

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #96, April 23rd, 2013

Introductions (All)

- Minutes from RRF #95 were approved
- Next RRF meeting: August 20-21, Capoli Slough tour, Prairie Du Chien, WI

Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)

- June 19th at 1000 the Change of Command is taking place, Col. Price will be replaced by Col. Koprowski
- General Peabody is out of Division, replaced by Brigadier General Delukah
- Sequester impacts- work plan anticipated the end of April, no official guidance on furloughs as of yet but an exemption was signed for Civil Works
- Hiring freeze remains, currently have two survey technician vacancies so data requests may be delayed
- Our Mississippi- involved in the program that will take place at Winona State University, program offers continuing education credits for teachers

Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)

- FY14/15 has been cut by 6.8% from FY12 CRA level
- Hiring freeze remains, impacts student hires as well
- Vacancy at McGregor, Park Ranger position at Brice Prairie, and Supervisory Law Enforcement position, Supervisor for Refuges in Missouri/Iowa all on hold and won't be filled
- Working on habitat management plan (Stephen Winter is spearheading the effort)
- Goal of 500 FTE's (\$45 million) to be cut by the end of FY13

Agency Activities- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)

- Barb Naramore was hired as Assistant Commissioner this past winter
- Budgets are considerably better than they were- additional 3/8% on income tax helped
- Fish movement study this summer to determine whether or not Lock and Dam 1 passes fish
 - Sonic transmitter will be used, placing 20 tags on 8 different species, track movement above and below the lock and dam
- Tim Schlagenhaft left the DNR and is now working for the Audubon, Nick Fronhauer was hired as a replacement working out of the regional office
- Corey Hanson's supervisor will be hired soon, anticipated to be more active in the RRF
- Pool 3 Sturgeon and North Lake
 - \$1.7 million in Lessard Sams funds requested, \$3.5 million received total as of now

Agency Activities- IDNR (Mike Griffin)

- Odessa HREP project was near completion and a levee broke, working on fixing the levee
- Permitting process anticipated to be the same, Griffin will continue to write the dredging permits
- Working on EMP projects, Capoli Slough and Harpers
- Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, 3/8% increase in sales tax added to fund

Agency Activities- IWLA (Olivia Dorothy)

- WRDA Bill
 - Working to include an expansion of geographic authority for EMP in bill
 - Grants COE the authority to set deadlines for agency reviews
- Senate floor vote will likely take place early May
- Appropriations committee has some concerns with the bill
- FY14 President's budget includes full funding for EMP

Agency Activities- Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (Rylee Main)

- Focusing on reduction of sediment transport from MN River into Lake Pepin
 - Evaluating increased flows in MN River

Agency Activities- UMWA (Greg Genz)

- Northbound movement is heavy, while there is little traffic to the south due to lock closures
- Lock and Dam 17 peaked yesterday
- Currently a lot of ethanol being used- 30-40% of corn crop is going to ethanol, impacting the tonnage somewhat
- Industry is proposing to increase the fuel tax from 20% to 29%
- Senator Durbin is trying to put a bill together regarding private/public partnerships regarding COE projects

Agency Activities- MnDOT (Dick Lambert)

- State of MN went through similar situation to current sequester
 - Pushed early retirements and avoided backfill in order to reduce staff by 9%
- Ports and Waterways Study
 - Concerned about diverting traffic off of the river
 - Focus is to increase commerce on waterways and rail with bigger populations and increased product demand
 - Completion of study on transport extended from June 2013 to August/September 2013

Agency Activities- WDOT (Sheri Walz)

- New ferry boat program- Casseville Ferry will be receiving ~\$20K per year in FHA funding
- ~\$12 million for harbor assistance program grants anticipated

Agency Activities- EPA (Larry Shepard)

- Ended up with ten sequester days over two phases
- Keystone / Xcel pipeline out of Canada remains a big issue
 - EPA sent out a letter requesting additional information
- Anticipating FY14 will look much like the FY13 sequestration process

Agency Activities- WDNR (Jim Fischer)

- Emphasis the last couple of years has been on streamlining the permitting process
 - Certain processes have gone online now
- Continue to work with UMRBA on water quality standards
- Working with the Central Office on statewide nutrient reduction strategies
- 2013 is the Year of Panfish throughout the State
- John Nelson vacancy will be filled with a six month temporary position
- There are 15 wildlife biologists to hire throughout the State
- Filled the Mississippi River Planning position with Sara Strassman
 - Targeting May 20th as a start date

Agency Activities- LMRWD (Terry Schwalbe)

- Managers recently approved the Dredged Material Site Management Plan
- Looking into planning and acquisition of the Air Force Site
 - FWS is proposing a trail in that vicinity, which may impact the use of the site
- Obtained \$4 million for the development of a new site or improving existing site at Cargill East River
- Attended a seminar in Louisville on the beneficial use of dredged material
 - Common problem of not being able to find an end use for the material

Agency Hierarchy and Explanation (All)

- Handouts were distributed to the River Resources Forum as attachments to the minutes
- RRF determined it is beneficial to provide this update annually

Environmental Management Program (Tom Novak)

- Agreed that it would be beneficial for the FWWG to discuss re-prioritizing EMP projects
- \$4.5 million for FY13 budget- likely the highest dollar amount in the budget thus far
- McHugh / Brennan plan to finish Stage 2 of Capoli Slough this fall
- Projects in planning queue:
 - Harpers- plan to obtain costs of alternatives by the 2nd week of May
 - Hoping to complete some construction in FY14
 - North and Sturgeon Lake- North Lake is on Federal Land / Sturgeon Lake is on State land, which makes the planning component more difficult

- Project will be Federally funded, but an agency still needs to commit to the O&M upon construction completion
- Lock and Dam 3 Fish Passage
 - Preliminary draft study is on the shelf
 - Tentatively selected plan is the intermediate island, still needs a sponsor
 - Wrote a letter to the WDNR asking if they wanted to be a partner
- Conway Lake, Lake Winneshiek, McGregor Lake are also in the queue
- Tom Novak will work on developing a project matrix which reveals where there are opportunities to work with other funding sources in order to be more economical

Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)

- Held WLMTF meetings in January and in March
- Ruth Nissen completed the summary report for Pools 5, 6, and 8
- Two synthesis papers under progress: one on policy planning and process, and one is a biotic and abiotic response paper
- Gretchen Benjamin secured \$100,000 from the Ann Ray charitable trust for the Pool 3 drawdown
- Tim Schlagenhaft applied for funds before leaving MDNR of the \$2.8 million available in Lessard Sams funds for the Pool 3 drawdown
- Public meetings have been postponed until fall
- Potential drawdown in 2016, discussed the potential of looking into other pools and waiting on Pool 3

Agency Update on Asian Carp (All)

- COE (Elliott Stefanik)
 - MDNR is looking into possible options for a barrier at Lock and Dam 1
 - They plan to come back to the COE with a more refined plan for consideration
- WDNR (Jim Fischer)
 - Ron Benjamin continues to work on promoting funding for a national plan
 - Also working on setting up an Aquatic Invasive Strike Force
 - Commented that until we evaluate the effectiveness of barriers we need to look forward or take a different approach to controlling invasives
- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)
 - 1 Silver Carp and 4 Grass Carp were caught in Pool 6 since the last meeting
 - All Grass Carp were diploid
 - Tim Schlagenhaft has been replaced by Nick Franhauer as the Asian Carp point of contact
 - Working on a fish passage study at Lock and Dam 1
- IDNR (Mike Griffin)

- Barrier was placed on the Iowa Great Lakes (electrical barrier) though some fish did get in after the flood
- Haven't had any Black Carp as of yet, but have had Silver Carp and Bighead Carp in all pools
- Greg Genz questioned whether the State had thought about trying to fish them out commercially
 - IA has not, MN has considered it if populations increase
- FWS (Tim Yager)
 - New fish research lab in Lacrosse had its grand opening, good eDNA resource
 - Jim Fischer commented that funding for eDNA testing is now available for the Great Lakes, but not on the Mississippi River
 - Dan Dieterman commented that we need to learn more about where big populations are located

UMR Systemic Forest Stewardship Plan Endorsement

- IA motioned, WI second, endorsed by consensus
- Agreed to have RRF send a letter of endorsement to RRCT and RRAT

Channel Maintenance Program Activities

- \$3 million has been taken out of MVP channel maintenance budget due to the pinnacle blasting in St. Louis
 - May not have to take the full hit, awaiting final guidance
- All dredging projects now need to be approved by MVD
- McMillan Island- partial excavation planned for approximately 40,000 cubic yards going to Essman Island
 - \$250,000 is allocated for this effort
- Lower Boulanger partial excavation- fines are needed to cap the material (~30,000 cy) on Grey Cloud Island
- FRAC- Superior Sands is still looking into options for moving material out of the Wabasha Gravel Pit
 - They're working on developing a road through the site
- Grand Encampment- PDT is currently working on the Plans and Specs for a "make it go away" contract
 - Contract will not identify an end site for the material
 - COE position is that the Federal action for the NEPA process ends once the material is off the site
 - Plan to meet on site May 6th to identify work limits and methods of dealing with vegetation
 - Solicitation- June, bid opening- August, Award- September
 - Mary Stefanski commented that she would like to ensure the berm is closed upon completion

- Zach Kimmel confirmed that is a contract requirement
- Dredging review
 - MN River- didn't dredge last year, likely needed this year
 - Upper Pool and Pool 1 will likely need to be dredged, there is most always material to dredge in Pool 1
 - Intermediate Pool – still working on the EA
 - Lower Pool 2- Boulanger Bend and Freeborn are always concerns – didn't dredge Freeborn last year
 - Pool 3, Trenton- still working on the EA
 - Lower Pool 4, Pool 5, and Pool 5A- anticipated to have material as always
 - Pool 9, Lansing Upper Light- avoided last year, will likely have to dredge this year
- CMMP- expect to provide updates in the near future, will distribute to the RRF upon completion

Fish & Wildlife Work Group (Elliott Stefanik)

- Plan to schedule a meeting prior to the next RRF meeting, likely late May or early June
- FWWG was tasked with referencing Tom Novak's matrix to prioritize HREP projects

Pool 2 CMS- Boulanger Bend to Lock and Dam 2 (Steve Tapp)

- Currently working on the EA and DPR
- Currently working on design for in water placement on Grey Cloud Island
 - Need to collaborate with the landowner and agencies regarding the plan
- Draft DPR went out today
- State is planning on completing the EAW
- Draft DPR is anticipated to go to the public in June
- Public meetings, final DPR, EA, FONSI anticipated in July
- RRF endorsement sought in August
- Hope to award multi-year contract pending funding in September
- Project remains a high priority throughout the District and it may delay other projects

Navigation Work Group (Dick Lambert)

- Handout was distributed identifying bridge updates, is an attachment to the minutes
- Dan Cottrell will take over as Channels & Harbors representative on the Navigation Work Group
- There were discussions of shutting down the river in unsafe circumstances

Management Opportunities at Tributary Deltas (Rich King)

- PowerPoint presentation completed, is an attachment to the minutes
- Discussion of different opportunities to restore components of the National Wildlife Refuge System
- Potential opportunities:
 - Mill Creek, WI

- Gasner Hollow, Ready Hollow, and Glass Hollow, WI
- Hog Hollow and Potosi Point, WI
- Maquoketa River, IA
- Upper Iowa River potential
 - Question was proposed as to how to move forward with the permitting process
 - Currently a COE flood control project, still under COE authorization
 - Project will likely need to be de-authorized in order to take any action as far as breaching levees for environmental restoration
 - RRF decided it would be beneficial to determine the steps it would take to complete said environmental restoration at the Upper Iowa River
 - It was recommended to task the FWWG with spearheading this effort
 - Steve Tapp agreed to discuss the potential of de-authorizing the flood Control Project with Dana Warner
- Efforts may have a positive impact on navigation as more material may be trapped in tributaries as opposed to reaching the main channel

Recreation Work Group (Kevin Berg)

- Tim Yager will take over as the Chair of the Recreation Work Group
- Pool 7 and Pool 8 beach planning effort is being led by Kendra Niemec, FWS, Deputy District Manager for the Lacrosse District
- Recreation Work Group plans to meet again May 2nd to further discuss Pool 7 and Pool 8 beach planning efforts

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF