

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #110, December 5-6, 2017; Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, Bloomington, MN

Introductions (All)

- Minutes from RRF #109: endorsed with minor changes: changing UMRCC to UMRCC in various locations and clarification as to the WLMTF White Paper recommendation
- Next Meeting:
 - April 24th RRF #111 will be held at the USFWS Visitor Center in Brice Prairie, WI

Agency Activities- COE (Tapp)

- Several deployments throughout district in support of hurricanes: Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate
 - Currently 57 people deployed, 35 people scheduled, and 51 people have returned
 - Trying to minimize impacts to projects, though there will be some delays
- Fargo-Morehead – injunction on construction in September, still on hold
- Public comment period for eight proposed Regional General Permits expired on November 13, 2017
 - RGP team has reviewed all comments received and made recommendations on the final content for seven of the eight put on public notice
- Current CR runs through December 8, 2017
- Starting in FY19 all DMMP's and CMS's will have to compete for General Investigations funds rather than O&M, much less funding available under GI for planning efforts
- Section 1122 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act – MVP submitted four projects for pilot consideration in February 2017: Pigs Eye Lake, Head of Lake Pepin, North & Sturgeon Lakes, and Pool 8 Water Level Management
 - Near 100 projects were submitted as part of the initial data call
 - HQ currently working on implementation guidance which will provide future direction for Section 1122 pilots

Agency Activities- WDNR (Fischer)

- Staffing/Personnel
 - A new Area Wildlife Supervisor was hired that will supervise wildlife staff working on the Mississippi River. Jess Carstens started October 2nd and replaces Tim Babros in the Black River Falls office. He supervises staff in Clark,

Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon Counties. During the department wide alignment effort the Mississippi River was recognized as needing additional attention from the wildlife program, so Jess will be allocating more time each week to working on river issues.

- Alignment Update:
 - Continue to implement the department-wide alignment with the Water Resources program now located in the Office of Great Waters, and with the fisheries and wildlife programs in the Fish Wildlife and Parks Division.
 - Adjustments have been ongoing as positions are filled and Jim Fischer, Jess Carstens, and Jordan Weeks (Mississippi River Fisheries Supervisor) are now working closely on all River-related issues.
 - As a next-step, we are currently reviewing both internal and external communications processes to ensure efficient internal cross-program communications, and efficiency and consistency in external communications. The review will include evaluation of Mississippi River interagency teams and projects to look for efficiencies and to ensure that we have a consistent approach on Mississippi River programs and projects. When finished with the review, we will send a list to the partnership identifying any changes to POCs on projects & teams.
 - So far we have made only one confirmed POC change by assigning Keith Weaver, (Fisheries Technician, Prairie du Chien) as the sole POC on the Mc Gregor Lake HREP. In implementing this approach we request that partners contact Keith first with any project-related questions. While he may redirect the question to ensure that the appropriate expertise is consulted, all official comments, votes, correspondence etc., will come only from Keith and in consultation with the Miss River management team (Fischer, Carstens, and Weeks).
 - Keith Phone: (608) 326-0428 Keith.Weaver@Wisconsin.gov

Agency Activities- UMRBA (Mickelsen)

- Josh Ney was hired on November 20, 2017 as UMRBA's new Policy and Programs Director
 - Will likely be focused on water quality and external communications to start
- Laren Salvado officially starts on June 4, 2018, but may help out over the winter
- Working with Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance to States for funding a Watershed Study over the next several years
- Plan to host a WLM workshop in late January or early February

Agency Activities- USCG (Mackillop)

- Overall experienced a good season, minimal incidents in MVP
 - Had some issues in the Winona area of the river
- Temporary repairs were completed at Pigs Eye Bridge last week, trains are now running
- Change of Command in July – Captain Scott Stormer took over
- Assisting with canine security in the Twin Cities area for the Super Bowl in February 2018

Agency Activities- Friends of Pool 2 (Senglaub)

- John commented that the friends group is interested in potentially stepping up as a local sponsor for a recreation project
 - He plans to attend the next Recreation Work Group meeting

Agency Activities- UMWA (Genz)

- Overall good year for navigation – traffic relatively high early in the season and relatively low later in the season
- Experienced good freight rates early in the season
- Not as many challenges as there have been in the past throughout MVP

Agency Activities- NPS (Robbins-Fenger)

- Alan is sitting in for John Anfinson for a couple weeks

Agency Activities- American Rivers (Dorothy)

- Efforts toward disposition study, which is now finalized

Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)

- Habitat Management Planning: Steve Winter has completed coordination visits with IA and WI, meeting with IL and Corps within the next week. MN was comfortable with HMP and didn't feel a visit was needed. FWS will review and address comments provided and plan to finalize HMP by December/January.
- All refuges allowing trapping were required to post a notification sign to inform visitors that trapping was allowed. Upper Miss received one sign that was posted at Weaver Landing in Pool 5. Trap sales have been very low this year – fur prices depressed.
- Three commercial waterfowl guides previously permitted to guide on the Refuge were sentenced for Lacey Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations. Sentences included \$25K fine and ban from guiding on the Refuge for two years.
- After meeting with WDNR, three compatibility determinations (CDs)(boating, beach use, and fishing tournaments) were forwarded to Regional Office for signature. Four CDs addressing commercial uses of the Refuge (guided fishing, guided waterfowl hunting,

fish floats, and guided eco-tours) are still being reviewed and modified based on public comment and comments from State partners.

Agency Activities- MnDOT (Phenow)

- Received \$5 million for port development
 - Anticipate a decision for the funding within the next week

Agency Activities- IDNR (Griffin)

- Griff will retire in the near future, though he hasn't set a date yet
- Kirk Hanson will fill in as the voting member for IDNR
 - Will be backfilling for Griff as an RRF voting member and writing permits, but he will still be involved in fisheries research

Agency Activities- MDNR (Moore)

- Brewer Lake Inlet project in Pool 3 has been delayed, will not get completed this calendar year
- Peterson Lake modification – Bill Huber is working with Steve Clark on the MDNR permit application
 - Hope to have the project completed by summer 2018
- Carrel's Pit now owned by Kohner, submitted a permit for a port facility

Water Level Management Task Force (Stefanski)

- Last met on September 6, 2017
- Conceptual model - Aaron McFarlane provided new digitized drawings for the public conceptual model
 - Brenda Kelly provided a sample that was designed by the WDNR graphic artist
- Drawdown video – Tim Schlagenhaft is working on two separate videos explaining the benefits of drawdowns – one that is 1.5 mins and one that is 3.5 mins
- White paper – RRF co-chairs will send a letter to the UMRRC requesting an answer to two questions: 1) can UMRRC funding be used to fund a drawdown, and 2) is there a mechanism for this funding to be granted every year over a 50-year project
- Winter pool operation – the COE will be sending a letter requesting a change in winter pool operation, to hold the pool at the higher side of the band in order to avoid staffing and overtime concerns

Channel Maintenance Program Activities (Cottrell, Kimmel, Machajewski and Tapp)

- Estimated FY18 budget for navigation is \$90 million
- Channel Maintenance

- Climate and land-use practices are influencing dredging volumes
- Dan Dieterman stated that he'd heard reports from the public regarding observed groundings at Camp Lacupolis
 - Dan Cottrell confirmed that no channel problems were recorded in this reach
- Agency partners expressed concern for the impact groundings have on natural resources
- The concern is greater when towboats ground outside the navigation channel
- Agency partners expressed interest in being engaged in grounding reporting
 - COE to discuss the matter both internally and with the USCG to determine whether or not there are limitations to distribution
- Excavations
 - Crats Island excavation was completed in August, 2017 – ~826K cy removed at \$11.57/cy
 - Lost Island excavation was partially completed in 2017 - ~410K cy removed by the end of the season
 - Eagles fledged by June 30, 2017
 - Corps Island excavation is being planned for 2019 - ~450K cy of material will likely be removed
 - Plan to award the contract in FY18
- DMMP's
 - There have been changes in the guidance for how we complete DMMP's, which has been passed down to St. Paul District from MVD/HQ
 - Additional planning reviews will be completed by MVD/HQ
 - Hoping for greater clarity as to what the Federal standard is
 - Pool 2 – completed preliminary draft report in October, 2017
 - Currently going through DQC and stakeholder review
 - Following DQC, report will go through legal, ATR, and MVD review
 - Lower Pool 4 – received all comments by September 15, 2017
 - 88 total comments were redistributed
 - Held a meeting with stakeholders on October 10, 2017
 - Tentative schedule: Jan – Federal standard defined, Feb – stakeholder review, Mar – public review
 - Pool 5 – planning has been delayed due to other priorities, hope to have the stakeholder review in the spring of 2018
 - Pool 6 – hope to have the draft report completed in January and hold public meetings in Feb/Mar timeline
- CMMP Update – have funding available in FY18, though there isn't a specific timeline for completion
 - Will provide an update at the April RRF meeting

Beneficial Use Restoration Projects (Clark and Kimmel)

- Mosquito Island
 - Distributed implementation plan to the RRF on July 13 and received endorsement on July 21 – thanks for the quick turn around
 - Post-construction details
 - Granular placed – 56,342 cy
 - Fines placed – 2,785 cy
 - Cost (excluding rock) - \$571,637 / \$9.67/cy
 - Cost (with rock) - \$629,574 / \$10.65/cy
 - Fine material borrow required a lot of coordination and creativity, to accommodate operational feasibility while still providing contingent overwintering benefits
 - Planting will take place in the spring of 2018
- McMillan Island
 - Have developed various design alternatives totaling over 650,000 cy of material needed for construction
 - Continuing to request study funding through the Corps' EWN program

Navigation Work Group Activities (Cottrell)

- Held a conference call on November 29, first meeting in a long time
- Corps will ask the navigation industry if/why tows are holding near Camp Lacupolis – partners have some mussel concerns with regard to queuing in this reach
- MDNR stated that there is a channel marker missing in this area, which may cause problems for navigation

Corps Winter Water Level Management (Cottrell)

- Changes in winter water level management are being proposed in conjunction with staffing changes at locks; proposing day shifts only during the winter months
- Discussed coordination with the FWVG, Corps will provide proposal to the FWVG for comment/discussion

HEC-RAS, Coon Rapids to Head of Lake Pepin (Hendrickson)

- Jon Hendrickson presented preliminary results of recent modeling by Alex Nelson to investigate alternative channel maintenance strategies due to the closure of Upper St. Anthony Falls (USAF) lock in 2015.
- Modeling looked at two alternatives. The first would eliminate dredging in USAF Pool and the second would eliminate all dredging upstream from Lock & Dam 1.
- The preliminary results show the first alternative increases average dredging quantities in Pools 2, 3 & 4 by 4%, 1%, and 6%, respectively, but reduces the overall average

dredging by 15%. Similarly, the second alternative increases average dredging in Pools 2, 3 & 4 by 4%, 2% and 8%, respectively, but reduces overall dredging by 24%. It is important to note, that while the average dredging quantities for the system are reduced over the 8 year modeling period, the trend of the dredging over time for both alternatives is toward an equilibrium that is similar to the current dredging quantities. This trend indicates that the new equilibrium for sediment deposition may be net neutral to the system and downstream pools may maintain permanent increases in average dredging quantities.

- Once results are final, the Corps will make a decision on how channel maintenance will be handled upstream from Lock & Dam 1.

Recreation Work Group (Yager)

- Have not met since the last RRF
- Seeking new chair to fill in behind Tim Yager
- EA for beach plans has yet to be completed, currently no timeline for completion
- Craig Blommer retired and will have a replacement on the RWG

Fish and Wildlife Work Group Activities (Clark)

- Last meeting was in October 2017 and focused on identification of HREP projects to move into the queue for planning and construction. The door was open to new projects, old projects, and old projects that were revised.
- Issue brief recommending RRF endorsement of Reno Bottoms and Lower Pool 10 HREPs was presented at the meeting. **After a brief discussion, the Corps made a motion to endorse the Reno Bottoms and Lower Pool 10 HREPs as requested by the FWWG. The IDNR seconded the motion and it was endorsed by consensus.**
- Ranking will need to continue for the remaining projects and an agreement was made to continue with ranking discussions prior to completion of the new HNA. States will work with FWS to refine the fact sheets.

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

- **A request for endorsement of the Pool 2 CMS was sent to voting members on 24 August 2017 via email and it was endorsed by consensus on 15 September 2017.**
- Upstream rock structure will be constructed during the summer of 2018 and the downstream rock structure will be constructed during the summer of 2019. Mussel relocations for each area will be completed during the spring prior to construction.
- Work continues on plans and specifications for Phase 2 dredging. Plan to award contract in FY18 with completion of dredging in 2019.
- Some discussion of potential placement at Lock & Dam 2 (LD2) embankment. Estimate 100K cy of fill for a berm at LD2. The Corps believes these can be effective and the LD4

embankment is looking very good. WDNR said they would be supportive of continuing with use of embankments similar to LD4. They provide protection and are good for movement of critters.

Section 204 Projects –Head of Lake Pepin - Pigs Eye Lake- (Novak)

- Pigs Eye: Selected alternative and went through Agency Technical Review (ATR). NPS noted lots of interest from the public. This is a way for east side St. Paul to access and enjoy the river.
- Head of Lake Pepin: Most data collection has been completed. WDNR working on concepts and getting shape files to the Corps to identify features. Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance working on fund raising to cost share the project. They are working with MN Land Trust. There has been some discussion of a feature that could be used for future placement of channel maintenance material.

Upper Mississippi River Restoration (Novak)

- Harpers Slough is done and awaiting as-built drawings. Dedication will be in Spring of 2018.
- Conway Lake bid opening was in September, but not awarded yet.
- McGregor Lake in feasibility stage now. Complete planning and focus on floodplain forest and overwintering habitat. Complete draft in May and final in June. Award contract in FY19. Anticipate two year construction period.
- Bass Lake Marsh Wetlands kickoff next week for feasibility.
- Pool 8 rock sill repair by Government plant in FY18.
- Peterson Lake comment period on EA ending 11 December. Looking at installing rock closure of the openings to increase overwintering benefits and reduce sediment (adaptive management).

Engineering with Nature (EWN) / Regional Sediment Management (RSM) (Kimmel)

- Two proposals for FY18 study funding. Chippewa Bedload Transport was funded at \$100K, but funding has not been received yet. Will look at better ways to predict sedimentation. Equipment installed at Durand, WI to look at sand wave movement and how much sand is in suspension. ERDC will come in spring to collect Bedload measurements. McMillan Island Forest Restoration was not funded through RSM in FY18, but it has a good chance of getting funding through EWN.

Disposition Study (Bischoff)

- Currently on hold pending FY18 funds.
- Corps held decision meeting on 21 August 2017 and decision was made to proceed with study. CRA funding provided in October 2017, but rescinded in November 2017.

- Objective is to review existing conditions of Upper three locks and dams and determine if there is justification to recommend Congressional de-authorization and determine the appropriate disposition of each of the projects.
- If recommendation is to de-authorize, Congress acts on the recommendation, projects would be classified as excess property, and GSA would dispose of the property as guided by Federal law. Congress could direct disposal to a particular entity in the de-authorizing language.
- If Congress does not de-authorize, USAF would continue in caretaker status and be operated for flood damage mitigation. LSAF and LD1 would continue current operations.
- Process should take about 18 months. Initial public outreach (3 months), Follow-up meetings with interested stakeholders to inform real estate analysis and environmental assessment (3 months), Draft report and EA for internal review (3 months), Public review of draft report and EA (1 month), Finalize report (4 months), Internal review (2 months), Forward report to HQUSACE (2 months), Forward recommendations to Congress (TBD).
- The NPS has taken over the visitor center piece and they are very interested in the property. They have sent a letter stating they want to be present, but not the operating owner.
- Many partners, agencies, groups, etc. are talking and planning for what the sites could be used for.

UMRS Watershed Study (Mickelson)

- Comments were gathered from the Summit held in July 2017 and a brochure/fact sheet will be sent out within the next couple weeks.
- Several challenges and solutions were outlined.
- Moving forward with Planning Assistance to States request to Corps of Engineers.

Other Topics (All)

- None

Steve Tapp
Co-Chairman, RRF