Water Level Management Update

Volume 6, Issue 1

January 2003

Water Level Management Task Force Takes the Next Steps

Although the formal evaluation of the drawdown of Pool 8, near La Crosse WI, is not yet complete, it has been judged successful. Therefore the Water Level Management Task Force (WLMTF) has been looking at where and to what extent, other water level reductions can be done.

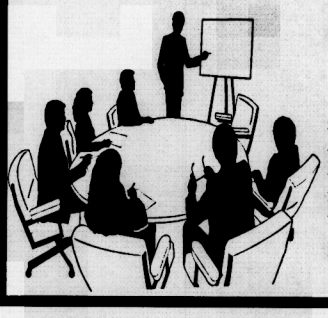
At the Mid-December WLMTF meeting it was decided to further investigate "minor drawdowns" for Pools 6 and 9, meaning a water level reduction at the dam of 1-foot or less. Originally ten pools were screened for their potential for a minor drawdown. Pools 6 and 9 ranked the highest because they will require little to no dredging to maintain commercial navigation and there will be a benefit to the habitat in the lower portion of both of those pools. (See details on page 2.)

The next phase will include examination of other recreational and commercial navigation impacts that may result from a 1-foot drawdown. Equally important, public meetings have been scheduled to provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments on these two projects. (More meeting information on this page.) If you cannot attend the meeting, please contact one of the people on the back of this newsletter with any comments or concerns.

If the results from this phase are within the acceptable limits and other necessary preparations are completed by late spring, one or both of these pools may be drawn down this summer.

The task force also decided that Pool 5 will be further evaluated as the preferred site for the next major drawdown, with a 1 to 4-foot drawdown being considered. The investigation will build on an assortment of data that has already been collected for that pool. (See details on Page 2.) In addition, the task force decided that Pools 5a, 6, and 9 would be evaluated to determine the implications of conducting a major drawdown on those pools. This will provide alternatives if implementation of the drawdown in Pool 5 has to be delayed for an extended period of time.

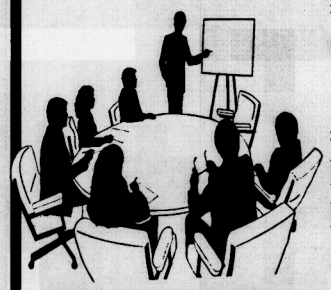
Pool 9 Minor Drawdown
Public Meeting
February 6, 2003
Lansing Community Center
Lansing, IA



⇒ **6-7 p.m.**
Open House

⇒ **7-9 p.m.**
Formal Presentation and Discussion

Pool 6 Minor Drawdown
Public Meeting
February 12, 2003
Winona State University
Kryzsko Commons, East Hall



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Next Steps for a Major Drawdown

A major drawdown is being considered for Pool 5, similar to the drawdown conducted in Pool 8 during the summers of 2001 and 2002. During the evaluation phase for the Pool 8 drawdown, a 1 to 3-foot reduction at the dam was considered. The 1.5-foot option was selected as the best alternative and was subsequently implemented during the summers of 2001 and 2002.

For Pool 5, a drawdown ranging from 1 to 4-feet at Lock and Dam 5 is being evaluated. Since drawdown effects gradually decrease moving upstream, the drawdown at the upper end of Pool 5 (near Alma, WI) would range from 0.6 to 1.8 feet. Drawdowns of this magnitude will have the following effects:

- Require additional dredging to maintain the navigation channel.
- Expose substantial portions of river bottom for emergent aquatic plant colonization (1,000 to 4,000 acres).
- Impact other river use to some degree such as recreational boating.

All of these and a number of other factors will be considered in making a decision concerning a drawdown in Pool 5. The first series of public meetings addressing a Pool 5 drawdown can be expected in April or May 2003. The task force will soon update the website (www.mvp.usace.army.mil keyword – drawdown) so you can access current information about Pool 5. If you would like to be involved in the Pool 5 drawdown study please contact Tim Schlagenhaft using the information on the back of this newsletter.

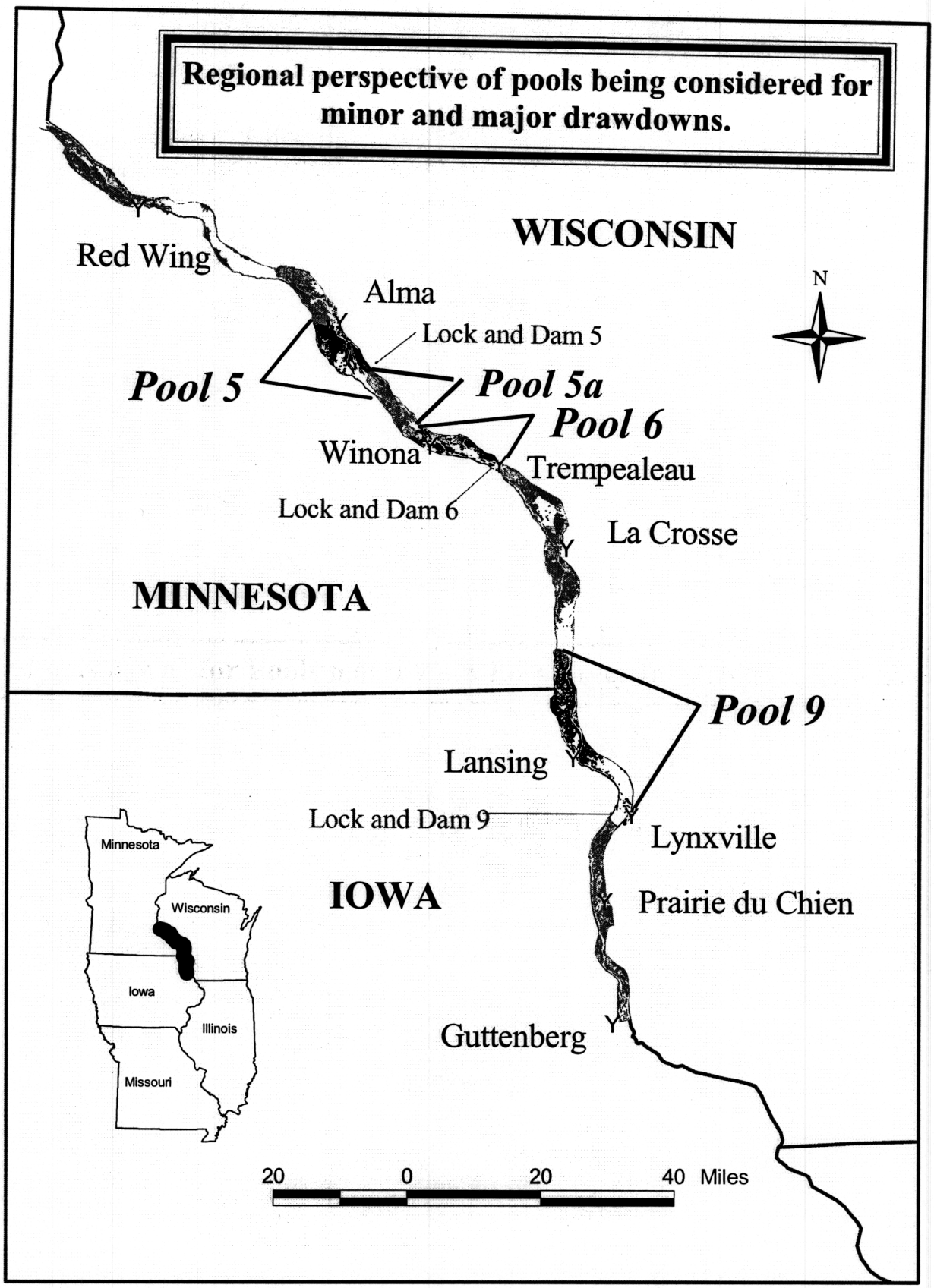
The earliest a Pool 5 drawdown could be implemented is the summer of 2004, but it is more likely to occur in 2005 when it is a potential budget item for the Corps of Engineers.

Minor Drawdowns for Pools 6 and 9 – A Possibility for this Summer

The type of drawdown being considered for Pools 6 and 9 is referred to as a "minor drawdown" whereby the water level at the dam will be reduced 1 foot or less. The effects of this limited water level reduction would only be evident just above the dam. This is because the effects of a drawdown gradually decrease upstream from the dam due to the slope of the pool. Consequently, the reduction at the upper end of these pools will be a few tenths of a foot or none at all.

During the initial investigation the task force determined that additional dredging to maintain depths in the navigation channel for commercial transportation would be minimal, if necessary at all. The next phase of the investigation will be to determine if other recreational or commercial facilities will be impacted by a minor drawdown. Public meetings, to discuss the possibility of a minor drawdown of these pools is also an important component of this phase. If the results are favorable these drawdowns could be implemented as soon as the summer of 2003.

Since the drawdowns would be limited in scale, the areas of riverbed exposed for colonization by emergent aquatic vegetation would also be limited. Therefore the primary purpose of implementing these drawdowns in Pools 6 and 9 is to assess what habitat benefits can be achieved with these small scale efforts, with little or no cost, and minimal effects on other river uses.


Regional perspective of pools being considered for minor and major drawdowns.
WISCONSIN
Red Wing
Alma
Lock and Dam 5
N
Pool 5
Pool 5a
Pool 6
Winona
Trempealeau
Lock and Dam 6
La Crosse
MINNESOTA
Pool 9
Lansing
Lock and Dam 9
Lynxville
IOWA
Prairie du Chien
Guttenberg
Minnesota
Wisconsin
Iowa
Illinois
Missouri
20
0
20
40 Miles

Water Level Management Update
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