

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #102, April 21, 2015

Introductions (All)

- Minutes from RRF #101: endorsed by consensus as written
- Upcoming RRF Meetings:
 - August 18-19: Prairie Du Chien, WI at the Prairie du Chien Community Center or Guttenberg, IA at City Hall; McMillan Island excavation as a field trip
 - Harpers Slough was mentioned as a contingency field trip, but the project will be an option next year also
 - December 1-2: Bloomington, MN at the FWS MN Valley Visitor Center

Agency Activities- MPCA (Emily Schnick)

- Transitioning to a new database for permitting

Agency Activities- WDNR (Sara Strassman)

- Mississippi River Planner position (Sara previously fulfilled) is a high priority to fill, but hasn't been done yet

Agency Activities- American Rivers (Olivia Dorothy)

- No updates

Agency Activities- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)

- Walt Popp is retiring, previous LTRM lead in Lake City, MN
- Issued a new permit to the COE for one year
 - Limited the period to one year due to delayed implementation of DMMP's and concern pertaining to material eroding from existing placement sites
 - Would like to see more attention given as to where the material from permanent and temporary placement sites is traveling
 - Mike Griffin reported that the Rock Island District had issues years ago and completed a study, the Corps will try to find information on the study to share with the RRF
 - This is generally a five year permit

Agency Activities- TNC (Gretchen Benjamin)

- Spent the last two weeks in D.C. speaking about UMRR
 - Mentioned disappointment in next year's budget
 - HQ USACE and ASA are both extremely supportive of UMRR

- Will continue to try to recoup some of the lost funding for next FY
- Completed visits in regards to obtaining NESP funding

Agency Activities- Audubon (Tim Schlagenhaft)

- Spent time working with LPLA on the Lake Pepin habitat restoration project
- Worked with the FWS to cost share a Forest Ecologist position
 - This new position was filled by Andy Meier, who is an Audubon employee based out of the Lacrosse District Upper Mississippi Refuge Visitor Center

Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)

- Jim Nissen and Lisa Reid retired
- Tim Miller was hired as the replacement for Jim Nissen
- Rich King is working on filling the Deputy Manager position in the McGregor District
- Working on filling the Visitor Service position that Paula Ogden-Muse vacated
- Co-funding the Forest Ecologist position for Andy Meyer with Audubon
 - Position is a two year minimum agreement
 - Will work on the systemic forest management plan and will have opportunities on Corps projects
 - Will be able to work on private lands and with States
- Decision on listing for the Northern Long-Eared Bat will be made on 5/4
- Released a draft Prospectus regarding commercial waterfowl hunting guide services
 - Potential for increasing the guiding fee to 3% of the expected gross revenue
 - Comment period closes 5/15
- More to come on fishing guides and fishing tournaments on the UMR, both need to be regulated better
- Received funding from Lessard Sams for Root River efforts
 - FWS will contract with Jim Nissen to return and work on the project
- Mary Stefanski is working with the MDNR on issues pertaining to Avian Influenza

Agency Activities- IDNR (Mike Griffin)

- There are some new representatives to the permitting section, which may cause delays in dredged material permits
 - Expect to see permits for McMillan Island and Hovie Island dredging in the near future

Agency Activities- MnDOT (Patrick Phenow)

- Getting close to reaching agreements for port development assistance projects
 - St. Paul, MN is expanding the barge terminal 1 reconnaissance
 - Red Wing, MN is looking to establish transient docks
 - Winona, MN is looking to establish a heavy lift dock

Agency Activities- EPA (Larry Shepard)

- No updates

Agency Activities- LPLA (Rylee Main)

- Draft PAR for Upper Pool 4 and the Head of Lake Pepin was distributed for comment
 - Some comments received, awaiting additional comment
 - Presented to the FWWG on 3/1
- Meeting was held late February to begin coordination regarding moving forward with public outreach
- Tim Schlagenhaft commented that it would be beneficial to have formal feedback (approval) from the RRF on specific projects so that NGO's are able to seek out sponsorship opportunities
- There's still some uncertainty as to how the project would flow through the FWWG and gain consideration at the RRF level
 - The Corps will have an internal discussion pertaining to how this would go through the RRF for consideration as a project

Agency Activities- USCG (Travis McNeely)

- Looking into the potential of removing buoys above LSAF Lock by the end of summer
 - Also looking into declassifying that area as a navigational waterway
- Mike Griffin questioned what it would take to require a safety zone, so as to avoid additional channel problems in shoaling conditions similar to McMillan Island
 - Stated that the purpose would be to avoid additional problems before dredging is completed, added the possibility of requiring barges to be lightered
- MDNR commented that receivers are being utilized in areas which the USCG is proposing to declassify, Travis agreed to forward that information along to Andre Myers, Captain of the Wyaconda

Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)

- Bryan Peterson was hired as the Navigation Manager for the Mississippi River Project Office
 - Will be the navigation business line manager and responsible for managing the Channels & Harbors, Locks & Dams, and Physical Support Branch offices
- Chris Atkins was hired as the new Locks & Dams Operations Manager
- Steve Tapp is acting as the Chief of Physical Support Branch until that position is filled
 - Mississippi River Project Office hopes to have the position filled within the next 1.5 months
- Paul Machajewski is acting as the Channels & Harbors Operations Manager until Steve has completed his rotation
- Tim Bertschi, Operations Manager for the Recreation and Natural Resource Project Office, is retiring on 5/1
- Steve Tapp stressed the importance of getting enough resources to complete current planning efforts in order to resolve placement site issues, in a meeting with MVD General Wehr and the MVP Commander on 2/5
- Steve Tapp participated in the River Advisory Board meeting on 4/1 with Ron Kind and stressed placement site planning needs

- Channels & Harbors will begin the process of reviewing the WDNR permit, working with Sara Strassman

Navigation Workgroup Activities (Dan Cottrell and Patrick Phenow)

- Bridge handout as attachment
- Work is continuing at the Winona Bridge and everything appears to be on schedule
- Dan has a new contact with the Federal Railroad Administration out of Indiana
 - POC for bridges over the Mississippi River
- Both the Winona Bridge Project and I-90/Dresbach Interchange Project are using Corps dredge material

MPCA Soil Reference Values Update (Emily Schnick)

- Presentation as attachment
- 38 comment letters were received from October through December
 - 23 of the letters related to dredge material management
 - Responses to the comment letters were sent out last week
- Continue to work on background numbers
- Additional stakeholder review to take place by 8/1/2015
- SRV's are anticipated to be finalized by January 2016
 - Continue to use 2009 SRV's until things are finalized
 - Will likely need to modify existing permit with the COE to include a table with updated SRV's
- Can sign up for the government delivery notifications for automatic updates on background numbers

Recreation Workgroup Activities (Tim Yager)

- Workgroup hasn't held a meeting since last River Resources Forum
- Pool 7 & 8 Beach Plan: comments were received, the plan is close to being finalized it is currently in final draft form
- Ongoing efforts tied to the programmatic EA for beach planning
- Steve Tapp spoke with Jon Klingman (Rock Island District, COE) pertaining to beach planning efforts in Pool 11
 - Jon stated that there aren't any identified beaches in Rock Island District, only shoreline placement locations
 - Jon doesn't believe that Rock Island Office of Counsel will be supportive of beach plans due the historical experience, therefore Rock Island won't be able to support Pool 11 beach plans
- City of La Crosse is working to place ~500 cubic yards of sand on Pettibone Beach

Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)

- Handout as attachment
- Next meeting will be held on 5/4
- Teresa Newton would like to do mussel surveys prior to Pool 3 drawdown and she's seeking funding for divers

- Potential for Winona's Mayor to complete a tour of Pools 5A & 6 in July, including the Ft. City Service Base
- Mary asked for RRF endorsement to proceed with the development of a white paper to determine the criteria and costs involved with planning and preparing routine drawdowns in Pool 8 and costs to implement such a plan
 - Per email dialogue with Steve Tapp, National Park service supports the proposal with general consensus from RRF per John Anfinson
 - COE Supports per Steve Tapp, FWS supports per Tim Yager, IDNR supports per Mike Griffin, MDNR supports per Dan Dieterman
 - WDNR supports per Dan Helsel and Sara Strassman, though there was question as to whether Pool 5 was considered as an alternative to Pool 8 for systematic drawdowns
 - Per Jon Hendrickson, advanced dredging is more likely to sustain in Pool 8 as opposed to Pool 5, with Pool 5 being much closer in proximity to the Chippewa River and the Zumbro River
- Jon also stated that a five year cycle is appropriate for calculating the annual maintenance cost of advanced dredging, as it's been utilized in the past for analysis
- Tim Schlagenhaft stated that the intent is to mimic regular low-water conditions in a natural manner, not necessarily complete a drawdown every five years
- Mike Griffin commented that the chance of completing a drawdown any given year is slim, but there is much benefit to having the tools in place when the timing is right
- Mary stated that discussions will continue at the next WLMTF meeting on 5/4 as to what are the proper criteria for pursuing a drawdown
- COE will contribute \$50K for completion of the white paper
- Formal endorsement: IDNR (Mike Griffin) motioned to have the WLMTF proceed with development of a white paper to determine the criteria and costs involved with planning and preparing routine drawdowns in Pool 8 and costs to implement such a plan; MDNR (Dan Dieterman) second; endorsed by consensus
- The goal is to have a draft completed by late July for discussion at the August RRF meeting, Tom Novak and Randy Urich have the lead

Flexible Uses of Dredge Material (Rich King)

- Presentation as attachment
- Sent out draft EA for Lansing Island (Pool 9) and McMillan Island (Pool 10)
- Several projects were listed as potential for floodplain forest restoration
 - Old fish pond (near the fish hatchery) in Pool 9
 - Lansing Island placement site in Pool 9
 - McMillan Island in Pool 10
 - Hurricane Island in Pool 11
 - Rosebrook Island in Pool 11
 - COE Rock Island District is in need of additional placement sites and the proposals at Hurricane and Rosebrook Islands help meet that need

- Rich proposed putting together a new task force focused on identifying various beneficial uses of dredge material
 - Mike Griffin supports the projects above and sees them as a win-win, also supports the proposal for a beneficial use task force
 - Dan Dieterman stated that it would be difficult for the task force to wrestle with the various conservation issues that were identified in the presentation
- Tim Schlagenhaft stated that forestry is often an oversight at the RRF level and more focus needs to be brought to forest restoration
 - Also stated that it is important to look at large scale floodplain forest restoration projects

Channel Maintenance Program Activities (OP-CH)

- 2014 dredging season AAR meeting will be scheduled in the near future
 - That meeting will be incorporated into the final AAR for distribution
 - Grand Encampment component will be a separate AAR from this
 - WDNR will wait to see how the AAR goes and may ask the Corps to clean up additional material adjacent to the placement site tied to the in-water re-handle
- Channel dredging began in March, which is extremely uncommon
- Two new dredging locations have already been identified as imminent: Hovie Island and Catfish Slough, both in Pool 10
 - Completed mussel surveys in the reach and didn't collect any State or Federally listed mussels
- Conditions are looking better now than they did as of last year
- Cannon River in Upper Pool 4 is narrow and has a substantial amount of material that needs to be dredged
- Grand Encampment Excavation is planned to resume on Monday, 4/27
 - The first 50,000 cubic yards of material will be placed at Dairyland Power property, the next 250,000 cubic yards of material will be placed at the Greshik Pit
 - Any balance of material will be placed on the Sass property
- Crats Island Excavation is anticipated to be advertised in July and awarded 9/1
 - There is currently 1.2 million cubic yards of material on the island
 - \$7.5 million is currently allocated in FY15 for the excavation
 - 150,000 cubic yards of material will be moved from the Wabasha Gravel Pit to the pit behind Dairy Queen
 - Dairy Queen pit has a total capacity of ~650,000 cubic yards
 - Capacity at the Wabasha Gravel Pit will reach 1,030,000 cubic yards after the 150,000 cubic yards of material is transferred to the Dairy Queen pit
 - An OSIT meeting will be held on 4/29 to discuss trucking material from the Wabasha Gravel Pit to the Dairy Queen pit
 - A public meeting at the Wabasha City Hall is scheduled on 5/13
- Lost Island Excavation will be a focus after Crats Island is awarded, 1,500,000 cubic yards of material needs to be removed from the island
- McMillan Island Excavation is anticipated to begin in late July or early August

- ~150,000 cubic yards of material will be hydraulically offloaded from McMillan Island to Buck creek
- Lower Pool 2 DMMP: Zach will be the Channels & Harbors lead on the project, anticipated to begin PDT meetings in the next month
- Lower Pool 4 DMMP: focusing on identifying pits in the Wabasha area to accommodate material
 - Plan to distribute a draft report this summer
 - Buffalo County passed an overlay District in effort to minimize truck traffic to 25 trips one-way
- Pool 5 DMMP: initiated, but work has been impacted by ongoing DMMP's and other projects
- Pool 6 DMMP: approximately 20 different sites were identified
 - Plan to distribute a draft report this summer
 - Homer placement site is for sale, though it isn't in an ideal location as it would require ~\$250,000 to establish a railroad crossing plus the additional expense of establishing a deceleration lane
- Both MDNR and WDNR expressed concern for keeping agencies up to speed on planning and to have them involved early in the process

Pool 2 CMS- Boulanger Bend to Lock & Dam 2 (Tom Novak)

- Presentation as attachment
- New potential alternative has been identified, increased channel maintenance with structures
 - There are some concerns with stage impacts, but the alternative currently has the highest net annual benefits
- Next steps:
 - Identify preferred alternative, spring 2015
 - Public meeting on preferred alternative, summer 2015
 - Finalize report, December 2015
 - Seek RRF endorsement, December 2015
- Channels & Harbors submitted a budget request of ~\$5,000,000 for construction funding in FY16
 - Not funded in President's budget for FY16
- Greg Genz commented that the poor channel conditions and need for change at Boulanger Bend was brought up in 2008, the Industry has suffered significantly since then and this project needs to be a high priority

Pool 2 Pigs Eye Lake, Section 204 Project (Tom Novak)

- interagency kickoff was held on 2/17
- Federal Interest Study has been completed and was sent forward to MVD for comment

Upper Mississippi River Restoration (Tom Novak)

- Presentation as attachment
- FY15 President's budget, MVP allocation is \$7.5 million
 - Obligated \$5.9 million to Harpers Slough (fully funded \$11.9 million)
- FY16 President's budget, MVP allocation is \$3.4 million

- Plan to obligate construction funds to North and Sturgeon Lakes and continue planning efforts on Conway Lake
- Three projects are currently in the planning phase
 - North and Sturgeon Lakes: planning is very difficult as three different landowners are involved and the effort is hopeful to be combined with a drawdown
 - Conway Lake: plan to complete preliminary draft DPR
 - McGregor Lake: deferred due to budget constraints
- Harpers Slough: construction began for the project

Aquatic Invasive Species (All)

- COE (Steve Clark)
 - No updates
- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)
 - Continuing monitoring efforts, boat inspection crews are getting questioned as to why they're not checking barges
- WDNR (Sara Strassman)
 - Secretary for the WDNR is in Washington D.C. today and did have some thoughts on AIS and re-engaging the National Invasive Species Act
- IDNR (Mike Griffin)
 - No updates

USAF Closure Update (Bryan Peterson)

- Lock is scheduled to close at 11:59 pm on 6/9
- Aggregate Industries is pushing to move as much commodity as possible in the waning days prior to lock closure
- COE is currently working through the logistics of actually shutting the lock down
- COE has also been contacted in regards to developing a portage route
- Kevin Baumgard has held meetings with interested parties to discuss the possibility of leaving the USAF Visitor Center open
- Staffing levels have been reduced to an appropriate level
- Olivia Dorothy asked the current status of the disposition study
 - Bryan Peterson responded that it has yet to be funded

Fish and Wildlife Workgroup Activities (Steve Clark)

- Steve Clark is now the chair of the workgroup
- FWWG met on 3/2 to discuss the Environmental Pool Plans
 - Put together a phased plan to address the Environmental Pool Plans
 - First phase of the plan is to update maps to reveal what's actually been constructed
 - Small group will evaluate what should be done to move forward
 - No plan to go back to the public or create a new copy

- Steve Tapp questioned whether there has been discussion as to the value of the Environmental Pool Plans
 - Steve Clark responded that he feels the pool plans are useful to a point, though when working on a project the plans are rarely pulled out and used as a holistic reference
 - Sara Strassman commented that they're a very useful tool to those new to the Upper Mississippi River

Workgroup Roles and Responsibilities (All)

- Discussion was tabled, to resume at the August RRF

Emergency Contact Information (All)

- Topic was added to the agenda in order to identify contacts from each organization in the event that there is an emergency dredging situation during non-duty hours
- Contact information will be distributed throughout the RRF at the August meeting

Other Topics/Issues, Due-outs (All)

- Each organization is to provide emergency contact information at the August RRF meeting
- Dan Helsel and Steve Tapp will provide sample charters to each of the workgroups, this information will be used to address the Workgroup Roles and Responsibilities topic at the August RRF meeting
- FWVG will update background information on Environmental Pool Plans and provide the update to the RRF at the August meeting
- Zach Kimmel will set up a conference call and/or OSIT meeting to discuss the specific sites of concern for erosion prevention
- Mary Stefanski will look into the possibility of reserving the FWS Minnesota Valley Visitor Center for the December RRF meeting
- Channels & Harbors Office to engage in discussions with Environmental Compliance Branch and Project Management as to how a project can move throughout the FWVG and gain RRF approval, to enable NGO's to seek out sponsorship
- FWVG will engage in discussion as to establishing a process for selecting projects to be included in the HREP list and to decide whether or not the Head of Lake Pepin project will be included
- Patrick Phenow will email the bridge list out to the RRF
- Tim Yager will provide a presentation at the August RRF to display the geo-database
- FWVG will engage in discussion as to improving forest restoration on the UMR, pertaining to both large-scale and small-scale projects
- Dan Cottrell will schedule a meeting within the next couple weeks in regards to discussing the 2014 dredging season AAR

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF