

CEMVP-CO-MR

06 December 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR Record

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #56, 30 November and 01 December 1999.

1. Introductions / Approve Minutes – A meeting of the RRF was held on 30 November and 01 December 1999 in the Kellogg Room of the Radisson Hotel in St. Paul, MN. Attached is an attendance list. *Following introductions, the Forum approved Minutes from Meeting #55 with the following correction: sentence rewritten under item #5 to read “No significant zebra mussels found.”*
2. Navigation Work Group (NWG) – USCG – Scott Bates. Prior to this forum, the NWG distributed the *Railroad Trackbed Erosion* Position Paper (RRF#56–1) for review. The paper covers in detail the issue, background, and a brief discussion of the Railroad Trackbed issue. NOTE: If anyone has further comments on the Position Paper, please get them to Paul Machajewski. Scott gave thanks to the railroad companies (especially BNSF) and the COE for their help on this issue. Dean Peterson thanked the NWG for the good work on this issue/paper.

Cliff Inmon of BNSF was present and expressed BNSF’s desire to have the “should’s” changed to “must’s” in #’s 2, 5, 9, and 10 of the Recommended Risk Reduction Measures of the position paper. BNSF feels that this will help to reduce the chances of derailments caused by towboat washouts of the railroad trackbeds.

The critical locations list is an evolving list which was originally prioritized, however it is recognized that this list will be forever changing. Locations 9 & 10 were recently added due to concerns raised by BNSF.

The main factors causing the erosion problems have been identified as environmental (wind, wave, and current) and tow and railroad practices (operations and maintenance).

The following are general comments made about the issue:

This is a national issue driven by economics – Rick Fricke. We need to focus on what we can do and not what we can’t – Dick Lambert. If/when we get all of the key players together, we need to hold it as a workshop/info meeting, not a boxing match – Ellen Fisher.

Mooring buoys were brought up as a potential solution to the erosion problem. Dan Krumholz explained that the buoys are not intended to solve this problem; they are intended to minimize congestion, save fuel...etc. They may however, provide some secondary erosion prevention attributes.

The following items require further action:

 - A) Add annual reports from the railroad to #10 of the Recommended Risk Reduction Measures. Looking for voluntary reporting but could pursue legislative requirement.

B) The COE's Real Estate office (Bill Vennemann) will review the flood easement between the COE and the railroads. Looking for potential Federal funding sources for repairs/maintenance. Bill is also looking into past compensation to the railroads for navigation project impacts.

C) The COE will also investigate the possibility of using the 1135 program for funding sources.

D) The COE, USCG, FRA, and Minnesota & Wisconsin DOT's will sponsor a workshop/info meeting on 27 January 2000. This workshop will be an opportunity for the NWG to present this issue to the Towing and Railroad industries.

3. Agency Activities - NOTE: only the agencies listed below had significant information to report.

MDNR – Steve Johnson – The COE's dredging permit will be renewed before it expires.

MDOT – Dick Lambert – Working with tow industry on mooring buoy site locations and agency agreement on those locations. Would like to have site selected prior to buoy arrival.

FWS – Jim Fisher – Working on Pool 3 HREP and Pool 8 Phase 3. Record number of waterfowl in refuge. Rehabilitating boat ramps.

NPS – JoAnn Kyril – There is a mechanism for funding in current legislation to keep proceeds from sales.

MWBAC – Jim Harrison – Budget has passed both states through June 2001. Working on Nav. Study and Pool 8 Drawdown.

USCG – Scott Bates – Worked on Hurricane Floyd Flood fight; Koch Refinery tabletop discussion, Pool 2 boom strategy training. Big changes coming in Coast Guard licensing.

L&S Marine – Greg Gentz – Hopefully, we'll have a disposal site on the MN River soon.

COE – Dean Peterson – L/D #5A will be shut-down on 01 December thru March 2000 for electrical repairs. L/D #1 will be dewatered this winter (01 December thru March 2000). May set up a site visit in Jan/Feb for RRF members. Mike Knoff is the new chief of Hydraulics.

4. Weaver Bottoms Report – Eric Nelson (FWS). Reviewed handout (RRF#56-2). Presentation, questions, and answers.

WDNR would like to have public input (meeting) before RRF endorsement; report at April RRF and possible endorsement at August RRF.

MWBAC will sponsor a public meeting for the Weaver Bottoms Report on 10 February 2000.

The Task Force was perpetuated. FWS is chair (Eric Nelson). Eric will draft a new Resource Analysis Plan (RAP) & Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the RRF to review. Eric will also send letters to all agencies confirming Task Force members.

5. River Mechanics Workshop Review – Jon Hendrickson (COE). Reviewed handout (RRF#56-3). A 2nd Workshop is scheduled for 21 January 2000 at the Red Wing/Winona Technical College, Winona Campus. Register with Jon by 17 December 1999.

6. FWWG – Rick Fricthe (FWS). As a result of the August RRF meeting, the work group will be developing and EMP II list. This list will be a modification of the existing list. The Habitat Needs Assessment (HNA) will not be available for use until mid 2000 (the HNA is a tool to select habitat projects). In the mean time, the work group will use the current matrix to select projects. The work group will also develop a ranking system. The next FWWG meeting will be held in January 2000.

7. RWG – Dick Otto (COE).
Rec. Boating Study: The study went well; nice job by St. Mary's being flexible (rescheduling flights) and thanks to Jim Harrison. Report is written, should be out after 09 Dec. Conducting trend and statistical analysis. Will do a mini boat study during the Pool 8 Drawdown (cover Pool 7 & 9 too).
Beach Plans update: The Rec. Boating Study will be heavily used for these. The RWG will prioritize the current list of Pools needing study for the next RRF. Pool 2: Combining comments; looking for April 2000 RRF Endorsement. Pools 7 & 8: Updating plan; will hold public meeting summer 2000. Pools 9 & 10: Public issues in Pool 9.

8. EMP – Don Powell (COE). Reviewed handouts (RRF#56-4 & 5).
Budget: FY00 funds will cover projects; could get more \$ if needed. May possibly contract out the completion reports.

9. WLMTF – Gary Palesh (COE) & Gretchen Benjamin (WDNR). Reviewed handout (FFR#56-6).
Drawdown: Ready to go. Received approval from COE Division office to deviate from Pool 8 Operating Plan. It was emphasized that the Corps approval is only for this demonstration project and that local sponsors would be needed for future drawdowns involving recreational dredging and increased O&M costs. Recreational access dredging has also been approved; currently contacting groups; hoping to award contract in Mar/Apr/May. Completing EA permit applications.
Winter Operations: The RRF proposes that the COE evaluate changing the operating manual for winter operations; plan for RRF Endorsement at April 2000 RRF. The Corps will evaluate operational impacts prior to that meeting.
Pool 5 Water Level Mgmt: The COE has expressed reservations to a drawdown in Pool 5 due to excessive dredging (worse case scenario).
Peck Lake: Drawdown went very well; lots of growth, tremendous response.

10. CMP – Dan Krumholz, Gary Palesh, & Don Powell (COE). Reviewed handouts (RRF#56-7, 8, 9A & 9B).

MN River DMMP: Steve Tapp (COE) gave a presentation on the status of the MN River DMMP. Q&A session.

Pool 8, Island 116: *The RRF Endorsed by Consensus the Pool 8, Island 116 Channel Closure & Shoreline Protection project.*

Diamond Bluff: Dean, Dan, & Gretchen made a site visit to inspect the pile and determined that it is stable; the material in the dry-wash slipped there during the original placement work. They did however, suggest that the silt fence be replaced and extended, and that material be removed more aggressively.

11. L/D 3 Embankment – Gary Palesh (COE). Reviewed handout (RRF#56-10).

Held interagency meeting to discuss project; much opposition.

12. HydroPower Discussion – Terry Moe (WDNR). Reviewed handout (RRF#56-11).

The RRF will keep an eye on this situation; there are many issues that come into play. Each agency will give brief updates at the April 2000 RRF. The COE's HydroPower poc is John Blackstone. MPCA's poc is Judy Mader.

13. Other Business & Topics Discussed.

Regional Dredging Team – Dan Krumholz (COE). Gretchen Benjamin, Dennis Cin, and Dan attended a meeting in September, 1999. This is NOT a formalized team; it is more of an educational gathering of the major players on the river. Many topics and issues were discussed. The team will be meeting again in March, 2000 in New Orleans; will attend a demonstration of wetland construction using a dustpan dredge.

14. Next RRF Meetings:

April 25, 2000 Winona Area

August 29 – 30, 2000 La Crosse Area (Pool 8 Drawdown site visit).

December 5 – 6, 2000 Bloomington FWS Refuge

Dean Peterson
Co-Chairman, RRF