

Comments and Coordination

4.1 Introduction

Section 4 summarizes public coordination activities that were undertaken during development of this Draft EIS. The section also summarizes the input received from local, state, and federal agencies, the public, and other organizations, including local schools, regarding development of this Draft EIS. This input was gathered from letters, meetings, comment forms, and the project web site. This involvement by the public and the agencies was coordinated in the Public Involvement Plan completed prior to beginning the DEIS.

4.2 DEIS Public Involvement Activities

The public and agencies have been kept informed of the project through newsletters, a project website, and press releases. The public's input was gathered from public information meetings and open houses, comment forms, individual meetings with residents, land owners, business owners and elected officials, and a public hearing. Agency input was gathered during a resource agency workshop workshops and meetings with the Minnesota DNR regarding the Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA), (see Section 3.14 for information on the WMA). The public involvement process described throughout this section was inclusive of all residents in the project area and did not exclude anyone because of income, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap.

4.2.1 Project Communications

Steps taken to inform the public during the DEIS process included distributing newsletters, developing and updating a Project Website, providing local media with press releases. These activities are described more fully below:

4.2.1.1 Newsletters

Newsletters are being used to inform citizens about project details, upcoming meetings, and opportunities to provide input on the project. Newsletters have been sent to a mailing list of over 700 people living along or near the US 14 corridor. The mailing list is updated as people request to be added. The list below summarizes the content of the three newsletters that have been sent out to date. Additional newsletters will be sent out as the project continues to move forward.

- *Newsletter #1, June 2004* – announced the start of work on the DEIS, described the alternatives being studied, discussed the decision making process, provided information for the first series of local informal open house meetings (held in July 2004, see Section 4.2.2), and provided contacts for local leaders serving on the Project Advisory Committee (see Section 4.2.3)
- *Newsletter #2, September 2004* – described the alternatives being studied in detail in the DEIS (as documented in the Amended Scoping Decision Document); provided information regarding public involvement opportunities during the summer



of 2004, and announced a public information meeting held on October 13, 2004 (see below).

- *Informational Postcard, April 2005* – provided information on informal open houses held in April 2005 (see below).
- *Newsletter #3, December 2007 or January 2008* – announced the availability of the DEIS and the public hearing.
- *Newsletter #4, Early 2008* – will announce the identification of a preferred alternative.

4.2.1.2 Project Website

A Project Website was placed on the Mn/DOT website in June of 2004. The website address is: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d7/projects/14newulmtonmankato/>. Items included on the website include:

- *Background information* – including the US 14 *Corridor Management Plan, Scoping Document, and Scoping Decision Document*
- *Project updates* – including schedule information, members of the Project Advisory Committee, PAC meeting summaries, information for contacting Mn/DOT staff to comment on the project
- *Project related documents* – including maps and documents which have been developed throughout the Draft EIS which are listed below:
 - *Interchange Workshop Report* (August 2004);
 - *Alternatives Screening Recommendations Memo* (October 2004);
 - *Amended Scoping Decision Document* (October 2005); and
 - Several wetland related documents, including the *Preliminary Draft Wetland Delineation Technical Report* (January 26, 2005) and the *US 14 Wetland Technical Report: Supplement* (January 24, 2006)

4.2.1.3 Press Releases

Press releases to multiple newspaper and media outlets were used to provide information about DEIS related public meetings and other activities; as well as to provide project updates. Press releases distributed to date are available on the Project Website under the heading, “News Releases.”

4.2.2 Public Meetings

Two types of public meetings were used during preparation of the DEIS – informal open houses and public information meetings. The public was notified of the meetings through newsletters, the project website, and news releases. Public meetings held to date are listed in Table 4-1.



TABLE 4-1
US 14 Public Meeting Schedule

Meeting	Date	Location	Time
First Round of Informal Open Houses			
Informal Open House	July 1, 2004	Courtland Community Center	4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Informal Open House	July 8, 2004	North Mankato Fire Station #2	4:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Informal Open House	July 20, 2004	New Ulm City Hall	4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Informal Open House	July 21, 2004	Inlaws Restaurant in Nicollet	4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Public Information Meeting(s)			
Public Information Meeting	October 13, 2004	Courtland Community Center	4:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Second Round of Informal Open Houses			
Informal Open House	April 19, 2005	Inlaws Restaurant in Nicollet	4:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Informal Open House	April 21, 2005	New Ulm City Hall	4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

4.2.2.1 Informal Open House Meetings

Informal open houses are geared towards providing local landowners, residents, and elected officials with project information. The meetings last two hours and are scheduled for the late afternoon and early evening. A total of six informal open houses have been held to date (see Table 4-1). More informal open houses will be scheduled after identification of a preferred alternative.

The first series of open house meetings were held at four locations along the corridor in July 2004 (see Table 4-1). These meetings provided basic information about the project, including the EIS process; the variety of alternatives under consideration; and offered opportunities for public involvement. Over 100 people participated in this series of meetings. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and provide input on the alternatives by writing on the displayed layouts or filling out comment forms. Mn/DOT representatives and consulting staff were available to answer questions. The second series of meetings were held in April 2005. These meetings focused on providing the public the opportunity to preview the DEIS and review the impacts of each corridor alternative.

4.2.2.2 Public Information Meetings

Public information meetings are more structured than informal open houses, with a focus on providing information and gathering input from communities and other stakeholders. One public information meeting was held on October 13, 2004 (see Table 4-1). Another will be held following the identification of a preferred alternative.

The purpose of the October 13, 2004 meeting was to share new information, show screened alternatives and interchange footprints (as documented in the *Amended Scoping Decision*



Document, which is available on the Project Website), and provide preliminary environmental impacts. Over 90 people attended the meeting; many of whom provided comments on the displayed layouts and comment forms. The following is a summary of the comments received:

Corridor Wide:

- Questions and concerns with potential impacts, such as: agricultural impacts (farm severances and access changes that would impact joint farming operations); access changes that would impact residential properties; residential relocations; and wetland impacts
- Desire to construct the project soon

West Study Section:

- Some preferred the top-of-bluff alignment (Alternative W2 and part of W3); others preferred using the existing US 14 route (Alternative W1 and part of W3) (see the Aerial Photo Exhibit)
- Need for a safer intersection at US 14/MN 15/CR 21

East Study Section:

- Support for not expanding US 14 through the Cities of Nicollet and Courtland

4.2.2.3 Meetings with Local Landowners and Residents:

Meetings were held, as requested, to provide the opportunity for one-on-one and small group discussions to better understand their opinions and concerns.

4.2.3 Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was created as a forum for appointed representatives from counties, cities, townships, and other agencies in close proximity to the project corridor, to provide input on project issues. Table 4-2 provides a list of communities and groups represented on the PAC. Committee members provide the group with the point of view of their agency and are also responsible for taking information back to the group they represent. PAC meetings are held at key points in EIS development. Table 4.3, below, lists the PAC meetings held to date and identifies the focus of each meeting. Additional PAC meetings will be held prior to the identification of a Preferred Alternative.

TABLE 4-2
Project Advisory Committee Representation

• Mn/DOT	• City of North Mankato
• Nicollet County	• City of Mankato
• Brown County	• Belgrade Township
• Blue Earth County	• Courtland Township
• City of New Ulm	• Nicollet Township
• City of Courtland	• Region 9 Development Commission
• City of Nicollet	• Minnesota State University Mankato



TABLE 4-3
Public Advisory Committee Meeting Dates and Meeting Topics

Date	Focus
July 1, 2004	EIS purpose and process, PAC member role, public involvement plan and upcoming activities, and development and screening of alternatives
September 23, 2004	Project overview, screening of alternatives, and upcoming public involvement.
February 2, 2005	DEIS alternatives to study in detail, preliminary environmental impact comparisons, and upcoming public involvement opportunities
February 15, 2007	Reintroduction of the project after one year without committee activity; introduce new PAC members; preview DEIS, including impacts
December 2007	Preview content of DEIS Public Hearing

4.2.4 Federal, State, and Local Agency Coordination

In addition to the PAC (see above), several federal, state, and local agencies participated in development of the DEIS. The following is a list of agencies that participated in the DEIS:

Federal Agencies

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service*
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Park Service

* denotes Cooperating Agencies

State Agencies

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area, Ecological Services)

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (Regional Environmental Management Division)
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
- State Historic Preservation Office

Other Entities

- Nicollet County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Region 9 Development Commission
- Mankato State University (Urban and Regional Studies Department)

Representatives from the agencies listed above primarily participated in meetings and workshops focused on a specific DEIS topic – including interchange concepts and environmental resources. Table 4-4 outlines the schedule and focus of agency meetings that have occurred over the course of DEIS development.



TABLE 4-4
Federal, State, and Local Agency Meetings

Meeting Topic	Date	Attending Agencies	Focus
Interchange Concept Workshop	June 17, 2004	Local counties, cities, and Mn/DOT staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified promising interchange locations/configurations; Considered interchange influence on alignments Identified environmental and screening considerations. Resulted in interchange concepts at four locations (TH 15/CR 21, CR 37, CR 24, and CR 23). <p>See Section 2 of this DEIS and the <i>Interchange Workshop Report</i> on the project website for more information.</p>
Environmental Resource Agency Workshop and Field Trip	July 21, 2004	Local, state, and federal agencies	Established contact with environmental resource to introduce the project and obtain input on alternative development and potential resource concerns.
Amended Scoping Decision Document Coordination Meeting	Sept. 15, 2004	Nicollet County Board	Introduce corridor study, share information, and discuss county involvement.
Swan Lake WMA & Preliminary Wetland Mitigation Opportunities	Feb. 2, 2005 & August 2005	Minnesota DNR	Discussed the resource management plans for the Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area; and preliminarily discussed how wetland mitigation may provide an opportunity for stewardship to further the goals of the WMA
Wetlands	March 5, 2005	Wetland Technical Evaluation Panel—composed of various local, state, and federal agencies	Mn/DOT presented the wetland delineation efforts that had been completed to date for the US 14 project area
Wetlands	May 2, 2005	US Army Corps of Engineers	US Army Corps Section 404 permit Pre-Application Meeting
Cultural Resources	Aug. 16, 2005	Minnesota DOT Cultural Resources Unit and Archaeological Consultant	Discussed findings of archaeological survey and the preliminary findings of the architectural history survey
Cultural Resources	June 9, 2006	Minnesota DOT Cultural Resources Unit	Discussed findings of the historic architectural and archaeological resource reports (see Section 3.13 and Appendix A for more details)



TABLE 4-4
Federal, State, and Local Agency Meetings

Meeting Topic	Date	Attending Agencies	Focus
Cultural Resources	December 13, 2006	Mn/DOT Cultural Resources Unit	Discussed with Mn/DOT's historian and archaeologist the potential Section 4(f) uses and Section 106 adverse effects (see Section 3.13 and Appendix A for more details).
Cultural Resources	February 13, 2007	Mn/DOT Cultural Resources Unit and State Historic Preservation Office	Field day to verify the potential Section 4(f) uses and Section 106 Adverse Effects documented in Section 3.13 and Appendix A.

In addition to attending meetings, some agencies and organizations have provided comments to Mn/DOT regarding this project in letters and e-mails, which are attached to the end of this section. The following is a list of the correspondence that is attached to the end of this section:

- US Army Corps of Engineers – the letter provides concurrence for the alternatives that are under consideration in this DEIS.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – documents the coordination that has taken place to complete the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (AD 1006) (see Section 3.4 for additional information).
- National Park Service-Midwest Regional Office – documents coordination with the National Park Service (NSP); the agency provided general comments/considerations for reducing impacts to the river, and recommended measures for inclusion in the planning stages of this proposed project.
- Minnesota DNR Trails and Waterways, Canoe and Boating River Designation – documents coordination with Mn/DNR's Trails and Waterways division; notes that the project would not adversely impact boating facilities on the Minnesota River, particularly, Eckstein Landing along CR 37, if construction takes place within CR 37 right-of-way.
- Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School – provides comments regarding expansion of the existing highway.

4.3 Activities Planned After Publication of the DEIS

4.3.1 DEIS Public Hearing, Public Meeting, and Informal Open Houses

A public hearing will be held as an additional opportunity to provide information or comments before the publication of a Final EIS. After the Public Hearing, a Preferred Alternative will be identified. The public will be informed of this decision through a public meeting and a series of



open houses. These meetings will be announced by newsletter, on the project website, and through press releases.

4.3.2 Additional Agency Coordination

After identification of a Preferred Alternative, Mn/DOT will seek additional agency coordination to focus on environmental, engineering and mitigation measures. Mn/DOT will seek input from cooperating agencies and resource agency stakeholders, including those who participated at the July 2004 Environmental Resource Agency Workshop.





REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

ST. PAUL DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

190 FIFTH STREET EAST, SUITE 401

ST. PAUL, MN 55101-1638

COPY

APR 18 2006

Operations
Regulatory (MVP-2005-70-JKA)

Ms. Cheryl B. Martin
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Galtier Plaza
380 Jackson Street, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101-2904

Dear Ms. Martin:

As a Cooperating Agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project (State Project 5200-03) to improve approximately 22.5 miles of U.S. Highway 14 from Front Street in New Ulm, to County Road 6 near North Mankato, primarily in Nicollet County, Minnesota, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has reviewed the September 2005 Amended Scoping Decision Document (Document) that has been prepared for the project. Based upon our review, the Corps believes that the range of highway alignment alternatives (three western alignment alternatives and four eastern alignment alternatives) identified in the Document are reasonable and practicable and should be carried forward to the Draft EIS for analysis.

If you have any questions, contact Jon K. Ahlness in our St. Paul office at (651) 290-5381. In any correspondence or inquiries, please refer to the Regulatory number shown above.

Sincerely,

for Robert J. Whiting
Chief, Regulatory Branch

Copy Furnished:

Peter Harff, MnDOT
Mary Gute, CH2M Hill
Doug Abere, CH2M Hill

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
209 West Mulberry Street
St. Peter, MN 56082-2029

*Helping People
Help the Land*

Phone: (507) 931-2530
FAX: (507) 931-4619

February 5, 2007

Jeffrey W. Olson
Wetland Scientist/ Botanist/ Plant Ecologist
CH2M HILL
1295 Northland Drive
Suite 200
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

Enclosed is the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (form AD-1006) for the improvement project on US Hwy. 14, from New Ulm to North Mankato. Thank you for sending information on your project for me to review. The Ad-1006 forms and the shape files of the different proposed routes you sent me were complete, enabling me to complete the forms without any delay. Where federal funds are involved, and prime farmland is converted, an AD-1006 must be completed.

The purpose of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA), is to minimize the extent that federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of prime and statewide important farmland to non-agricultural uses. The FPPA requires federal agencies involved in projects that may convert farmland, to determine whether the proposed conversion is consistent with FPPA.

I have completed parts II, IV, and V on the AD-1006 forms (W1 to W3 on the west part and E1 to E4 on the east part). Also appended is a copy of the prime and statewide important farmland list for Brown and Nicollet Counties, and the soil map for the project area with the project area highlighted.

If I can be of further assistance, contact me at 507-931-2530, Ext. 107.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas E. Miller".

Douglas E. Miller
Area Resource Soil Scientist

Cc: Stephanie McLain, District Conservationist, St. Peter
Greg Tennant, District Conservationist, Sleepyeye

"W Alternatives"; U.S. 14

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Date Of Land Evaluation Request 1/30/07
---	---

Name Of Project US 14 EIS from New Ulm to North Mankato, MN	Federal Agency Involved Federal Highway Administration
---	--

Proposed Land Use Roadway and Right-of-Way	County And State Brown and Nicollet Counties, Minnesota
--	---

PART II (To be completed by NRCS)	Date Request Received By NRCS 2-2-07
--	--------------------------------------

Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form).	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Acres Irrigated 0	Average Farm Size 308
--	---	-------------------	-----------------------

Major Crop(s) Corn/Soybeans	Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 225,200 % 80	Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 191,420 % 85
-----------------------------	---	---

Name Of Land Evaluation System Used LE	Name Of Local Site Assessment System N/A	Date Land Evaluation Returned By NRCS 2-5-07
--	--	--

	Alternative Site Rating			
	Site A W1	Site B W2	Site C W3	Site D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	352.0	343.0	357.0	
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly				
C. Total Acres In Site	352.0	343.0	357.0	0.0

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information				
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	246	224	228	
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	23	24	29	
C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	0.17%	0.15%	0.16%	
D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	99%	99%	99%	

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion				
Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)	73	69	68	0

PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Site Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(b))	Maximum Points				
1. Area In Nonurban Use		11	15	13	
2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use		10	10	10	
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed		3	7	5	
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government		0	0	0	
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area		5	5	5	
6. Distance To Urban Support Services		10	10	10	
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average		10	10	10	
8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland		0	4	2	
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services		5	5	5	
10. On-Farm Investments		20	20	20	
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services		0	0	0	
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use		0	0	0	
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	0 74	0 86	0 80	0

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100	0 73	0 69	0 68	0
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	0 74	0 86	0 80	0
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	0 147	0 155	0 148	0

Site Selected:	Date Of Selection	Was A Local Site Assessment Used? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
----------------	-------------------	--

Reason For Selection:

"E Alternatives" ; U.S. 14

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		Date Of Land Evaluation Request 1/30/07	
Name Of Project US 14 EIS from New Ulm to North Mankato, MN		Federal Agency Involved Federal Highway Administration	
Proposed Land Use Roadway and Right-of-Way		County And State Brown and Nicollet Counties, Minnesota	
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		Date Request Received By NRCS 2-2-07	
Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form).		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Acres Irrigated 0 Average Farm Size 308
Major Crop(s) Corn/Soybeans	Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 225,200 % 80	Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 191,420 % 85	
Name Of Land Evaluation System Used LE	Name Of Local Site Assessment System N/A	Date Land Evaluation Returned By NRCS 2-5-07	

	Alternative Site Rating			
	Site-A E1	Site-B E2	Site-C E3	Site-D E4
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	666.0	658.0	669.0	639.0
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly				
C. Total Acres In Site	666.0	658.0	669.0	639.0

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information				
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	535	584	581	573
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	93	99	108	49
C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	0.30%	0.29%	0.30%	0.28%
D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	88%	36%	88%	36%

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Criterion				
Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)	88	89	85	89

PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Maximum Points				
Site Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(b))					
1. Area In Nonurban Use		15	15	15	15
2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use		10	10	10	10
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed		3	9	9	9
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government		0	0	0	0
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area		10	10	10	15
6. Distance To Urban Support Services		10	10	10	10
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average		10	10	10	10
8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland		0	1	1	1
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services		5	5	5	5
10. On-Farm Investments		20	20	20	20
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services		0	0	0	0
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use		0	0	0	0
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	0 83	0 90	0 90	0 95

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100	0 88	0 89	0 85	0 89
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	0 83	0 90	0 90	0 95
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	0 171	0 179	0 175	0 184

Site Selected:	Date Of Selection	Was A Local Site Assessment Used? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason For Selection:		

Gute, Mary/MSP

From: Gute, Mary/MSP
Sent: Wednesday, October 03, 2007 10:53 AM
To: Gute, Mary/MSP
Subject: FW: US 14 Improvements, Draft EIS NPS Coord., Rivers Inventory (MinnesotaRiver)

Attachments: pic24221.jpg



pic24221.jpg

-----Original Message-----

From: Sue_Jennings@nps.gov [mailto:Sue_Jennings@nps.gov]
Sent: Friday, August 03, 2007 10:44 AM
To: Olson, Jeff/MSP
Subject: Fw: US 14 Improvements, Draft EIS NPS Coord., Rivers Inventory (MinnesotaRiver)

Hi Jeff----

Thank you for your early coordination efforts to ensure the proposed project does not adversely affect the Minnesota River, which is listed to the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Your note indicates the design of the US 14 bridge to New Ulm is still very conceptual, however, it is known that the beams would be at the same elevation or slightly higher than the current bridge and the bridge would be replaced in the same corridor alignment as the existing bridge. Our comments are as follows:

This particular segment of the Minnesota River is listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) prepared by the National Park Service (NPS). The NRI is a register of rivers that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. These rivers were included on the NRI based on the degree to which they are free-flowing, the degree to which the rivers and their corridors are undeveloped, and the outstanding natural and cultural characteristics of the rivers and their immediate environments. Section 5(d) of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that, "In all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources, consideration shall be given by all federal agencies involved to potential national wild, scenic and recreational river areas." In partial fulfillment of the section 5(d) requirements, NPS has compiled and maintains the NRI.

The intent of the NRI is to provide information to assist in making balanced decisions regarding use of the nation's river resources. A Presidential directive and subsequent instructions issued by the Council on Environmental Quality required that each Federal agency as part of its normal planning and environmental review processes, take care to avoid or mitigate adverse effects on rivers identified in the NRI. Further, all agencies are required to consult with NPS prior to taking actions that could effectively foreclose wild, scenic, or recreational status for rivers on the inventory.

The Minnesota River was listed on the NRI because of its free-flowing condition and outstanding scenic, recreational, wildlife and historic values. As you are in the early planning stages, our comments general in scope. As such, to reduce impacts to the river, we recommend that the following measures are included in planning the proposed project:

1. Design access and staging areas to minimize disturbances to the bed and banks of the river.
2. To the extent practicable, utilize the same alignment for the replacement bridge in order to reduce tree removal and other impacts in the riparian zone, and to limit additional intrusion on the scenic viewshed. Placement of the piers outside the river channel is recommended.
3. Trees and other woody vegetation existing along the riverbank should not be removed unless absolutely necessary. Any vegetation removed should be replaced with the same or similar native species;
4. Integrate a bank stabilization system that includes native vegetative plantings rather than hardened systems such as riprap to the extent practicable. As a suggestion, native fieldstone should be used, covered with topsoil above the ordinary high watermark, and planted with native vegetation where practicable (excluding areas under the bridge deck).
5. Erosion control plans should be designed to incorporate measures to minimize short-term and long-term sedimentation impacts. All erosion control devices that are installed should be monitored on a regular basis throughout the duration of the project.
6. During bridge removal, all efforts should be in place to minimize impacts to water quality and habitats at the site and downstream of the site. Shrouds, tarps or other catchment devices should be utilized to minimize debris entering the river. Equipment should be inspected for fluid leaks.
7. Minimize impacts to the river bottom if removal of existing piers and/or construction of new piers in the river channel is necessary---operating equipment from the banks is preferred. If causeways or work pads is necessary, in-stream flows should be maintained.
8. Any fill placed above the ordinary high water level should be stabilized as soon as possible;
9. Bridge design should include the use of earthtone colors (concrete tinting, paints) to minimize visual intrusion.
10. All traces of construction materials and equipment should be removed from the project site upon project completion.

Once the draft EIS is available, we would like an opportunity to review and offer additional comments. For coordination purposes, the draft EIS should be mailed (hard copy) to Mr. Nick Chevance, Regional Environmental Coordinator at the same address indicated below, as there may be other resources of interest to the NPS involved. If you have questions or require additional information, feel free to give me a call.

These comments have been provided as early technical assistance and do not necessarily indicate the NPS' or DOI's responses to future environmental documents prepared in association with the project.

Thank you,

~~~~~  
Sue Jennings  
Regional Wild and Scenic Rivers Specialist

National Park Service-Midwest Regional Office  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

(Office) 402/661-1848  
(Fax) 402/661-1982  
www.rivers.gov/

----- Forwarded by Sue Jennings/Omaha/NPS on 08/03/2007 10:21 AM -----

<Jeff.Olson@CH2M.com>  
<sue\_jennings@nps.gov>  
07/26/2007 08:33 AM CST  
Draft EIS NPS Coord., Rivers Inventory (Minnesota River)

To:  
cc:  
bcc:  
Subject: US 14 Improvements, River)

Hello Sue,

It was good talking with you this morning. Per our phone conversation, attached is a drawing showing existing roads, proposed improvements, aerial photography, and other features in the vicinity of the US bridge to New Ulm. The US 14 project area extends from New Ulm to west of North Mankato - however, the only area close to the Minnesota River is depicted on the attached figure.

As I mentioned, design on the US 14 bridge to New Ulm is still very conceptual, but we do know that the structural beams will be at the same elevation or slightly higher than what is on the current bridge. And we do know that the bridge will be replaced in the same location as the current bridge. The boat landing operated by the City of New Ulm (Minnecon Park) will not be affected by the proposed improvements .

As part of the improvements to US 14, its intersection with Hwy 37 will also be improved. The improvements to Hwy 37 may introduce temporary construction-related inconveniences to those using the Eckstein Landing (operated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources). However, the end result will be an improved entrance to and exit from the Landing.

When you have had time to digest this information - could you send me an e-mail as to whether NPS believes the improvement to US 14 will / will not introduce adverse impacts to the Minnesota River and its status on the Rivers Inventory.

Your e-mail will become part of the official agency coordination associated with this project.

We really appreciate your assistance!

Best Regards,

Jeffrey W. Olson  
Wetland Scientist/ Botanist/ Plant Ecologist

CH2M HILL  
1295 Northland Drive  
Suite 200  
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

phone: 651 688 8100 Ext #48516  
FAX: 414 454 8828

[attachment "APE\_Plate\_1\_New\_Ulm\_West\_06-11-07.pdf" deleted by Sue Jennings/Omaha/NPS] (Embedded image moved to file: pic24221.jpg)



**From:** Olson, Jeff/MSP  
**Sent:** Monday, July 16, 2007 9:07 AM  
**To:** Gute, Mary/MSP  
**Subject:** FW: US 14 Improvements, Draft EIS DNR Trails & Waterways Coord., Minnesota River (Canoe and Boating Riv  
 Mary,

Here (below) is the response from DNR concerning Canoe and Boating Rivers. According to Bob Kaul (DNR Trails and Waterways Supervisor in New Ulm)- no adverse impacts.

I am still awaiting a response from NPS (concerning rivers inventory).

Cheers,

**Jeffrey W. Olson**

Wetland Scientist/ Botanist/ Plant Ecologist

CH2M HILL  
 1295 Northland Drive  
 Suite 200  
 Mendota Heights, MN 55120

phone: 651 688 8100 Ext #48516  
 FAX: 414 454 8828

---

**From:** Bob Kaul [mailto:Bob.Kaul@dnr.state.mn.us]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 09, 2007 8:26 AM  
**To:** Olson, Jeff/MSP  
**Subject:** Re: US 14 Improvements, Draft EIS DNR Trails & Waterways Coord., Minnesota River (Canoe and Boating Riv

Jeff,

As per your notes below and information provided on the attached map, it appears that the project will not adversely impact the boating facilities on the Minnesota River. If there is construction taking place outside of the Co. Rd. #37 ROW adjacent to Eckstein Landing, there may be easements that will need to be obtained from the DNR. Thanks for the opportunity to review this project. We will be willing to provide further review as the project progresses .....BK

>>> <Jeff.Olson@CH2M.com> 7/2/2007 9:34 AM >>>  
 Hello Bob,

It was good talking with you this morning. Per our phone conversation, attached is a drawing showing existing roads, proposed improvements, aerial photography, and other features in the vicinity of the US bridge to New Ulm, and in the vicinity of the Hwy 37 Eckstein landing. The US 14 project area extends from New Ulm to west of North Mankato - however, the only area close to the Minnesota River is depicted on the attached figure.

As I mentioned, design on the US 14 bridge to New Ulm is still very conceptual, but we do know that the structural beams will be at the same elevation or slightly higher than what is on the current bridge. And we do know that the bridge will be replaced in the same location as the current bridge. The boat landing operated by the City of New Ulm (Minnecon Park) will not be affected by the proposed improvements.

As part of the improvements to US 14, its intersection with Hwy 37 will also be improved. The improvements to Hwy 37 may introduce temporary construction-related inconveniences to those using the Eckstein Landing. However, the end result will be an improved entrance to and exit from the Landing.

When you have had time to digest this information - could you send me an e-mail as to whether:

1) There is no potential for adverse effect concerning the status of the river as a Minnesota Canoe and

Boating River, or

2) There is a reasonable potential to adversely affect concerning the status of the river as a Minnesota Canoe and Boating River.

Your e-mail will become part of the official agency coordination associated with this project.

We really appreciate your assistance!

Best Regards,

**Jeffrey W. Olson**

Wetland Scientist/ Botanist/ Plant Ecologist

CH2M HILL  
1295 Northland Drive  
Suite 200  
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

phone: 651 688 8100 Ext #48516  
FAX: 414 454 8828

4/8/05

These are topics  
that we need to be  
sure to address.

Peter

Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School  
Property and transportation Committee  
45638 561<sup>st</sup>. Ave.  
New Ulm, MN. 56073

Feb. 15, 2005

Dear Mr. Harff

We are writing this letter today because of the concerns we have with the proposed expansion of highway 14. We realize that the expansion to 4 lane is necessary but our concern is with the use of the existing road.

We believe that since Highway 14 is the main entrance for MVL, it could lead to many accidents. Most of the drivers to and from school are young inexperienced drivers. This and the fact that speeds will be in excess of 65 MPH would make the entrance and exit to school very hazardous.

During the morning and afternoon anywhere from 50 to 100 cars may be leaving at one time. Also during sports events there is a large number of people leaving at one time.

We would also like you to consider how this would affect us financially. Our softball fields would all have to be moved and with the amount of wetlands we have on our property we would have a hard time finding a new spot for them. Future plans for a football field and track west of the softball fields would also be in jeopardy.

These are just a few of the reasons we would encourage you to use the route on county road 21.

If you have any questions or would like to meet with us about our concerns feel free to contact us at any time

Sincerely, MVL Property and Transportation committee

Joel Grunke, Chairman

Arden Enter, Secretary

Perry Meyer, Committee member

Brian Fischer, Committee member

Rev. Wayne Fischer, Superintendent

Denny Roeber, Transportation Coordinator