

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #100, August 19, 2014

*Introductions, Minutes, and Future Meetings (All)*

- Minutes from RRF #98: Endorsed by consensus as written.
- Minutes from RRF #99: Endorsed by consensus as written.
- Next RRF meeting: December 2-3, 2014, St. Paul, MN.
  - Try for Minnesota Valley FWS (Mary will check).
  - Back-up plan will be MVP District Office.

*Agency Activities (All)*

- COE, Tapp
  - WRDA passed, Federal Register notice to comply with shutdown of USAF & adjust level of service at LSAF & LD1. Continue to coordinate with local stakeholders. COE to assess dredging needs in upper pools, Pool 1, & Pool 2.
  - New Division Commander Change of Command ceremony on 8/29, BG Wehr.
  - Reorganization at Fountain City – GS14 Miss River Organization.
  - Randy Devendorf is retiring in October, 2014
- WDNR, Strassman
  - Contacted WDOT about beneficial use of dredged material within WDOT projects.
    - Has two contacts, which she will forward onto the COE
  - Dredging guidance review, no changes anticipated on Miss River.
  - Solid Waste Program giving leads on facilities for use of larger volumes of dredge material.
- MnDOT, Phenow
  - New Statewide Ports & Waterways Plan available next month on web, nothing controversial.
  - There is \$2M in bond funds available for commercial navigation interests. State-wide port authorities & the LMRWD will likely request funds. An RFP is in the state register and is open until mid-September.
    - Do not have to be a port authority to qualify.
    - LMRWD eligibility is in question (bond eligible).
  - Bridge update to come later via email.
  - Patrick intends to keep Dick's information sharing legacy going.
- FWS, Yager
  - Sabrina Chandler is the new Refuge Manager Supervisor
    - Has experience in Vicksburg & Savannah Districts with groups like the RRF.
  - Right-of-Way Projects
    - Cap 2020X currently working at Alma

- Dairy Land Power at La Crosse & at Reno Bottoms
  - Reported Wood Duck illness was power line collision, not an illness
  - Public comment period has been completed for the compatibility determination document.
  - Waterfowl survey, reduced scope of flights, focus on closed & high use areas.
  - Working on a Habitat Mgmt Plan with completion expected in 2015.
  - Working on a Commercial Guide & Guiding program update.
  - Working on a Visitor Services plan update
  - CP Rail & Pinnacle Engineering still working on Weaver Bottoms oil spill; vegetation impact monitoring, restoration plans still being discussed.
- MDNR, Dieterman
  - Meetings held with Commissioners on staffing & workloads; trying to get DNR more involved in Miss River.
  - Bill Huber taking over for Corey Hansen on Sept 1<sup>st</sup>. Still only 50% of Bill's time will be available for Miss River work.
  - Possible new wildlife position.
- IDNR, Griffin
  - New IDNR attorney, working hard to get permits out.
  - New Division Administrator (Kelly Meyers) over state forest and fish & wildlife.

*WLMTF (Stefanski, FWS)*

- WLMTF last meeting was held July 1, next meeting is September 3.
- WLMTF moving forward with submitting a special session proposal to the International Society for River Science meeting to be held in August, 2015 in La Crosse. This will follow the same format as the session held at the Wisconsin Wetlands Association symposium with the additions of a section on COE channel information.
- A Science Support Program proposal was submitted by Stephen Winter and Kevin Kenow for aquatic vegetation sampling on Pool 5 in 2015 to compare vegetation 10 years following the drawdown. (FWS has entered into an interagency agreement with USGS to perform this sampling in 2015.) A second Science Support Program proposal was submitted to work with Brian Ickes for analysis of LTRM fish data in Pool 8 to look for correlation with the drawdown.
- Kevin Kenow received word that the WLM policy synthesis paper was still too long. He and others will work on a revision and is "fairly optimistic" that it will make it through the next round of review. Teresa Newton's paper on mussel movement from the Pool 6 study has been "tentatively accepted" into Freshwater Biology.

- Drawdown summary document is complete (thank you Ruth Nissen). Twelve hard copies will be printed and given to each agency; the electronic version is available online at the COE website (thank you Dan Cottrell).
  
- Gretchen Benjamin and Tim Schlagenhaft completed a review of the 1996 Problem Appraisal Report for water level management with the intent to rejuvenate this work and ultimately revise the operating plan for one pool in the St Paul District effective in 2017. The PAR would be written by a consulting firm which would be hired through National Audubon and The Nature Conservancy. Gretchen has submitted a proposal to the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative for \$60,000 to help fund a contract to have a PAR written.
  
- The decision has been made to proceed with a 0' drawdown at Prescott with a 12" drawdown at LD 3 in conjunction with the HREP. The WLMTF will continue to stay informed about the Pool 3 project and provide educational assistance whenever needed. The WLMTF will focus its energy on the next pool drawdown and the pool operating plan PAR.
  
- Photo points will be completed by MN DNR (Pool 3), FWS (Pools 5 & 6), and WI DNR (Pool 8) in Aug/Sept.

*FWWG (Stefanik, COE)*

- Last meeting was May 21
  - o Topics included riparian forest presentation, permits (EMP, Channel Maintenance), flood conveyance; lots of good discussions. Need to work through challenges, define logical path to work through them.
  
- **Small scale projects:** goal is to implement as they present themselves. Very broad topic and hard to define. Need boundaries/guidance from RRF to make meaningful. Wanted projects with quick turnaround when funds available (EMP, Channel Maintenance). Difficult to define what can be streamlined. The Corps agreed to develop a list of parameters for only channel maintenance sand for review by FWWG. Similar to Beach Planning effort. The FWWG can use those parameters to develop a list of projects that might fit the parameters. Shelf-life of planning & permits is a concern. Maybe the EMP process would be a place to start (per Yager/FWS). DMMPs are a channel maintenance plan, not a habitat program. Define least costly measures. Define RE costs and compare to habitat projects.
  
- **NGO Participation.** FWWG wants their continued participation but concerned with how we define who attends, who's invited. Continue as is. RRF concurs.
  
- **Looking for new workgroup chair.** Seek from within FWWG. FWS will consider within FWS.

- **Review Environmental Pool Plans:** Did not address but will at next FWWG meeting. Status of projects completed by Pool. Tom Novak to look into a report card.

*Channel Maintenance Program Activities (Tapp & Machajewski, COE)*

- Dredging:
  - o Summary of conditions & dredging status
    - WDNR concerned with in-water placement, but did want to accommodate COE needs. Concern is for sediment moving and filling overwintering habitat.
    - COE did place material in historic dredge cut footprint. Material being removed this week.
    - MDNR concerned that the 1<sup>st</sup> they heard about the issue was on the day of dredging. Issue needed more discussion with agencies; concern with lack of coordination. Concerned with material washing into Big Lake. Is sand sloughing into channel or backwaters from placement sites during high water events? Suggested that Jon Hendrickson address this issue. Stream bank erosion needs further study.
    - Have only done in-water placement a few times in MVP; NOT a common practice. This was an emergency situation.
    - Most cuts being dredged to 200' wide and 11' deep, (vs. 300' wide @ 12' deep.)
    - Concerns with Pools 7, 8, 9, & 10.
    - Buoy setting by COE to avoid groundings and channel closures. COE needs more resources from USCG to manage channel marking program. Virtual buoys are a tool to be used but not a cure all; not all boats have the capability to utilize them.
    - RRF members would like to participate in a post-season After Action Review (AAR)
    - Emergency CT process too long; not very responsive. Need to emulate flood fight contracting.
  - o Long-term Planning
    - Grand Encampment Summary
      - ~62,000cy removed from 5/20 – 6/27.
      - Material placed at the former Sass property located north of Alma.
      - Contractor shut down for about a month due to permit issues with Buffalo County. Buffalo County ultimately issued permits for the work.

- In-water placement noted above was result of no capacity at placement site; site would have had capacity if contractor would not have been shut down for a month due to permit issues.
- Work shutdown will result in need to continue unload operations into the 2015 construction season. Material will also need to be trucked through the City of Alma
- Concern raised by RRF partners about the lack of a public meeting regarding this unload project. C&H was advised by legal counsel to not be involved in the permit process including hosting public meetings.
- “Make it go away” concept the result of COE loss of 360 acre Braun property sold to local farmer after preliminary agreements were negotiated with property owner.
- FRAC-use of material was investigated but cooled due to expense to separate.
- Lower Pool 4 & Pool 5 Dredged Material Management Plans (DMMPs)
  - 50-year planning effort supports that dredging will generate 18 – 20 million cy of material which needs to find an end location.
  - Crats (Pool 4) & Lost (Pool 5) Islands both about ~2.0M cy to be removed in the next two seasons.
  - Interagency meeting held on 2/27 @ LD #4.
    - Very little support for habitat projects in Pool 4.
    - Additional habitat features being considered in Weaver Bottoms (Pool 5).
    - Upland placement is preferred management option.
    - Utilization of Carrels Pit is being considered as an upland transfer site.
      - Both mechanical & hydraulic placement options
      - Material to be trucked elsewhere
  - Stakeholder meeting scheduled for 9/23 in Wabasha. Engage County & local municipalities.
  - Hoping to have a preliminary DRAFT report prepared by fall 2014.
- Pool 6 DMMP
  - Losing or have lost utilization of historic placement sites in Pool 6
    - Winona Commercial Harbor
    - Hemker portion of Homer
  - Last two seasons had to scramble to find new placement sites
    - This season Zach was able to work-out agreements with City, Port Authority, & Hemker.
    - Additional trucking costs incurred by COE (\$1.70 & \$7.00/cy).
  - DMMP goal is to implement a COE-owned site.

- Various options being considered:
  - Mosquito Island
  - Other City of Winona/Winona Port Authority Property
  - Condemnation
- McMillan Island Unload
  - Contract to remove 150,000 of the 200,000cy on McMillan.
    - Capacity at Buck Creek is 150,000cy.
  - Hydraulically move material to Buck Creek.
  - Bid opening scheduled for 8/21.
- Other DMMP needs:
  - Minnesota River
  - Head of Lake Pepin
  - Pool 9, loss of site at Dairy Land Power (Genoa) site.
    - Additional, significant transportation costs to push material to Lansing Hwy Bridge
      - 2012: \$306k of \$672k job
      - 2014: \$221k of \$383k job
- Other Comments/discussions
  - MDNR stated that they own property below the Hastings Small Boat Harbor that could be considered for a future dredged material placement site.
  - WDNR asked if the DMMP are looking at current weather patterns (wet cycle/increased dredging) when considering site capacity needs. The DMMPs are based on historic dredging records from 1981 through present (period suggested by Jon Hendrickson due to changes in dredging practices – this period covers flood & drought periods).
  - Unfortunately, site unload costs have doubled & tripled over historic costs in the past 5 – 10 years.
- CMMP Overhaul needed.
  - All aspects will be reviewed/updated including policies, agreements, tables, maps, environmental review.
  - RRF input will be requested.

### *Flexible Uses of Dredged Material*

- Mosquito Island (Clark, COE)
  - MOU still requires water quality certification
  - Stefanski (FWS) stated that Mosquito Island is the least used island/beach in Pool 6 per their surveys
    - Machajewski (COE) disagreed; always full, especially weekends.
    - Griffin (IDNR) supports this type of beneficial use

- Dieterman (MDNR) concerned with adding sediment in Pools 4, 5, & 6.
- Strassman (WDNR) stated that they are searching for common ground.
- Novak (COE) Only difference between this and the Pool 5 E islands is the long-term planning process.
- Strassman (WDNR) stated “we need criteria to meet a standard to protect the resource; to have an added value.”
- Clark (COE) O&M needs to manage dredge material at the Federal Standard; Least Costly, Environmentally Acceptable Alternative. Additional benefits (i.e. environmental/habitat) are beyond O&M authorities.
- Lansing Island Restoration and Recreational Enhancement (King, FWS)
  - DRAFT EA out for agency review; have received most agency comments.
  - Comments included:
    - Minimize flood stage impacts
    - Connect to existing islands
    - Run flood duration models
    - Improve forest community
  - Friends Group collected 100,000 tree seeds.
  - Next step is to send the EA to partners by Dec RRF.

*Pool 2 Channel Management Study (Novak, COE)*

- Tom gave an updated presentation on the status of the project
- New schedule
  - Winter 2015/2015: DRAFT report to public
  - Feb 2015: Finalize report, RRF Endorsement
  - Mar 2015: Report approval/FONSI
  - Apr 2015: Initiate Plans & Specs
  - Aug 2015: Advertise Stage 1 (Island construction & wing dam modification (~\$5M))
  - Oct/Nov 2015: Award Stage 1
  - Aug 2016: Advertise Stage 2 Contract (Dredging (~\$8.5M))
  - Oct/Nov 2016: Award Stage 2
  - Aug 2017: Advertise Stage 3 Contract (Rock sill closure (~\$2.5M))
  - Oct/Nov 2017: Award Stage 3
- The maintaining authorized dimensions alternative will likely need channel control structures to be effective; this will likely require additional modeling
  - Additional sediment testing is likely needed as well.
- Concern with increased dredging in Pool 2 due to WRDA closing of USAF lock
- VE study recommendations not implementable
- The additional sediment samples collected in the proposed Boulanger Slough had no major hits; the special handling quantity of material should be decreasing.
- Mitigation impacts being developed; mussels & sedimentation
- Need to complete NEPA process
- Dorothy (American Rivers) has a concern with precedent to moving the channel.

- This is not the 1<sup>st</sup> channel movement in MVP or the COE.
- Genz (UMWA) expressed his concern that starts with watershed management.
- Dorothy (American Rivers) expressed concerns with high flow sedimentation impacts in Pools 3 & 4.

*Head of Lake Pepin (Main, LPLA)*

- Rylee gave a presentation of their proposed project
- Habitat Enhancement & Rehabilitation Project
  - Improve sedimentation, water quality, aquatic & terrestrial habitat
  - Main features are islands
    - Similar to Pool 8 mudflats, Peoria Lake, and/or Chesapeake Bay
  - PAR started but need additional data
- Need non-Fed sponsor
- COE O&M needs placement options at Head of Lake Pepin
  - This is not a high priority area for C&H, but it provides good initial planning.
- Report to RRF members for review & comments prior to next Dec RRF
  - FWVG should look at this and provide comments
  - Need contamination/sediment data.

*Recreation Work Group (Tim Yager)*

- Pool 7/8 Planning
  - draft plan has been completed, including public input
  - final partner input is requested by end of August
  - final plan ready by end of September
- Environmental Assessment
  - working on finalizing "big spreadsheet" which will identify all beaches and preferred actions at those beaches (currently includes Pools 4 through 10).
  - writing draft EA/Plan has been slowed due to acting/detail
  - Kendra Niemeck and Laurel Kullerud in La Crosse District have stepped up and continue to work on Pool 7/8 beach plan and EA
- Will move forward with concept of adding Pool 11 to MVPs Rec Beach Plans
  - RWG will discuss further
- 2015 Year of Fishing (aka 2012 year of paddling)

*Workgroup Roles/Responsibilities (All)*

-Tabled discussion to RRF #101.

*Other Topics/Issues (All)*

- Closing of LSAF: add Olivia & Patrick to partner planning group
- Critical Corridor Planning – Zoning Districts, Rule making for MDNR; zoning affect on placement sites. Sara's notes to Steve Tapp to see if it's something the RRF should discuss further.
- Unconfirmed Blue-Green algae-caused fatality of two dogs in Winona.



- States to follow up

*Environmental Management Program (Novak)*

- Tom gave a brief update to those who attended the Capoli Slough project tour on Wednesday morning.
- Funding:
  - FY14 Program \$31.96M (MVP allocated \$7.13M).
  - FY15 Presidents Budget: \$33M (MVP \$7.5M).
- Capoli Slough
  - Project tour
  - Project dedication being considered for fall 2014.
- Harper Slough: Bid opening 8/29/2014
- Other Planning Studies:
  - North/Sturgeon Lake Islands w/minor Pool 3 drawdown, complete PAR, initiate preliminary DRAFT DPR.
  - Conway Lake, complete PAR, initiate preliminary DRAFT DPR.
  - McGregor Lake, complete PAR, initiate preliminary DRAFT DPR.

*Aquatic Invasive Species*

- Tabled discussion to RRF #101.

*Navigation Work Group (Dan Cottrell) Handout on bridges*

- Tabled to RRF #101

*Due Outs*

- Mary Stefanski to see if she can arrange Dec RRF @ Minnesota Valley Refuge.
- Sara Strassman to provide WDOT points of contact to COE.
- Small Scale Projects: RRF to define parameters for FWVG.
- Environmental Pool Plans: Tom Novak & Elliott Stefanik to look into report card.
- Partners to be invited to participate in post-dredging season AAR.
- Steve Tapp to follow-up with MVR counterpart about possibly including Pool 11 in the MVP beach planning efforts (this would simplify process for FWS).
- Add Olivia Dorothy & Patrick Phenow to the partner planning group for the closing of USAF.
- Sara to send MDNR Critical Corridor Planning information to Steve Tapp.

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF