

## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #108, April 25<sup>th</sup>; USFWS Visitor Center, Brice Prairie, WI

*Introductions (All)*

- Minutes from RRF #107: endorsed with corrections on WDNR agency update
- Next Meeting:
  - August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> RRF meeting is in Wabasha. Field trip possibilities: Goose Lake Project, Lost Island Unload, Crats Island Unload, Wabasha Prairie or LD 4 embankment tour. Corps C&H will discuss logistics and send out a proposal.

*Agency Activities- IDNR (Mike Griffin)*

- Iowa Governor has been nominated by President Trump to be the ambassador to China. Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds will take over as Governor. Historically she is interested in the River.
- Legislative session ended last week, just started a hiring freeze.
- Kelly Meyer was hired by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Dale Gardner took her position.
- Mike Griffin will likely retire before the end of the year, position will be filled by Kirk Hanson.

*Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)*

- March 8<sup>th</sup> navigation began for the season
- Dredge Goetz is currently at Lansing in Pool 9.
- Under the new Administration, we are currently under a hiring freeze, there have been some exceptions made to the freeze in critical roles.
  - Steve Clark – Environmental Compliance – has hired a new fisheries biologist Trevor Cyphers started work last week.
- Major General Wehr (Mississippi Valley Division Commander) visited the District last week, he visited the Fountain City Service Base, spent time on a survey boat and visited the fish hatchery in Lake City. Thanks to MDNR for hosting the stop at the fish hatchery.
- Dan Cottrell attended a USCG table top exercise in St. Paul on 4/19, the purpose was to discuss with first responders actions that would need to take place if there were a barge / rail incident.
- Continuing Resolution Authority (CRA) – currently under a CRA not sure if it will end or be continued until the end of the FY (September 30<sup>th</sup>).

- Aaron Snyder was hired as the new Tom Crump – Regional Chief of Environmental Section for the Upper 3 Districts.
- Zach Kimmel plans to return from his HQ rotation on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

*Agency Activities- WDNR (Jim Fischer)*

- The Governor’s budget it out now, DNR had proposed discontinuing the NR Magazine – this has received significant push back from the public. Also proposes a cut to the Mill tax which would reduce funding overall.
- Sixteen month agency realignment effort is complete – there are five divisions now. Office of Great Waters has been stood up, Steve Galarneau is the lead and Jim Fischer falls under that group as the Mississippi River team leader.
- Jim is hoping that having the Great Lakes as part of the same work group that lessons learned can be shared: Jim and Kurt Rasmussen toured Cat Island recently; a 40 year capacity dredge material management site on Lake Michigan at Green Bay.
- Agency is currently reviewing the Dredge Material Management Plan for Hurricane Island in the Rock Island District, also developing a new MOU with the Rock Island District. The MOU expired in 2013, and that was only an extension from the 2011 MOU.
- UMRBA Water Level Management workshop that was held in April was attended by several WDNR employees.
- WDNR is currently in discussions with La Crosse County modifying a culvert area and Wing Lake at Goose Island campground. Aaron McFarlane with the Corps is involved; a contractor is writing the EA.
- Hoping for a contract with WisCorps this summer, for beach work in Pools 7 & 8, starting work in Pool 8. The work would include clearing poison ivy and maybe site leveling – prior to the EA being completed.
- Head of Lake Pepin 204 project. The review was sent through the Secretaries office and signed off. WDNR agrees the feasibility study should move ahead, the project will be challenging if the plan directs the construction outside of WDNR’s proposed work area.
- UMRBA – holding a flood risk and management summit in July in Moline. Discussion will include dredge material maintenance, flood management, and sediment management.
  - Dru Button resigning, returning to the MO DNR.

*Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)*

- Brian Stemper has left since the last meeting has moved on to South Dakota, the position will not be filled. Federal hiring freeze has been difficult, have had to seek exemptions, regionally haven’t been many. Preparing for a possible shutdown on Friday – essential are Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs), one manager, would have to close all landings and facilities.

- Working closely with Randy Urich with the Corps on Big Slough clean up. Hired labor crew for the Corps did a fantastic job – thanks to Chris Stai, Randy Urich, Ray Marinar and folks at Blackhawk Park. Iowa is appreciative too.
- Chinese delegation visited UMRB project in Pool 7.
- Rusty Patch Bumble Bee is now federally listed; male worker bee was found in 2014 by Mississippi Gardens. This is the first pollinator listed by the Endangered Species Act. Management plans: Need to increase flowering plant density, time burns better, will bring in a burn boss from Necedah. No Section 7 guidance yet, expecting some suggestions like: Sampling without impact, not planting flowers due to ground disturbance.
- Bald Eagle Database – only monitoring nests where there is an active project. Rookeries are on the same level of observance. District managers manage the database.
- Currently reviewing an application for installing hydropower at LD 11.

*Agency Activities- MDNR (Megan Moore)*

- In last election the State Legislature switched parties. The Governor’s budget is a long way from the legislature’s budget at this time.
- Several MDNR employees participated in the UMRBA WLM workshop in April, MDNR is interested in working through the challenges.
- Jason Lewis went on a tour to discuss Asian Carp on Peterson Lake HREP – talked about PPA challenges.
- Dan Dieterman is working on the Brewer Lake Inlet project. Restarted and is chairing the Weaver Bottoms Task Force, they have had one meeting so far.
- MDNR has no position yet but is listening in on a project called “Restoring the Gorge” Upper St. Anthony Falls to LD 1.
- Brenda Stauffer met with a company about a barge terminal in Wabasha – it is all preliminary and all confidential at this point.

*Agency Activities- American Rivers (Olivia Dorothy)*

- There used to be two staff in the Upper Mississippi Basin, reduced to just one (Olivia). Getting a fellowship in July and they will be working on floodplain restoration.
- American Rivers is following the disposition study that has started looking at USAF, LSAF and LD 1. Nan Bishoff is the POC for the Corps on this effort. There is a meeting hosted by the National Park Service on July 13<sup>th</sup> at St. Peter’s Church will define process and potential restoration opportunities in the Gorge.

*Agency Activities- US EPA (Kathy Kowel)*

- Hiring Freeze is having a large impact, waiting to see how much their budget will be cut.

*Recreation Work Group (Tim Yager)*

- Met on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Beach Management Plan for Pools 7 & 8 are complete and ready for implementation. Tim will send the .pdfs of the plans to Steve – Steve will distribute to RRF voting members requesting endorsement.
- Beach planning is a big database – three alternatives per area, plan to reduce beach maintenance, and recreation enhancement. Managing poison ivy is a categorical exclusion without a lot of planning. Most of the plans show vegetation control. NEPA doesn't need to address every beach as long as the action doesn't include management actions like barge unloading that could impact mussels etc.
- Non-toxic ammunition outreach – goal is to make hunters aware of unintentional secondary impacts that could be avoided by switching to non-toxic ammo like copper.

*Navigation Work Group Activities (Dan Cottrell)*

- NWG will meet in fall of 2017 to go over any issues
- Bridge Updates from MDOT will – shoot for getting an update once a year.
- WDOT rep Shari Walz has moved on Dave Simon is new POC – Jim will provide contact information to Dan.

*Channel Maintenance Program Activities (Tapp and Cottrell)*

- Dredge Schedule
  - Started dredging early, bump in high water may have an impact on how much sediment is moving in to the system. Had problems with putting the mechanical dredge contractor on standby last year, we will not put contractor on standby if at all possible. Wanted the partners to be aware.
- Channel Management and Placement Site Activities
  - Upper Approach to LD 7 Channel Management Study
    - Looked at the quick fix of dredging it, not likely to work, will look at a few more alternatives
    - Might need a structural fix
  - Lower Pool 10 Channel Management Study
    - From Wisconsin River to LD 10, kick off in July estimated 2 years to complete.
  - Crats Island Unloading: Brennan resumed unloading on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Have until December of 2017 to complete.
  - Lost Island Unloading: OSIT met in early April discussed turtles, eagles and impact to use of boat ramp. Newt Marine plans to mechanically remove material, take it by barge to the shore by West Newton Chute then pump it up the hill.
  - Expecting a mid-June fledge of the eagles due to the early spring (as per Tim Yager).

- Southport: Need to determine options for hydraulic placement discharge.
- DMMP Lower Pool 2: Zach is working on this from DC and hope to be finalized this summer.
- DMMPs Pool 4 – 5: Are going forward will be out for public review soon.
- DMMP Pool 6: Parcels have been identified will be out for review after 4-5.
- Other Channel and Harbors Activities (Kimmel)
  - Inland Channel Framework – will be used to ID condition assessments. Data will be available to the public.
  - eHydro – will be talked about at the UMRBA summit as a possible resource.
  - RSM – proposals are due the 1<sup>st</sup> week of May
- MPCA permit expires the end of July 2017 – Paul is working with Emily Schnick. WDNR may be interested in commenting.
- CMMP Update: Still trying to do major overhaul, would like to have a project manager assigned. It is still on our radar it just is not rising to the top above other obligations.
- UMRBA Summit: Steve Tapp, Megan Moore, and Jim Fischer will be participating.
  - Rock Island District initiated a levy survey (Olivia Dorothy). Around 80 miles of levy were found to be 2’ or more above authorized elevations.

*Pool 2 CMS – Boulanger Bend to LD 2 (Tom Novak)*

- Project hasn’t changed as far as features.
- Dan Kelner and Aaron McFarlane working on an IDIQ contract to mitigate (move) mussels. Plan is to initiate mitigation in July or August.
- WDNR asked about increased sedimentation from USAF closure
  - EC-H is running a HEC-RAS model. Coon Rapids dam to Head of Lake Pepin – we will try to get them to present preliminary results at a future RRF meeting.
- Plan is to get report done this year, Colonel will sign, move mussels first, then create rock structures, dredge sand will be last stage of project.
- Significant dependence for the sand part on the acquisition of property in Lower Pool 2, acquisition is dependent on DMMP completion.

*Upper Mississippi River Restoration (Tom Novak)*

- Harpers slough on third year of construction.
  - Hope to be done in July
  - Dedication in Fall 2017 or Spring 2018
- Upcoming projects:
  - Peterson Lake rock berm additions – adaptive management
  - Conway Lake complete planning, P&S and award.
  - McGregor Lake continue planning

- Pool 8 rock sill repair (M&R)
- Planning – Due to North / Sturgeon project going away, we need a project to begin planning.
- Potential approved fact sheets:
  - Lower Pool 10, Lake Winneshiek, Weaver Bottoms, Clear Lake and Bass Lake Ponds.
- Corps requesting 2 more projects to start planning

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

- FWWG – Met March 27<sup>th</sup> – main topic was next HREP selection. Goal was to bring a project to the RRF.
  - Now the goal is to have the next project selected in May. Pick a 2<sup>nd</sup> project fall of 2017. Discussed 5 fact sheets; pick from that for list for the 1<sup>st</sup> for 2<sup>nd</sup> choice open up to other projects.
  - At the March meeting it was narrowed down to the top three: Weaver Bottoms, Bass Ponds and Lower Pool 10. Goal of the Corps is to decide on 1 project that everybody can support.
  - Current ranking of the top three projects:
    - WDNR & Corps 1) LP10 2) Bass Ponds 3) Weaver
    - IDNR 1) LP10 2) Weaver 3) Bass Ponds
    - FWS 1) Bass Ponds 2) LP 10 3) Weaver
    - MDNR 1) Weaver 2,3 were tied between) LP 10, Bass Ponds
  - US FWS not prepared to support LP 10 or Weaver
    - Concern that fact sheets don't currently reflect goals of the agency. Ex. Overwintering habitat not as high of a priority as in the past.
  - Next Step: Tom wants a project identified in May. FWWG will package up votes and info, will send to RRF voting members and ask for a vote.
    - Try to add non-environmental reasons.
    - This specific topic to be put on future agenda for RRF.

*Hydrologic Reconnection of the Root River Tract (Tim Miller and Josh Eash)*

- Project Goals:
  - Goal 1 – Restore natural topography and drainage patterns
  - Goal 2 – Enhance wildlife habitat
  - Goal 3 – Support wildlife dependent recreation
- Challenge to consider best way to improve habitat with barriers there – solution was to move dikes and driveways. Used fill to plug certain areas.
- Challenging weather conditions – very rainy last year. Flooding from the Root River caused a levee breach.

- The project is 90 – 95% complete. Used all levies to create ditch plugs. A lot of sand on the track of land – that was unexpected.
- Restored 27 floodplain forest acres.

*Beneficial Use Restoration Projects (Steve Clark)*

- Mosquito Island – will work on implementation plan
- Not much work on others
  - No work on Lansing, McMillan – McGregor UMRR considering using McMillan Island dredge cut material.

*Section 204 Projects – Pigs Eye Lake- Head of Lake Pepin (Steve Clark)*

- Pigs Eye Lake
  - Handout shows tentatively selected plan
  - Preliminary report is out for agency review
  - Working on DQC next week.
- Head of Lake Pepin
  - Letter from WDNR received last week
  - Tom Novak will be taking over as PM
  - Kickoff will be in late May.
  - Issue of lack of overlap of features between WDNR and LPLA – not in agreement of features and where.
  - Some of the features are on Wisconsin land, could be complicated if features are put on private land.
  - LPLA understands concerns – would like to keep options broad initially, if the project ends up in backwater only than LPLA may not be able to support it. Their goal is to consider islands in open water to reduce turbidity and promote veg response.
  - There is currently enough support for Corps to move forward with feasibility.
  - Kurt Rasmussen will be the WDNR rep for the project.

*Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)*

Water Level Management Task Force  
RRF 108 Report  
April 25, 2017

*Conceptual Model* – (Handout: Drawdown\_Public\_Figure\_Drafts) Aaron McFarlane provided new drawings for the public conceptual model. He felt that “Iteration 1” looked too much like an inland lake so he based “Iteration 2” on a cross section of Pool 8. This needs verbiage added, suggestions included having a “before” and “after” drawing with text and adding a person with binoculars. Aaron will draw a draft based on the recommendations.

*White Paper Update* – Shahin Khazrajafari and Randy Urich reported that the draft paper had been reviewed by COE legal and economics divisions. Group discussion regarding the paper focused around the accounting/funding tables and discussion in the paper. These questions/comments focused on: the inability to augment navigation funding; the inability to show the cost savings in future dredging that is generated from the advanced dredging; requesting the table clearly show how costs were determined including the average costs used; determining the average cost/year based on a 5 year average. There were concerns about the statement on page 22 that reads there is no support from the UMRR program for drawdowns. Comments from the Task Force were consolidated and provided to Randy on February 24 to allow time for a turnaround by May 1.

*UMRBA Workshop* – Kirsten Mickelsen attended the Task Force meeting and provided a skeleton agenda of the upcoming Water Level Management Workshop which will be (was) held in April.

*UMRR Handout* – (Handout: Megan Moore pool 8 fish and veg communities) Megan Moore provided a handout for UMRR regarding fish response on Pool 8. There was a fish community change from species tolerant to degraded habitat to one of sport fish after 2002.

*MN DNR LSOHC funding for Pool 3.* Dan Dieterman reported that approval had been given to pursue a drawdown and utilize funding for supplemental dredging. Dan discussed with several COE staff and determined that it was going to be too difficult to achieve for several reasons. 1) a 0.5’ drawdown is so narrow that pre-dredging could quickly fill in and require additional dredging; 2) setting up a contract for the dredging is not possible through the COE so DNR would need their own contractor; 3) timing issues as supplemental dredging would need to occur after the “normal” dredging. A snag has also come to light regarding using the funding to construct the Brewer Lake inlet structure. There are permit concerns regarding changes in flow to the navigation channel and future O&M.

Group discussion included: Can Pool 3 be drawn down a few inches within the normal operating band and keep 0 at Prescott? If it could, given the fluctuations that would likely occur, would a time frame as short as 2 weeks provide any habitat benefits? What if the pool bounced a few inches throughout the summer, would vegetation be able to establish during the minimal periods of low water?



The next WLM meeting will be Wednesday, May 24, 2017.

*Other Topics (All)*

- Next Agenda
  - Discuss UMRR project objective importance
  - Report of HEC-RAS transport model by Alex Nelson
  - December Mtg Discuss Habitat Needs Assessment version II
- Mississippi River Clean-up with in conjunction with Living Lands and Waters
  - May 13<sup>th</sup>, several landings in the La Crosse area, Kurt will send info to COE to pass on.
- Due-outs: Carried forward from previous RRF meetings
  - COE to forward 2014 Dredging Season AAR to the RRF upon completion (Tapp)
  - OSIT to investigate erosion at Lost Island and Fisher Island (Kimmel)
  - COE to distribute Environmental Assessments for Lansing Island and McMillan Island to the RRF upon completion (Clark)
  - FWS to distribute a preliminary draft EA of the beach plans for Pools 2-10 to the RRF upon completion (Yager)
  - RRF to draft a letter to distribute to the USCG pertaining to buoy maintenance concerns throughout the St. Paul District (Tapp/Helsel/Fisher)
  - COE to establish a team to identify potential uses of the Corps' Regional Sediment Management and Engineering with Nature programs pertaining to the McMillan Island Project (Kimmel)
  - MnDOT to reengage in discussions pertaining to modifying fill specifications for construction projects (Phenow)
  - COE to reach out to Jon Klingman (MVR) in regards to the O&M islands constructed in Pool 13 (Kimmel)
  - COE to reach out to Wendy Woyczik (FWS) in regards to the status of the Lansing Island floodplain forest restoration project (Kimmel)
  - MDNR to reach out to Dan Cottrell pertaining to railroad bank erosion near Swift Creek (Dieterman)
  - COE to define emergency dredging in the CMMP (C&H)
    - Add language to remove natural occurring shoals causing emergency conditions
  - Recreation Work Group to look into portaging status at USAF Lock
    - Continue looking for a chair person
  - COE to provide one page write-up for December RRF endorsement of Mosquito Island and Prairie Sand & Gravel (Machajewski/Kimmel)

- Due-outs: Generated from RRF meeting 108
  - Jim Fischer to send POC info for WDOT to Dan Cottrell (Fischer)
  - FWVG provide items to RRF voting member with back ground related to deciding next HREP projects. (Clark)
  - Each agency shares their objectives for UMRR projects (All)
  - Ask Alex Nelson to present on HEC-RAS of Coon Rapids to Lake Pepin (C&H)
  - Ask Andy Meier to present at December RRF on Forestry Model (C&H)

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF