

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

NEPA Scoping Meeting and Public Comment Period for the Grand River Upper Reach Revitalization: Sea Lamprey Control and Habitat Improvement Project

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District

ACTION: Supplemental Notice of Intent (NOI)

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in partnership with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), hereby announces its intent to reinitiate public scoping and solicit public comments to gather information to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Grand River Upper Reach Revitalization: Sea Lamprey Control and Habitat Improvement Project (“Project”) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The EIS will evaluate the impacts of the removal of the 6th Street Dam, which will include alternatives to install a new structure that will primarily prevent sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), an invasive non-indigenous species, from migrating upstream. The Project must ensure that native aquatic species can continue to access upstream habitats at least as effectively as currently provided by the 6th Street Dam fish ladder, implement effective sea lamprey control, enhance public safety, and, when possible, restore aquatic habitat. If implemented, the Project is expected to have adverse effects on existing healthy mussel populations, including the federally endangered snuffbox mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*), and several state-listed mussel species. The USACE, GLFC, and USFWS request public comment on potential alternatives, unavoidable impacts, and any relevant information, studies, or analyses related to the Project.

DATES: Comments for consideration in the development of the scope of the draft EIS are due no later than May 22, 2026. Comments may also be made at the public scoping meeting as noted

below. All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public.

ADDRESSES: The public is invited to submit written comments at the meeting and/or to Mr. Hal Harrington, Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, Environmental Analysis Section, 477 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226 or via email to: Comments-Grand-River@usace.army.mil.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Hal Harrington, 810-623-1006.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In 2019, the USACE announced its intent to prepare an EIS on behalf of the GLFC for habitat restoration, invasive species control, and potential modifications to the 6th Street Dam in the Grand River. After this initial scoping period, the Project was put on hold so that other local work that may influence the available alternatives could be progressed. During this pause, USACE and its Project partners continued to refine the Project proposal and its alternatives. Since 2019, significant statutory, regulatory, and administrative changes have affected the Project, including amendments to NEPA in 2023, the withdrawal of NEPA regulations by the Council on Environmental Quality, and the publication of updated NEPA regulations by USACE in 2025. This renewed public scoping effort responds to these changes and to Project developments since the original NOI was published on March 15, 2019, and clarifies that USACE is now the lead federal agency responsible for developing the Record of Decision (ROD).

The GLFC remains a cooperating agency based on its expertise in sea lamprey control and fishery restoration and sustainability in the Great Lakes. The USFWS is also a cooperating agency due to its jurisdiction over reasonably foreseeable impacts on federally listed mussel species and its special expertise in sea lamprey control. USACE recognizes this Project has been

a high priority for the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids WhiteWater for many years, and acknowledges that a collaborative Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids WhiteWater, the GLFC, and the USFWS was adopted and amended on December 16, 2024, affirming the parties' commitment to working together to plan, design, permit, construct, and develop an operation and maintenance plan for the Project.

The renewed effort also seeks to clarify how the Project aligns with the ongoing Lower Grand River Habitat Restoration Project, which is located downstream of the 6th Street Dam. While the Lower Grand River project was originally included in the initial NOI, it is now being undertaken as a separate project by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Proposed Project: The Project area encompasses the reach of the Grand River extending approximately from Ann Street to just downstream of Bridge Street in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. This multipurpose restoration initiative intends to remove the existing concrete low-head dam (6th Street Dam), located downstream of the 6th Street Bridge. After the dam is removed, the Project would involve construction and operation of a barrier that is specifically designed to prevent sea lamprey from entering reaches of the Grand River upstream of Grand Rapids. Alternatives consider actions to improve the riverbed, restore bedrock habitat, and reestablish more natural rapids, thereby enhancing aquatic habitat.

Project Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Project is to address significant public safety concerns associated with the aging 6th Street Dam by replacing it with a purpose-built sea lamprey barrier, restoring rapids and riverine flow, and enhancing bedrock habitat, recreational opportunities, and the natural character of the Grand River in Grand Rapids. Over time, the Grand River's physical, chemical, and biological functions, as well as its recreational value, have been degraded by channelization, dredging, damming, and urban development in the reach that

flows through the city. By removing the 6th Street Dam, the Project seeks to reduce risks of structural failure and hazardous river flow conditions surrounding the dam, improving safety for river users and the surrounding community, while also potentially restoring rapids within the Project area.

Because the 6th Street Dam currently serves as the first blocking structure to invasive sea lamprey migration along the Grand River, its removal creates a need for a new structure to impede sea lamprey from moving into upstream tributaries. The Project therefore proposes the construction and operation of a new barrier in place of the aging 6th Street Dam, designed to exclude sea lamprey while supporting broader ecosystem restoration goals. These goals include improving aquatic ecosystem connectivity and fish passage; creating improved spawning habitat; and restoring natural sediment transport processes. Achieving these objectives could also benefit threatened and endangered species, such as the snuffbox mussel, while continuing to protect critical infrastructure and riverbed stability. Additional objectives addressed by the Project include diversifying recreational opportunities while minimizing public safety risks and developing a stream design that is aesthetically pleasing and functionally natural.

Alternatives: Alternatives under consideration to fulfill the Project's purpose and need were developed using input from the previous public scoping period held in 2019. The action alternatives involve removing the 6th Street Dam and constructing a sea lamprey barrier and associated fish ladder at one of three locations: (1) at the current dam site, (2) approximately half a mile upstream of the 6th Street Dam, or (3) approximately one mile upstream of the 6th Street Dam. For the barrier itself, two design options are under consideration at each location: a fixed crest barrier or a seasonally adjustable barrier. Both designs are intended to effectively prevent sea lamprey from moving upstream while supporting flood conveyance, public safety, and

ecosystem restoration objectives. These alternatives have been developed based on public input and agency expertise, ensuring compliance with environmental laws and regulations, while meeting Project objectives.

The draft EIS will evaluate the direct, indirect, and reasonably foreseeable impacts of the proposed alternatives and a No Action alternative on affected resources identified during the scoping process. These resources may include, but are not limited to, water quality, hydrologic resources, air quality, ecological resources (including federally listed species and designated critical habitat), floodplains, wetlands, cultural resources, and social and economic resources such as community resources and facilities, recreation, noise, and aesthetics.

The Project may adversely impact a healthy population of freshwater mussels, including federally endangered snuffbox, as well as several state-listed mussel species. This assessment is based on previous mussel surveys conducted in the Project area and information provided by the USFWS. As a result, the alternatives must address potential unavoidable impacts on state and federally listed mussels within the Project area and identify appropriate conservation measures to avoid and minimize impacts.

Scoping Process/Public Involvement: The USACE, Detroit District is issuing this supplemental NOI to: (1) inform other Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies and the public of their plan to analyze effects related to implementation of the Grand River Upper Reach Revitalization: Sea Lamprey Control and Habitat Improvement Project in Grand Rapids, Michigan; (2) obtain information, studies, or analyses that may inform the scope of issues and range of alternatives to evaluate in the draft EIS; (3) provide notice and request input on what issues should be considered in the EIS analysis regarding potential effects to federally listed species and their critical habitat in accordance with the Endangered Species Act; and (4) provide

notice and request input on potential effects on historic properties in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

The scoping process will help identify reasonable alternatives, facilitate the evaluation of potential effects to the human environment and identify key issues of concern to be analyzed in the draft EIS. The USACE, Detroit District intends to comply with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act by undergoing formal Section 7 Consultation with the USFWS. Additionally, the USACE, Detroit District intends to comply with the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA in parallel with the NEPA process. The USACE, Detroit District invites Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies, the State Historic Preservation Office, other interested parties, and the general public to participate in the NEPA scoping process for the preparation of this draft EIS by attending meetings and/or submitting written comments.

The NEPA Public Scoping open house style meeting will be held at the Grand Rapids Public Schools University, 1400 Fuller Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 on April 22, 2026 from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. to provide information to the public; serve as a mechanism to solicit agency and public input to develop alternatives and issues of concern; and ensure full and open participation in scoping of the draft EIS. A short, informal presentation will be held at 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to provide more detail on the Project. Written comments will also be requested. Additional information related to the public scoping process will be provided through news releases to the media, advertisements placed in regional/local newspapers of general circulation, Public Notice, and/or on the Detroit District USACE website at:

<https://www.lrd.usace.army.mil/>.

Upon completion of the scoping process, the draft EIS will be developed and circulated for public review and comment. The USACE Detroit District expects to release the draft EIS for

public review and comment in 2027. The USACE Detroit District will issue a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register announcing the release of the draft EIS for public comment through news releases to the media, advertisements placed in regional/local newspapers of general circulation, Public Notice, and/or on the Project website listed above.

Hal F. Harrington for

19 March 2026

Katie Bates
Acting Chief, Environmental Analysis Section,
USACE, Detroit District.