

## A river runs through it, again: The Grey Cloud Slough restoration



Grey Cloud Slough, a 2.8 mile long waterbody was a “cut-off” meander loop of the Mississippi River located east of the main channel between Grey Cloud Township and St. Paul Park in Washington County.

The slough was cut off from the Mississippi years ago, when road projects, the additions of culverts, and a bridge replacement in the early 1900s failed to take into account the necessary design considerations that would maintain sufficient flow for the ecological function of the river meander.



*Grey Cloud Slough before start of construction.*

“The channel was dramatically impaired by a lack of water flow following road construction in the 1960s, resulting in degraded water quality. Because of this, the channel was only suitable for carp and dense, invasive vegetation,” said John Loomis, Water Resources Program Manager with South Washington Watershed District (SWWD).

To solve the water quality problem SWWD, Houston Engineering, Inc., and Washington County began the Grey Cloud Slough Restoration project. Their goal was to fully restore ecological functions to Grey Cloud Slough by reconnecting the slough with the river.

Funded in part by a Clean Water Fund grant, as well as dollars from SWWD and Washington County, construction kicked off in June 2017.

In the fall of 2017 flow was restored to Grey Cloud Channel.

The restored flow resulted in improved water quality, new fish passage and spawning, development of a boat water trail access through the slough, along with better boater safety and improved roadway safety.

Loomis summarized the work, “Grey Cloud is a unique project, but one with great and immediate benefit to the Mississippi River. By replacing the road embankment with the installation of a natural bottom bridge we were able to immediately restore water quality to the side channel and begin to replace habitat that was in short supply. Over the course of one construction season, we restored water quality to match that of the main channel and in the process restored over 2.5 miles of the channel and 125 acres of aquatic habitat in the Mississippi River system.”



*Grey Cloud Restoration complete.*

You can [watch a video](#) of the project by SWWD.