

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #103, August 18-19, 2015

*Introductions (All)*

- Minutes from RRF #102: endorsed by consensus as written
- Upcoming RRF Meetings:
  - December 1-2: Bloomington, MN at the FWS Regional Office

*Agency Activities- WDNR (Dan Helsel)*

- Ron Benjamin is no longer with the agency
- Sara Strassman is on maternity leave

*Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)*

- Dusty Hoffman has been permanently placed at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge
- Winona District: Michelle Barrett replaced Lisa Reid
- La Crosse District: Tim Miller is the new Refuge Manager, replacing Jim Nissen
  - Hallie Rasmussen will be filling the Visitor Services position previously held by Paula Ogden-Muse
- McGregor District: Wendy Woyczik is the new Deputy Refuge Manager, replacing Clyde Male
  - Lisa Maas left McGregor District for a job in Alaska, will be temporarily replaced by Amber Rogers
- Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell recently visited the FWS Visitor Center in La Crosse and toured Lake Onalaska
- Commercial waterfowl hunting guide program has been updated
- Bowfishing tournament was held last weekend, public has expressed concerns/displeasure with nighttime use of airboats by tournament participants
- Will be reviewing Compatibility Determinations which were developed as part of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan.
  - CCP will be 10 years old in 2016, most of the Compatibility Determinations required a 10-year review

*Agency Activities- Audubon (Tim Schlagenhaft)*

- Cooperative Forester position is currently vacant
  - Employee fulfilling the position was hired by the Corps of Engineers' Recreation and Natural Resources office out of La Crescent
  - Hoping to fill the position within the next couple months

*Agency Activities- LPLA (Rylee Main)*

- Working with the WDNR Wildlife Manager on a Master Plan for Pierce County islands
- Head of Lake Pepin Project
  - Continuing to work on the PAR
  - Community engagement is ongoing
- Currently looking into fundraising opportunities if the project is to move forward

*Agency Activities- IDNR (Mike Griffin)*

- Bernie Schaunhoff, Fisheries Biologist, has retired

*Agency Activities- MnDOT (Patrick Phenow)*

- No updates

*Agency Activities- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)*

- Weaver Bottoms EAW is out for public review
- There was a large fish kill in Lake Pepin early July (Lake Sturgeon)
  - Most is believed to be caused by commercial gill netting
- Worked with WDNR to temporarily ban commercial gill netting to investigate
- Been involved in spill response planning for Pools 5, 5A, and 6

*Agency Activities- MPCA (Emily Schnick)*

- No longer a full-time compliance representative, Chandi McCracken has been reassigned
  - Contact Ken Moon for compliance questions
- Water quality funding has decreased

*Agency Activities- American Rivers (Olivia Dorothy)*

- Potential for a Mississippi River gorge revival if USAF Lock and the Ford Plant close down
  - Enough funding is available to remove the lock and Ford Plant and restore the gorge, currently determining whether this is a viable option
  - A forum will be held (tentatively) on 11/10 at the U of MN campus
  - First step is a disposition study which will look into potential de-authorization

*Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)*

- Steve Tapp has returned to usual role of Channels & Harbors Operations Manager
- Jake Bernhardt has been hired as the Physical Support Branch Operations Manager
- The Locks & Dams Operations Manager position is now open
- Dan Cottrell is fulfilling a 6 month detail with the St. Louis District, working at the National Great Rivers Museum
  - Zach Kimmel and Brandon Olson will be backfilling Dan's duties
- Chief of Engineers, General Bostick, is visiting the St. Paul District 1-2 September

- Lock 9 will be de-watered for winter maintenance this winter
- Clean Water Act: jurisdiction pertaining to “waters of the U.S.” ruling will possibly have some impact on COE Regulatory Office as a whole, but impacts aren’t anticipated in the channel maintenance program

*Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)*

- WLMTF handout as attachment
- WLMTF continues to update their Facebook page and continue exposure, 284 likes so far
- White paper: Tom Novak, Randy Urich, Zach Kimmel, Steve Clark, and Jon Hendrickson hope to complete the first draft by 10/1
- Pool 3 drawdown: brochure was sent out to 25-30 stakeholders
  - Public meetings will be held on 9/9 in Red Wing and 9/16 in Prescott
    - Mike Kennedy and Gretchen Benjamin will lead the charge to establish a Citizen’s Committee
- Kevin Kenow’s group is now beginning vegetation sampling in Pool 5
- Steve Tapp questioned whether proper criteria for pursuing a drawdown would be included in the White Paper
  - Per Jon Hendrickson, there’s no guarantee that answer will be included in the white Paper because it’s a complex answer that we’re struggling to find
  - Steve also questioned what criteria would be required to pursue a drawdown
  - Tim Schlagenhaft stated that instead of the “90 day rule,” the WLMTF is trying to approach drawdowns with a different mentality in managing the natural variability in low-water conditions
  - Jon Hendrickson stated that from a hydrological standpoint, we should consider which pools allow us to better mimic the natural low-water tendencies of the river
  - Dan Helsel asked if the White Paper would identify the cost of a drawdown relative to the benefits of a drawdown and who/what drives the decision as to whether or not the cost is worth the benefit
    - Steve Tapp stated that the COE would have a significant influence on the decision
    - Steve Clark stated that costs would be identified in the White Paper and the need for a sponsor may be identified also
    - Tim Schlagenhaft stated that from Audubon’s perspective, costs are needed as to begin pursuing alternatives and begin looking into funding options
      - This is a high priority for Audubon and they would look into the possibility of obtaining funds

*Fish & Wildlife Work Group Activities (Steve Clark)*

- Work group discussed pool plan updates in March
  - Stephen Winter, Dan Dieterman, Mike Griffin, and Dave Potter are part of the team that will spearhead pool plan updates
  - Decided to target Pool 8 first, will put together initial maps to reflect which projects have completed construction and to review/refine prior to completing the rest of the pool updates
    - This update is currently at the COE GIS level and Steve Clark will follow up to check status
- Likely to schedule a FWWG meeting in the October timeframe

- Will discuss pool plan updates and HREP prioritization
- Possibly holding a webinar to discuss mussels in conjunction with the FWVG meeting
- Randy Urich provided a list of foresters on the UMR to Steve Clark for potential participation in FWVG meetings going forward
- Tim Schlagenhaft stated that it would be beneficial to include more forestry focused projects going forward

#### *Navigation Work Group Activities (Patrick Phenow)*

- Bridge handout as attachment
- There haven't been any Navigation Work Group meetings in quite a while
- A violation of MnDOT project at Winona was reported by the DOT
  - Contractor deposited some excavated soil off-site in the thalweg
  - Outcome won't impact navigation, though mussel impacts are unknown
- The violation was reported to COE Regulatory Office
- The DNR will issue a ticket and the county attorney will prosecute

#### *Recreation Workgroup Activities (Tim Yager)*

- Presentation as attachment
- Dusty Hoffman completed a GIS database for Pools 2-11
  - The database stopped at Pool 11 as there isn't any beach data below Pool 11
  - Pool 7 coordinates were digitized to validate with GPS coordinates that were field based, no discrepancies were found
  - Will continue to utilize the geo-database as a tool for best management practices
- Pool 7 & 8 beach planning status
  - Will schedule a meeting soon to finalize
  - Beach management plan alternatives were: no action, remove from beach plan, active vegetation restoration (seed/plant), vegetation management, beach and shoreline reshaping, nourishment up to 1,000 cubic yards, nourishment over 1,000 cubic yards
  - Total of 307 beaches spanning 293.13 acres were considered for action
- RWG hasn't met since the last RRF meeting in April, 2015

#### *Channel Maintenance Program Activities (OP-CH)*

- Steve Tapp provided updates on the status of the 2014 Dredging Season AAR and the UMRBA presentation
  - Thanks to the agencies for participation in the 2014 Dredging Season AAR
  - AAR is currently under its final review phase, will be distributed upon completion
- Also thanks to all partners for participation in the many ongoing projects pertaining to Channels & Harbors
- Dredging updates:
  - MN River- haven't dredged since 2013, currently next area on the list for contract mechanical plant 2 to address after completion of work in Pool 3
  - Lower Pool 2- have yet to dredge this season

- Have dredged an average of 2.5 months each of the last two seasons, so work will likely be required at a later date
- Lower Pool 4- both Reads Landing and Teepeeota Point are closed at the 10.5' contours
- Pool 9- Island 126 is closed at the 10.5' contours
- Placement site updates:
  - Cargill East River- currently working on the right of entry to the placement site
  - Hastings dredge material management- looking into various site alternatives in Upper Pool 3 after loss of the Koch Site
    - Need to find a home for material from Lower Approach to LD2
    - Greg Genz commented that there was never an issue at the Lower Approach to LD2 prior to the power plant's establishment in the late 1980's
  - Mathy Pit- currently working with Mathy Construction on potential use of the Mathy Pit for dredge material in Pool 3 near Diamond Bluff
  - Homer- appraisal of the property was completed on 8/3
    - DMMP PDT will evaluate the appraisal upon completion of the write-up, which should be completed in the near future
  - Blackhawk Park- coordinating placement of dredge material at Blackhawk Park, currently looking into cultural survey needs
    - Plan to schedule an OSIT next spring
- Grand Encampment Unloading
  - 430K cubic yards have been excavated to date (~80% completed with the project), 550K cubic yards total are to be excavated
  - Didn't receive any complaints pertaining to trucking material
  - Dan Helsel asked what the approximate unit cost was, Paul Machajewski stated that it was ~\$14/cy
- Crats Island Unloading
  - Material from Crats Island will be placed at the Wabasha Gravel Pit
    - There's a separate trucking contract to remove 150K cubic yards of material from the Wabasha Gravel Pit to accommodate the material from Crats Island
      - Contract was awarded to U.S. Site Work
      - City of Wabasha has an ordinance of 30 truck trips (round-trip) per day, though they may modify to accommodate the contract if we can prove impacts are minimal
      - Tentative start date is 9/1/2015, with completion anticipated by 6/30/2016
  - Contract award came in below the government estimate
  - Plan to award the base contract and a couple options, additional options may be awarded as funding allows
  - Tentative start date is 7/2016, with completion anticipated in 12/2017
- Lost Island Unloading
  - Hope to award a contract for the excavation of Lost Island in FY16
  - Material will most likely be placed at West Newton Chute
- McMillan Island Unloading

- Contract was awarded to Brennan Marine for the hydraulic offload, pumping material from McMillan Island to Buck Creek
  - Contract was awarded at \$1.7 million, \$11/cubic yard
- Contractor plans to begin work after completion of the Grand Encampment excavation (anticipated mid-October)
  - Contractor has until 11/30/2015 to complete the work
- Sara Strassman asked if the contractor was working 24 hours per day, which Paul Machajewski replied that is an option though it hasn't been decided yet

#### *Flexible Uses of Dredge Material (Rich King)*

- FWS has been evaluating the science behind floodplain forest restoration, elevation and location to target
- Draft EA was completed for the floodplain forest restoration projects prior to Clyde Male's retirement
  - Now have more scientific background to go forward with the EA, especially considering additional support now that Wendy has been hired as the Deputy District Manager
- Rich King questioned why island construction isn't part of dredge material management planning as a default
  - Focus is not on construction of new islands, but restoration of islands that have degraded over time
  - This would include adjusting elevation of existing islands
- Tim Schlagenhaft suggested presenting projects at the FWWG level as options for floodplain forest restoration
- Dan Dieterman stated that the CMMP should include restoration/mitigation for impacts by Locks & Dams and commercial navigation

#### *Aquatic Invasive Species (All)*

- COE- no new updates
- WDNR- Starry Stonewort has been found on the eastern side of Wisconsin
  - WDNR will continue to monitor
  - Species is common in Michigan, gives off an oily sheen
  - Dan Helsel will email information on the AIS out for distribution to RRF members
- MDNR- no major updates
  - Continuing to work with commercial fishermen to monitor adult species of invasive Carp
- IDNR- established monitoring stations at various boat ramps containing aquatic nuisance species personnel to ensure that boats are properly washed prior to leaving the ramps

#### *Upper Mississippi River Restoration (Tom Novak)*

- Presentation as attachment
- Capoli Slough project is wrapping up, anticipate turning the project over to the FWS next month for operations and maintenance going forward
- Harpers Slough is also under construction
  - This project had a very good construction season as the river cooperated

- Contractor needs to be out of the closed area by 11/2015
- UMRR projects in the planning phase
  - North/Sturgeon Lakes- continuing to evaluate in conjunction with Pool 3 drawdown
    - Public meetings will take place on 9/9 in Red Wing and 9/16 in Prescott
    - Project will likely utilize dredge material placement easement as opposed to PPA due to multiple land owners
    - Hope to have the design completed this winter, then transition into plans and specifications and contract award
    - 100K-120K cubic yards of granular material is needed for the islands
      - Looking into options of utilizing channel maintenance material both from the channel and Corps Island placement site
    - Dan Helsel questioned whether or not a Pool 3 drawdown would require over-dredging
      - Tom Novak stated that the draw down would require over-dredging and that Channels & Harbors would pay for the dredging that would have been required in that given season
  - Conway Lake- currently working on preliminary draft DPR
  - McGregor Lake- has been deferred due to concentrated efforts elsewhere
- There is potential for the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance to attend the FWFG in order to engage in UMRR project discussions
  - Per Tom Novak, that's an appropriate place for project consideration
  - RRF concurred that it is best for NGO's to build their financial support and gain support from the State, then it would be possible to have the State propose a project on behalf of an NGO
    - NGO's and State(s) will plan to partner and bring potential projects to the FWFG
- NGO participation was encouraged in other work groups throughout the RRF

*Pool 2 Channel Management Study- Boulanger Bend to Lock & Dam 2 (Tom Novak and Paul Machajewski)*

- Olivia Dorothy questioned whether or not there would be flood stage impacts with the project
  - Paul Machajewski responded that the COE has discussed impacts with MDNR and they have accepted that there will be localized impacts
  - Also stated that the Environmental Assessment will consider flood stage impacts

*Work Group Roles and Responsibilities (All)*

- The RRF has a resolution for establishment of technical work groups and identifies roles and responsibilities
  - Work group chairs will be responsible for deciding on general operations and conflict resolution procedures
- A handout was provided as an outline to bring issues to work groups from the RRF, or to the RRF from work groups
- The issue brief format should be used to identify high profile, or controversial work items
- There was discussion as to whether or not forestry should act as its own work group or be part of the FWFG, a determination was not made, discussions will continue within the FWFG

*MPCA Updates- Soil Reference Values, Requirement to wash riprap (Emily Schnick)*

- Soil reference Values
  - Currently working on background numbers
  - Received a lot of comments, mostly pertaining to Arsenic
    - Will be able to provide comments through September
  - Plan to redistribute final values along with public notice in December
  - May be finalized by the end of the calendar year
    - Will continue working with the COE going forward
- Requirement to wash riprap
  - Started with the Hastings Bridge Project
  - MPCA has reconsidered the request to wash all riprap and will treat the requirement as a project-by-project requirement going forward
  - Easiest way to resolve the issue is to utilize best management practices

*Other Topics/Issues, Due-outs (All)*

- Due-outs
  - White Paper: first draft to be completed by 10/1 (Novak, Clark, Urich, Hendrickson, Kimmel)
  - COE to forward 2014 Dredging Season AAR upon completion
  - OSIT to investigate erosion at Lost Island and Fisher Island
  - COE to look into shoaling below Lock and Dam 2 to determine if the shoal is tied to the hydropower plant
  - Steve Tapp to provide Bill Huber a contact phone number for LW Matteson
  - COE to define emergency dredging in the CMMP
  - Mike Griffin to send lessons learned from Section 204 Projects to the RRF
  - FWWG to establish a team to identify potential forest restoration projects utilizing dredge material
  - Distribute Environmental Assessments for Mosquito Island, Lansing Island, and McMillan Island to RRF
  - Work Group chairs to identify decision making processes for each respective subgroup of the RRF
  - Work Groups to utilize issue briefs to identify high profile/controversial work items
  - Dan Helsel to email information on Starry Stonewort for RRF distribution

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF