US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

FARGO MOORHEAD DIVERSION PROJECT
FAQ | WILD RICE DAM REMOVAL

MAY 2017

What is the project?

The dam will be removed to improve passage for fish and macroinvertebrates, such as mussels, and eliminate safety concerns associated with this particular dam. This project will serve as an environmental mitigation project for the Fargo-Moorhead Flood Risk Management Project.

Where is this project located?

The Wild Rice River dam site is located just north of the Wild Rice Bar and Grill and only 1 mile (3.4 river miles) upstream from where the Wild Rice meets the Red River of the North.

Why was this site chosen?

Monitoring of the Wild Rice River was completed in 2011 and it included studies on geomorphology, physical habitat and fish and macroinvertebrate presence. Monitoring confirmed there is relatively poor habitat throughout the lower Wild Rice River, which may be due to the dam preventing connection of different habitat types. Removing the dam should improve biological movement and productivity.

What are the safety concerns surrounding this dam?

Low head dams pose a risk of injury or drowning to canoers, kayakers and swimmers. The project will improve safety by eliminating the dangerous hydraulic roller that forms at the base of low-head dams. Dam removal also provides some small improvement in safety by removing any potential for future dam failure. This is also an important factor in why this site was chosen.

When will it happen?

If federal funding is received, the Corps anticipates awarding a construction contract in the fall of 2017. Dam removal will be completed during periods of low water depth.

Will the water level in the river drop?

Removing the dam will result in lowing the water by 4 to 5 feet immediately upstream of the dam during low flow conditions. Minimum water depth is 1.5 feet for fish passage. The drop in upstream water elevations will taper off with greater distance from the dam and have no effect about 5 miles upstream.

What are the impacts to erosion?

The existing dam is causing significant erosion, creating a deep scour hole on the downstream side of the dam. For this project, rock will be placed to stabilize the bank at the existing dam site and fill in the scour hole. Lowering upstream water elevations could increase the rate of bank failure, however, such failures are already occurring in the upstream area and will likely continue if the dam is not removed. Removing the dam will have a minor impact to the downstream channel bank slide, since the water depth on the downstream side of the dam should still remain at the same level and the flow should be less turbulent.

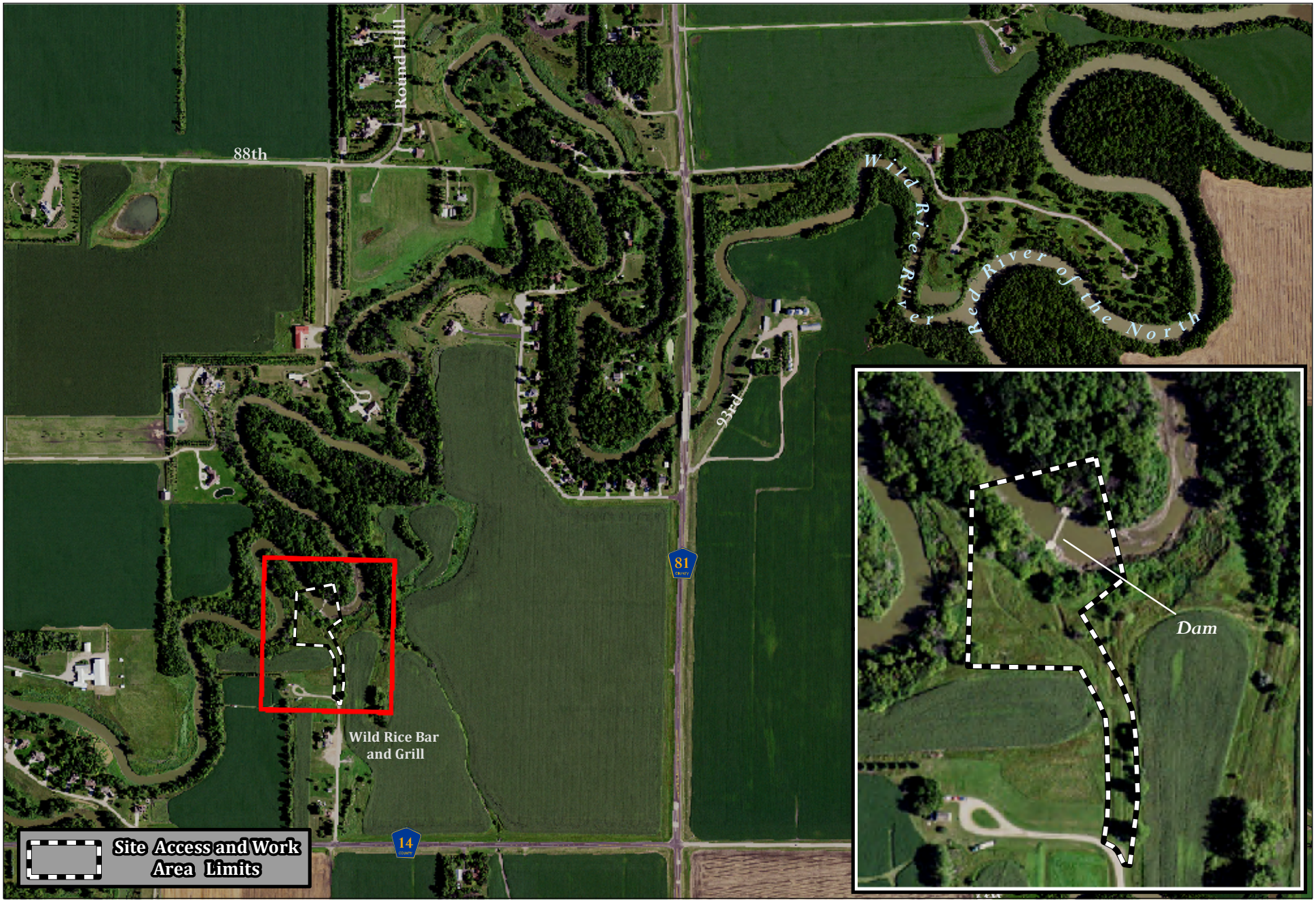
Was an analysis conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act?

Yes, and the document can be found at http://www.fmdiversion.com/studies-technical-documents/

What other options were considered for this project?

Building a rock rapids fish passage on top or next to the existing dam was considered, but it was determined that while rock rapids may work for some fish species, dam removal would be more effective for all aquatic species. It would also cost four times more than dam removal.

Replacing the dam and including fish passage was also considered. This alternative would improve the risk of potential dam failure but public safety would remain an issue. Further, it would not as effective of an environmental mitigation project for connecting the Wild Rice River. It would also be more costly than the removal of the existing dam.



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Wild Rice River Dam, ND - Parcels

Fargo Moorhead Metro Flood Damage Reduction Project

Base Image: ESRI WMS World Imagery

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