FWWG – HREP Selection process and workshop/discussion/brainstorming.

Meeting Recap from June 17, 2019

Please Note – this is not meant to be formal meeting minutes, nor does it try to capture all details of our discussion.   I'm hoping to capture the major topics and ideas we discussed, and more importantly, boil our discussion down to a logical path forward. I welcome any input, corrections, or additions. I especially would appreciate input on anything in blue text.

Review of UMRR HREP Selection Process FY 20-25 guidance documents from the Program Planning Team (PPT). Those involved in this process should be familiar with contents of these documents. Members of the PPT will be able to answer questions, provide additional clarification, etc.

1. Specifically discussed:
    a. District River Teams (DRTs) are being asked to develop 3-5 new HREP Fact Sheets for FY 20-25.
    b. For FWWG, we would like to complete this task by late October or very early November, so that we can provide our prioritized Fact Sheets 30 days before the River Resources Forum meeting in December. Chair's note – after discussing with a few people, we may have a little more flexibility on this timeline. However, for the time being I plan to stick to this deadline and keep us moving as best we can.
    c. We are expected to include HNA-II Indicators in our HREP development, prioritization, and selection. There is flexibility at the DRT level on how we approach this, but we will also be looking at what other teams do and try to achieve some consistency for the program.
    d. We are expected to invite candidate cost-sharing nonprofit organizations to consider submitting an HREP proposal.
        i. We are fortunate to have long standing involvement from Audubon, TNC and Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance in the FWWG, however the guidance suggests we should do more outreach
        ii. We had a lot of discussion on this, but did not develop a specific plan to address this guidance.
        iii. Chair's suggestions:
            1. If FWWG members know of a potential project sponsor that should receive the letter and information – please provide me the necessary information and I will get it sent (see letter template that came with guidance docs). I'll suggest deadline of July 15 for FWWG members to get contact info to me?

Review FWWG rankings of HNA-II indicators

1. Total of 12 indicators under 3 themes – Connectivity, Diversity & Resilience, and Controlling Variables (slow feedback)
    a. Both FWWG and the partnership as a whole considered the Diversity & Resilience indicators to be most important. These are: Aquatic Functional Classes 1 & 2, Aquatic Vegetation Diversity, Floodplain Vegetation Diversity, and Floodplain Functional Class

2. Composite FWWG rankings for the High priority indicators for the Upper Impounded Cluster as follows (From Table 3.1 of HNA-II report)
    a. Aquatic Vegetation (light green) – existing condition near desired condition, may merit action to maintain.
    b. Floodplain Vegetation (yellow) – existing conditions is near your defined desired condition, but may merit actions to maintain or improve conditions.
    c. Floodplain Functional Class (orange) – existing condition deviates from desired, and may merit action to improve.
    d. Aquatic Functional Classes 1 & 2 (orange) – existing condition deviates from desired, and may merit action to improve.
3. Tables 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 in the HNA-II report summarize composite FWWG rankings at the Pool scale.
4. For some indicators, there was substantial differences of opinion among FWWG agencies (see HNA-II Appendix pages A2 – A4)

Chair's note – sections below are not in order of our actual discussion, as we did circle around on some of these several times. Just trying to pull some of the key thoughts and ideas together.

Discussion of how FWWG can incorporate HNA-II to identify important restoration needs, select efforts that have the best chance of "moving the needle" for a particular indicator, and how to develop a decision-making process that will be effective in the future.   Our challenge now is to use HNA-II information to direct/prioritize restoration efforts. A few of the thoughts/ideas that came up in our discussion included:

1. Isn't the UMRR-CC and larger partnership wanting us to really try to develop "a new generation of HREPs" and wanting us to use HNA-II to rethink how we approach restoration efforts?
2. Can we model or project how much a particular project might affect an indicator within a Pool? Generally no – but could do an exercise for some indicators that would plug in multiple projects and see how many it would take to have measurable change.
3. Must keep in mind that restoration activities for one indicator could negatively influence others – can get back to agency priorities, etc.
4. Having a discussion about the "big picture" restoration goals and using HNA-II indicators as guidance is worth doing – but when in that process should we acknowledge "administrative" or other limitations that exist in the program?   One example is Pool 3 - which is "red" for numerous indicators, but right now there is not a viable project sponsor.
    a. Even if there are known limitations to implementing an HREP – we should still flesh out those ideas, as they will help identify programmatic or policy changes that are needed.
5. Still quite a few questions about "scale" of indicators and how to relate them into HREP development.
    a. There is lots of expertise and resources available. This is going to be an ongoing and learning process.
    b. HNA-II does give us some "common language" to use in our restoration efforts.

How should we proceed in meeting both the deadline for 3-5 new Fact Sheets and develop a process that incorporates guidance from the PPT to effectively use HNA-II indicators in our selection and development of HREPs.

Several Ideas were brought up for consideration:

1. Mirror a process that was used in the "Environmental Pool Plans" developed in 2004 by FWWG and RRF.
   a. Form two teams around the FWWG high priority indicators. Essentially focus one team on aquatic indicators (Aq. Classes 1 & 2, Aq. Veg. Diversity) and one on more terrestrial indicators (Floodplain Veg. Diversity and Floodplain Functional Class)
   b. Each team would have a "champion" that would work with FWWG partners to develop one HREP fact sheet.
   c. Would result in two fact sheets to meet short term needs, but potentially develop a process that could be used in the future for other indicators.
   d. Would potentially allow more time and resources to incorporate additional GIS analysis, decision support information, etc. into developing two projects – rather than spreading that effort over multiple project ideas
   e. Could develop a pool or reach scale plan (e.g. floodplain forest) that has multiple projects nested >> which could then be used for future requests for new projects.

2. A hybrid version of above was discussed – take the same kind of approach, but have three teams that are focused by Refuge District.
   a. Some support for this idea, as there are already many project ideas in each District that could be further developed in this process
   b. Most HREPs in the upper impounded reach will likely be on refuge land, so logical place to focus discussion
   c. Some concerns that states would not be able to participate on multiple teams
   d. Also, there are some project ideas that could overlap between Districts

3. Start with a formal Structured Decision Making (SDM) process.
   a. Identify and agree on larger restoration goals, in context of HNA-II, and priorities <u>before</u> getting to project scale or discussing project ideas.
   b. Address agency priorities and potential conflicts.
   c. Identify program constraints
   d. Discuss the trade-offs that might exist between HNA-II, agency priorities, administrative constraints, etc.
   e. Use the process to develop a set of criteria that all agencies can use to evaluate and rank proposals. This criteria could then inform the development of project ideas, e.g. people wouldn't waste time developing a project if it was clear that it would not fit the established criteria

4. Start with the wealth of project ideas that are already out there.
   a. Compile all project ideas
      i. Develop a simple method or spreadsheet that can be populated with enough detail to communicate the intent of the project.
      ii. List of ideas could include those described in No. 1 (Aquatic-themed, Terrestrial-themed) and No. 2 (previous fact sheet ideas).
   b. Need to explicitly consider HNA-II indicators in the project ideas.

      c. Use a structured process, possibly even SDM, to narrow down the list to a number of projects that would go into Fact Sheet development.

      d. The narrowing down process would be an opportunity to discuss and reach agreement on larger restoration goals, how projects mesh with HNA-II, etc.

      e. Project ideas will be narrowed down to a workable number that will then be developed into Fact Sheets. Fact Sheet development will be done collaboratively.

      f. Completed Fact Sheets will be discussed by FWWG and ranked/prioritized.

5. Follow a process similar to the last HREP Fact Sheet process
   a. Work collaboratively to develop Fact Sheets that are fully fleshed out
   b. Have each agency (or champion of a project) present 1 or 2 HREP Fact Sheets to FWWG
   c. Rank projects and submit 3-5 to RRF for endorsement
   d. In other words – like we did last time.

While we did not conclusively settle on a process, there appeared to be the most energy behind a combination of 3 and 4 above.

      a. We discussed the option of having a smaller group of people being tasked with the next step in the process. Once that process is outlined, each agency would decide how to be best represented.

      b. We discussed a goal of late July for the next meeting.

      c. This approach appears to be consistent with guidance received from the PPT.

      d. We did not specifically discuss how to involve our NGO partners in this process.

Chair's suggestion – if there is no strong opposition, I will start working with Angela Deen, Megan McGuire, Andrew Stephenson, and FWWG voting members to outline a process similar to what is described in No. 4 above <u>and</u> we plan to use Structured Decision Making at all steps of that process. Our goal would be to have a draft outline of that process in a couple of weeks.

Attendance

Elliot Stefanik	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Angela Deen	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jon Hendrickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Steve Clark	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Megan McGuire	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP [on the phone]
Heidi Keuler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Winter	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Brandon Jones	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Cheryl Groom	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sharonne Baylor	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Erin Adams	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jenny Froehly	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tim Miller	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mary Stefanski	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Rebecca Neely	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Teresa Newton	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jeff Houser	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Kristen Bouska	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Nate De Jager	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Kirk Hansen	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Neil Rude	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Dan Dieterman	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Stauffer	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Jordan Weeks	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Kurt Rasmussen	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Jeff Janvrin	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources [on the phone]
Andrew Stephenson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association