

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #104 (web-meeting only), December 1, 2015

Introductions (All)

- Minutes from RRF #103: endorsed by consensus as written
- Upcoming RRF Meetings:
 - April 19: Winona, MN or La Crosse, WI
 - August 23-24: Prairie Du Chien, WI, Harpers Slough UMRR Project or Wabasha, MN, Crats Island unloading
 - December 7-8: Bloomington, MN at the FWS Regional Office

Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)

- Jim Rand was hired as the Operations Manager for Locks & Dams
- Dan Cottrell will return from his MVS detail in early February
- Lock & Dam 9 will close at 1000 hours on 12/9 for winter maintenance and reopen on 3/17/2016
 - There may not be another dewatering in MVP for 4-5 years

Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)

- Jeremy Lawrence was selected for the Lead Federal Wildlife Officer position, he will work out of the La Crosse District Office and Tim Yager will be his direct supervisor
- Rebecca Banick was selected for the Administrative Assistant position out of the La Crosse District Office
- Matt Merclowitz, Interpretive Specialist out of the Winona District Office, will retire soon
- Scott Yess out of the La Crosse Fisheries Office will also retire soon
- Mags Rhudy is now an Eagle Biologist for the FWS, best contact for specific Eagle coordination
- Nick Utrop is now a Fisheries Biologist, will likely begin attending the RRF
- Andy Bebe is filling the Forester position stationed in the La Crosse District Office which is a cost-shared position with Audubon
- Will be advertising for GS-5 Biotech seasonal positions in the near future
- There was a train derailment just north of Alma on 11/7
 - 32 cars, 12 of which were on their sides
 - Estimated 19,500 gallons of ethanol leaked into the river

- The DNR and EPA were also engaged
- Embankment cleanup is still a concern, hope to minimize exposed soils
- Listed Species Updates:
 - Mussel coordination team received the Recovery Champions award in December
 - Proposal to list the Massasauga Snake as threatened
- FWS continues interagency coordination efforts pertaining to the Northern Long-Eared Bat
 - Will likely issue final ruling toward the end of 2015 or early 2016

Agency Activities- EPA (Larry Shepard)

- Advanced coordination on projects requiring NEPA is greatly appreciated

Agency Activities- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)

- First attempt to hire Walt Popp's replacement as River Coordinator was unsuccessful, plan to reopen the position in early 2016 and hire by March, 2016
- Watercraft inspections continue, ~15,000 total inspections were completed
 - Discovered an ~15% drain plug violation rate within the Winona and La Crosse area
- Weaver Bottoms small-scale dredging project is possible next year, awaiting final record of decision within MDNR
 - Lessard Sams funds, would possibly award this winter and begin construction next summer
- Planning to reissue the dredge permit to the COE in the near future, term will be one year
- Looking into no wake zones in Upper Pool 4 and Pool 3 locations, working with specific counties to establish no wake under certain river elevations

Agency Activities- WDNR (Dan Helsel)

- Jim Fischer is working on filling Sara Strassman's position
- Shawn Gibling sent out preliminary information pertaining to the ethanol spill near Alma, WI
- Working on the dredging permit to the COE
- Mississippi River staff received a state-wide team award for their accomplishments
- Dan Baumann will be "taking the Mississippi River to Madison" in February to discuss the importance of the river for economic development and for the environment

Agency Activities- IDNR (Mike Griffin)

- Bernie Schauhoff retired, IDNR has hired Andy Fowler as his replacement
- Gun deer season opens this weekend

- IDNR has identified CWD in Allamakee County, the disease is localized in the Harpers Ferry area right now (anticipated less than 2% of the population)

Agency Activities- American Rivers (Olivia Dorothy)

- U of MN and non-profits gathered to discuss the potential of a restoration project within the gorge
 - Trying to obtain a grant to complete some modeling

Agency Activities- Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (Rylee Main)

- Currently working on sediment data collection for Upper Pool 4
- Discussing the potential of pursuing a project at the Head of Lake Pepin with the section 204 program with COE
- Rylee and Tim Schlagenhaft continue outreach and are seeking potential cost-share partners for the Head of Lake Pepin project

Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)

- Last meeting was held on 11/5/2015 and the next will be held on 2/9/2016
- Randy Urich provided a draft supplement to the master plan including pool wide drawdowns whenever environmentally possible
 - Possible that this will be a routine part of Environmental Stewardship planning for the La Crescent Office
- Pool 3 drawdown: public meetings were held on 9/9 in Red Wing, MN and 9/16 in Prescott, WI
 - Both meetings had more public participants than agency participants
- Brenda Kelly and Mike Kennedy are leading the charge on drafting a response letter to the Town of Diamond Bluff regarding the concerns they addressed at the public meeting
- Vegetation sampling revealed an increase of Arrowhead from 6% to 45%, wild rice has also expanded throughout most pools
- Anticipate completing the White Paper for routine drawdowns in Pool 8 by the end of February
 - Cost information is still needed, which Channels & Harbors will provide

Pool 2 CMS- Boulanger Bend to Lock & Dam 2 (Paul Machajewski)

- Presentation as attachment
- The tentatively selected plan, as previously discussed, is keeping the same channel alignment, increasing the channel width, and adding channel control structures to channel the flow of water
- Final results of the mussel surveys and boring samples are being added to the report
- Multiple options are being evaluated for island construction

- The tentative schedule is as follows:
 - January: preliminary draft to agencies and accompanying 30 day review period
 - February: internal COE review
 - March: public meetings
 - April: finalize report and request RRF endorsement
 - May: begin plans and specs on stage 1, channel control structures
- Tim Yager asked about NEPA compliance throughout the project and Paul clarified that NEPA components of the project will be included in the draft report sent to agency partners in January

Workgroup Roles and Responsibilities (All)

- FWWG will develop a charter for decision making processes to include issue briefs
 - Anticipated completion is spring, 2016
- Tim Yager contacted Kevin Berg in regards to a charter or guiding principles for the RWG, found that there's no knowledge of anything existing
 - RWG will utilize FWWG charter as reference and likely establish something similar

Emergency Contact Information (All)

- Agencies will collaborate to develop an emergency contact information list for internal (within partnering agencies) use
- FWS stated that the Federal Law Enforcement Officers are likely the best initial contact during non-duty hours
- COE agreed to distribute a call list identifying key partners for different circumstances (navigation issues, permitting, endangered species, etc)

Navigation Workgroup (Zach Kimmel)

- Handout as attachment
- There was discussion pertaining to identifying a chair for the Navigation Workgroup
 - Steve Tapp commented that historically the USCG chaired the NWG, though the last formal chair was Dick Lambert from MN DOT
 - RRF agreed it would be beneficial to schedule a meeting and have a chair identified, Steve Tapp stated that he would follow up with the USCG regarding potential chairs and discuss scheduling a meeting
- Dan Dieterman commented that there are a few unmarked day markers in Pool 5, may be a good task for the NWG – either remove or mark?
- Olivia Dorothy questioned the status of the disposition study, as to whether the funding was for studying USAF lock only, or USAF, LSAF and LD1
 - Steve Tapp stated that the funding was meant to cover the three upper locks

Recreation Workgroup (Tim Yager)

- City of Minneiska contacted the FWS in regards to shoaling occurring within the access to the landing on the upstream side of town
 - MDNR Parks & Trails will likely provide funding to dredge access to the landing
 - Tentative plan is to dredge straight out from the existing culverts and dogleg upstream toward the navigation channel
- North Lake access was recently dredged
- Continuing to prepare programmatic EA for beach planning
 - Purpose of the EA is to provide opportunity to take action when the doors open for beach nourishment and/or maintenance
- Dusty Hoffman put together geo-database for Pools 2-10
 - 308 beaches were captured covering 293.13 acres
- Plan to hold RWG meeting in the near future to discuss beach plans and developing a charter
- Larry Shepard requested to see the programmatic EA for beach planning at draft phase, Tim Yager stated that the EA would be distributed to the RRF prior to finalization

MPCA Soil Reference Values Update (Emily Schnick)

- Emily Schnick was unable to attend the meeting, Zach Kimmel will follow up with Emily and distribute an updated schedule regarding soil reference value revisions to the RRF

Fish & Wildlife Work Group (Steve Clark)

- Last met on 10/22, discussed developing charter as well as identifying a conflict resolution process to include an issue brief draft
 - Will work on the above throughout the winter
- Beginning next week, FWWG meeting notes will be posted on the RRF website similar to the WLMTF process
 - Notes will also be posted for the last two years
- Decided that there wasn't a need for a forestry technical committee, though the FWWG will ensure that foresters from various agencies are engaged in the FWWG
- HREP prioritization: there are currently four projects in the queue
 - Harpers Slough, North / Sturgeon Lakes, Conway Lake, McGregor Lake
 - FWWG decided to postpone prioritizing the next projects on the list until the time for project initiation draws nearer, which is most likely a year or more away
- On 11/19 there was a joint river team call to discuss mussel concerns
- The next FWWG meeting will be held in the spring of 2016
- Aquatic invasive species & listed species updates will now be done under the FWWG section

- COE – working to determine what needs to be done with newly listed mussel species, as well as actions relative to the Northern Long-Eared Bat
- FWS – water lettuce and water hyacinth were found in Pool 7, 50 individuals volunteered to remove the plants from the water
 - FWS will monitor next spring to see if the plants return

Beneficial Use Restoration Projects (Steve Clark)

- McMillan Island: excavation has been completed, material was placed at Buck Creek
 - ~70,000 cubic yards of material remains at the placement site
 - Currently in the planning phase of the floodplain forest restoration project and will try to keep momentum going forward
- Lansing Island: not much has been done regarding floodplain forest restoration, McMillan Island stole a bit of the attention after channel problems were identified in Lower Pool 10
 - Last thing completed was Rich King's draft EA including this site for floodplain forest restoration
- Mosquito Island: project is shovel ready
 - Received Water Quality Certification from WDNR
 - Hydraulic model was run which revealed zero impact on flood stage
 - Bill Huber asked whether the hydraulic model would be shared, Steve Clark stated that he would talk to Alex Le and ask if he could distribute the model to those interested
 - The design is being finalized, upon completion, the document will be shared as is COE policy
- Steve Clark, Randy Urich, Paul Machajewski, and Rich King met to discuss future restoration projects
 - Sites were identified in proximity to frequent dredging locations, looking for adjacent locations that could benefit from forest restoration
 - Randy Urich and Rich King will compile a list of the prospective sites and include conceptual design for forest restoration

Upper Mississippi River Restoration (Tom Novak)

- Presentation as attachment
- FY16 President's budget: \$19.78 million, MVP allocation \$3.4 million
- Projects in the construction phase
 - Harpers Slough Stage 1 – Newt worked March through mid-October and completed 30% of the work (Stage 2 will be a separate project completely)
- Projects in the planning phase

- North / Sturgeon Lakes – second round of public meetings were held in September, some marina owners expressed concern
 - Flood stage impact issues have been resolved
 - Interagency meeting will be held this Thursday, 12/3
 - Dan Dieterman questioned how fast the project developed, Jon Hendrickson responded stating that there are budget uncertainties, so the goal was to have the project shovel-ready to enable execution if funding permits
 - Dan stated that the project may not have had enough review to be progressing at the pace it is
 - Jon also stated that island D1 is proposed to be constructed with O&M funds, and it also has a small impact on sediment deposition in the main channel
- Conway Lake – working on preliminary draft DPR
 - Identified all potential features, measure are focused on overwintering habitat and floodplain forest
- McGregor Lake – planning has been deferred due to budget constraints, though some data is being collected

Channel Maintenance Program Activities (OP-CH)

- Presentation as attachment
- Steve Tapp updated the channel maintenance expenditures graph to include inflation
 - Dredged material management funding has increased in the recent past
- CMMP updates – set a goal to have annual updates (tabs 2, 3, 4) completed by the April RRF
 - Suspense date for the first draft of the CMMP overhaul is by the August RRF
- Dredging: Bill Huber asked why there was a spike in volumes in 1994, Steve Tapp responded that the 1993 flood was a significant factor
 - Linda Loomis asked why the 20 year average is higher than the 30 year average
 - Steve Tapp responded that an increase in flows on the MN River and other tributaries has contributed to a higher average
 - Jon Hendrickson added that when broken out by decade, the 1990's is the highest flow decade we have ever had
 - Linda Loomis added that in some counties, farmers are establishing 1 million feet of drain tile and the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District is encouraging the State to do something to even the flows out through water management strategies upstream
- Zach Kimmel agreed to schedule an OSIT meeting to address erosion concerns at temporary sites
- Pool 2 DMMP – planning is ongoing, dredging quantities have to be determined

- Operations needs to determine how dredging practices will continue in Upper Pool and Pool 1, if dredging is reduced or eliminated in either or both of these pools, what are the impacts
 - Jon Hendrickson stated that downstream impacts will be realized both in the main channel and the backwaters
- Upper Pool 3 DMM – planning continues in regards to finding a site to replace the historically used Koch placement site for the Lower Approach to LD 2 dredge cut
 - Various sites were identified and a wetland delineation was completed for each site alternative
 - CH needs to identify a preferred site, schedule an OSIT meeting, and engage the City of Hastings
- Grand Encampment Excavation – removed just under 550K cubic yards of material for ~\$7.9 million
 - All material was offloaded at the Alma Marina, though the final resting spot of the material varied
 - Mid-project after action report revealed that the contractor preferred that the COE would have cradle to grave oversight of the project (as opposed to the “make it go away” approach)
- Pool 4/5 DMMP’s – stakeholder meetings were held in September of 2014
 - Primary concern was to get all dredged material out of the floodplain
 - Hope to have a draft tentatively selected plan by February 2016 for both DMMP’s, with public meetings to follow in March
- Wabasha Gravel Pit trucking – contract was awarded to haul 150K cubic yards of material from the Wabasha Gravel Pit to the Dairy Queen pit to restore capacity for the Crats Island offload
- Crats Island excavation – pipeline route that was identified matches Reads Landing when last offloaded by the dredge Goetz
- Lost Island excavation – currently in the planning phase, likely to place material either hydraulically or mechanically at West Newton Chute
- Pool 6 DMMP – objective is to obtain a site that is under COE ownership and management
 - Held an OSIT in 2013 to identify preliminary sites, now have considered ~20 sites in total
 - Currently narrowing down the tentatively selected plan and hope to seek RRF endorsement of TSP by the April RRF
- McMillan Island Excavation – Brennan Construction was awarded the contract in September 2014 to remove 150K cubic yards from McMillan Island and place the material at Buck Creek
 - Construction took place from August 2015 to November 2015

- ~70K cubic yards remains on site, which may be used for floodplain forest restoration
- Mike Griffin commented that it's good to consider all beneficial use projects to aid in dredge material management efforts (UMRR, floodplain forest restoration, etc)
 - Zach Kimmel commented that the potential success of the Pigs Eye Lake Section 204 project may open other doors
 - Mike Griffin commented that one potential struggle with Section 204 is the need for a cost-share partner

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

- Agenda topics: disposition study update, shoreline erosion (areas of concern), beneficial use operations
 - Suggestion to remove workgroup roles and responsibilities and emergency contact information
- Due-outs
 - White Paper for routine drawdown of Pool 8: first draft to be completed by spring of 2016 (Novak, Clark, Urich, Hendrickson, Cottrell/Kimmel)
 - COE to forward 2014 Dredging Season AAR upon completion
 - OSIT to investigate erosion at Lost Island and Fisher Island (Kimmel)
 - COE to look into shoaling below Lock and Dam 2 to determine if the shoal is tied to the hydropower plant
 - COE to define emergency dredging in the CMMP
 - Mike Griffin to send lessons learned from Section 204 Projects to the RRF
 - Distribute Environmental Assessments for Mosquito Island, Lansing Island, and McMillan Island to RRF as completed
 - Dan Helsel to email information on Starry Stonewort for RRF distribution
 - FWWG to develop charter for decision making processes, which other work groups will mirror
 - Steve Tapp will engage in discussion with USCG and MnDOT pertaining to NWG chair position and scheduling a meeting in the near future
 - Tim Yager will distribute a preliminary draft EA of the beach plans for Pool 2-10 to the RRF upon completion
 - Randy Urich and Rich King will compile a list of potential forest restoration projects with conceptual design options and provide to the FWWG
 - Jon Hendrickson will distribute the report pertaining to hydraulic modeling done for Mosquito Island to those who request it
 - Zach Kimmel will distribute the Channels & Harbors presentation to the RRF
 - Each of the states (WI, MN, IA) will provide a noxious plant list to the RRF identifying plant sale restrictions

- Dan Dieterman will forward information pertaining to an aquatic management area as a potential placement site below Hastings, MN to Zach Kimmel
- COE will look into potential mussel impacts from the emergency dredging at Grand Encampment and swing anchor placement due to dredge Goetz operations
- Zach Kimmel will distribute the NWG bridge handout to the RRF
- Zach Kimmel will get an update from Emily Schnick pertaining to the schedule for finalizing the SRV's and distribute the schedule to the RRF
- Paul Machajewski will distribute operations criteria for utilizing environmental projects as a means of beneficial use (minimum quantities, economic feasibility, etc.)
- COE will send a form/template to RRF regarding emergency contact information

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF