

CEMVP-OP-CH

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #95, December 4th-5th, 2012

Introductions (All)

- Minutes from RRF #94 were approved
- Upcoming RRF Meetings: April 23, either at Winona State University, Winona, MN or the Fish & Wildlife Visitors Center, Brice Prairie, WI; August 20-21, National Park Service Building, McGregor, IA

Agency Activities- EPA (Larry Shepard)

- Xcel Energy pipeline- NEPA process for the pipeline route that crosses the U.S. / Canada border
 - Currently at the State of Nebraska level, looking into alternative routes
- St. John's Bayou- MVM project
 - Study on wetland assessment and conditions
- Kathy Kowal is the contact for GLMRIS

Agency Activities- WDNR (Jim Fischer)

- EPA approved 2010 impaired waters list
- Houseboat at Trenton- hearing concluded with the court in agreement with the State of Wisconsin, the permit for the houseboat was denied and testimony from the COE and USCG was appreciated
- UMRBA- working with the four other states for uniform water monitoring by December 2013
- LTRMP- reviewing 9% cut to field station
- Dan Baumann is now the Regional Director, beginning in July Dan will be the Regional Director and Rivers Coordinator
- A lot of effort has been put into performance evaluations for staff

Agency Activities- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)

- Commented that the RRF distribution list needs to be updated, COE agreed to make revisions

Agency Activities- USCG (Brian Zekus)

- Boat is currently undergoing maintenance
- Brian is transferring out sometime in June, replacement will likely arrive in July-August
- USCG will likely have an Industry Day early 2013 (Feb/Mar)
 - Probably take place at the Emergency Operations Training Facility in Fridley, MN
- Under strict travel restrictions

- Living Lands and Waters, in connection with the “Our Mississippi” outreach program, had two outings on the river- recently won a national award

Agency Activities- IWL (Olivia Dorothy)

- Discussion with MVR regarding a geographic expansion of UMRR-EMP
 - Responses from congressional staffers are positive
- Anticipating a new WRDA bill in 2014

Agency Activities- FWS (Tim Yager)

- Transferred their email system from Lotus Notes to Google Mail on 11/19
 - There have been some hiccups with the transfer
- Directed to reduce travel by 13% in 2013 (from 2012 levels)
 - Shouldn't impact OSIT attendance
- Rich King is now the District Manager for the McGregor District
- Dixie Palmer, Administration in McGregor retired
- Rick Shulz, Chief of Refuges retired, expect to fill position the 1st of the year
- Looking into establishing a Supervisory Law Enforcement position
 - Tim would supervise this position
- Looking into establishing a Visitors Assistant position at the new FWS building in Brice Prairie, WI
- Habitat Management Plans are making progress
 - National scale initiative to develop a list of surrogate species
- Waterfowl season in Wisconsin and Minnesota closed for the year on Sunday
 - Still very large numbers of migratory birds in the pools
- Cap-X 2020- crossing would go through refuge near Alma
 - Record of decision signed last month to expand the right of way for the crossing
 - Looking to start construction within the next year
 - FWS could still find it non-compatible

Agency Activities- COE (Steve Tapp)

- Dan Cottrell may partake in a 90 day rotation at Headquarters starting this spring
- Kurt Brownell is joining Channels & Harbors as a Channel Maintenance Coordinator
- There has been a lot of turnover in the survey crew, so be aware that there may be some inexperience on the river and it may impact turnaround times
- Low water issues haven't impacted us as much due to the pooled areas our District has
- 2013 level of service at the upper three locks: 2am-7am closure every day
- LD6 dewatering started on Monday, you can contact Lisa Lund for a tour
- New guidance for conference approval
 - Received an exemption for this meeting, hopeful that the exemption can be applied to future forum meetings

- In order for this to be the case, the meeting must take place at a federal facility and travel costs must stay the same

Channel Maintenance Program Activities (OP-CH)

- Dredged a total quantity of 1,182,187 cubic yards in the 2012 season
 - 57% government, 43% contractor
 - Two non-typical jobs: Chippewa Delta, 247,000 cubic yards; Above Atchafalaya for UMRR-EMP borrow, 89,000 cubic yards
- Head of Raft Channel: grounding and channel closure, channel was closed for 55.5 hours over the 7/31-8/2 time frame
- St. Paul Barge Terminal: grounding and channel blockage, channel was blocked on 10/31, barges were relocated to let vessels pass, area was re-opened through dredging on 11/2
 - Dan Dieterman questioned whether or not it was possible for the COE to pursue a towing company for causing a shoal in the channel due to prop-wash
 - Steve Tapp stated that C&H will look into it, it is rare that we have recent sounding data before and after an event like that happens, but we do in this circumstance
- Jim Fischer questioned how the towing industry calculates financial loss during a channel closure
- Dan Cottrell questioned what the rules/guidelines are for turbidity caused by boats in reference to local complaints due to transporting and off loading barges within the Red Wing Commercial Harbor
 - No known regulations were stated, it may be a question suited for the MPCA and they were not in attendance
- Jim Fischer commented that it would be good for the forum to complete a site visit when the Goetz is pumping
- Zach Kimmel questioned whether or not agencies had a preference on placement site stabilization next season
 - Dan Dieterman commented that it would be good to stabilize the Fountain City 1 Site
 - Jim Fischer commented that he would speak to his colleagues and respond in the spring
- Dan Dieterman also commented that it would be good to identify historic site locations to place material and/or re-shape to help prevent additional erosion
- Pool 2 Channel Management Study- 3 alternatives remain: no action, increased channel maintenance, and the Boulanger slough channel realignment
 - The Boulanger slough realignment consists of a northerly and southerly alignment, the towing industry prefers the southerly alignment
 - This alignment would avoid an area where Higgins Eye mussels were located by 300'
 - PDT hopes to identify a preferred alternative within the next month and present to the RRF in February/March 2013 for endorsement

- Lower Boulanger Unload- 15 acres on Grey Cloud Island were identified with 4-6' of fill for material from the Lower Boulanger placement site
- Reads Landing Unload- site unloading began in the Fall of 2011 and ended in July of 2012
 - Moved ~900,000 cubic yards of material from Reads Landing to the Wabasha Gravel Pit
 - Moved an additional ~250,000 cubic yards of material from the Chippewa Delta to Reads Landing

Lock & Dam 3 Final Update (Tom Novak)

- Construction work was completed on November 12th
- Plan to establish seeding/planting in May/June of 2013
- One more final update will be provided for the LD3 Project (August RRF) after plantings are completed

Environmental Management Program (Tom Novak)

- FY13 allocation- \$4,344,798
 - Includes \$600,000 from MVS and a \$419,000 carry-in from FY12
 - Majority of funds will go to Capoli Islands Stage 2 for the base bid
- Pool 8 Islands Phase III- Maintenance and Repair crew is going to repair a small breach at island N1 in FY13
- Capoli Slough Islands Stage 1 (Newt Marine)- awarded at \$3,900,000
 - 80% complete as of November 15th
- Capoli Slough Islands Stage 2 (low bid- McHugh Excavating)- there was a protest, plan to re-advertise in December 2012 and award in February 2013
- Harpers Slough planning effort
 - Complete DPR in August 2013
 - Initiate plans and specs October 2013
 - Complete plans and specs Stage 1 March 2014
 - Advertise contract March 2014
- Lock & Dam 3 Fish Passage plan to complete the report in 2013
- North and Sturgeon Lakes planning effort
 - Initiate and complete PAR in 2013
 - Initiate DPR in 2013
 - Currently having issues establishing an agreement with the state of MN
 - May eliminate the possibility for a drawdown due to the inability to cost share
 - Olivia Dorothy commented that Corps cost sharing will likely be more flexible in the new WRDA
- Other planning studies include: Conway Lake, Lake Winnishiek, McGregor Lake

Navigation Work Group (Paul Machajewski)

- Main topics: Head of Lake Pepin, Current Meter, Dan Cottrell is now the Channels & Harbors representative for the work group
- Lowry Avenue Bridge- construction completed, had the grand opening in October 2012
- Hastings Bridge- construction began in the fall of 2010
 - Floated the main span into place in September 2012
 - Beneficial use material was used for the project
- Winona Bridge- latest plan is to build a two lane and rehabilitate the existing bridge
- I-90 Bridge (La Crosse)- preferred alternative is to build a concrete box girder
 - Construction completion anticipated to be 2015
- Wabasha Bridge- Tim Yager commented that ~400 trucks are crossing per day for FRAC purposes
 - 200 loaded / 200 unloaded, Superior Sand trucks
- Mooring buoy is currently below Lock & Dam 8, may look into relocating
 - Estimated cost of sheet pile cell is \$2.3 million, there will not be a permanent cell constructed below Lock & Dam 8 due to input from the navigation industry- they would rather see the money used elsewhere

Recap from Day One (All)

- River Resources Forum distribution list needs to be updated
- Each agency has been asked to bring and distribute a hierarchy chart of their organization at the next meeting
- Congress is working on a new WRDA, estimated completion is 2014

Water Level Management Task Force (Mary Stefanski)

- Agencies need to provide comments to Ruth Nissen regarding the summary document for the Pool 5, 6, and 8 drawdown results by 1/1/2013
- Gretchen Benjamin helped raise \$100,000 from a trust for the Pool 3 drawdown
 - Funds will be used for cultural documentation and mussel surveys and analysis
 - Funds from the trust must be committed by 7/1/2013
- FY14 Lower Mississippi River habitat restoration proposal to the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council was successful in being recommended for \$1.7 million of the requested \$3.4 million
 - \$1.1 million for the Pool 3 drawdown
 - \$450,000 for Root River
 - \$150,000 for Goat Prairie restoration
- There are five alternatives for a drawdown in Pool 3
 - Have to continue to investigate impacts to the St. Croix River
 - Most beneficial scenario may have the greatest impact to the St. Croix, so increased modeling may be needed to make a sound judgment decision

- COE to begin working on a Definite Project Report for completing the North & Sturgeon Lakes EMP project along with a potential drawdown of Pool 3, anticipated completion mid-2014
- January 2013- plan to hold a public meeting explaining the purpose and concept of a drawdown, likely taking place in Hastings, Red Wing, and Prescott
- May 2013- plan to hold a meeting specific to a Pool 3 drawdown, explaining the situation in greater detail
- Dan Dieterman commented that it may be possible to expose a good amount of land in North and Sturgeon Lakes as they have filled in quite a bit
 - May need newer survey data to calculate exposed acreage
- Photo points have been completed for Pools 5, 6, and 8
- Pool 8 is the alternative for a drawdown if Pool 3 is no longer feasible

Agency Update on Asian Carp (All)

- USCG (Brian Zekus)
 - University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species lab is looking for \$8.7 million more to study Asian Carp next year
 - Peter Sorenson, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology at the U of M, is the lead
- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)
 - MDNR is putting together an advisory board for Asian Carp research, to provide guidance on the direction of research efforts
 - Currently have a full-time monitoring program with two full time fisheries employees
 - Commercial fisherman caught a 47 pound Bighead Carp in Lake Pepin in November
 - Lock 1 preliminary report is currently under review
 - Request for proposal to study the St. Croix River, Lock & Dam 2, and the MN River to determine if fish barriers are feasible
 - Tim Schlagenhaft took a new job working for the Audubon and the MDNR plans to fill his position
- FWS (Tim Yager)
 - New Fish Health Center in Lacrosse, WI is expanding their technology and increasing their capabilities
- COE (Russ Snyder)
 - Working with MDNR on a public draft report of efforts at Lock & Dam 1 (potential electric barrier)
 - City of Minneapolis is advancing their “Above the Falls” zoning plan
 - City of Minneapolis is also looking into their obligation to the Corps as it ties to the 9’ Channel Project and the potential closure of one of its own terminals to help prevent the spread/migration of Asian Carp
 - Asked the USCG to look into the spread of Asian Carp from a navigation safety perspective

- Jim Fischer asked about portages around barriers if they are used (for kayaks and canoes)
- EDNA testing- taking a more scientific approach using positive and negative controls
- WDNR (Jim Fischer)
 - Two additional positions were added to support AIS endeavors
 - AIS decontamination policy team hopes to put something together by April
 - Two Bighead were caught and sampled on the Wisconsin River near Prairie Du Sac, WI below the dam- each of the fish was at least 40"
 - Granted a permit to the USGS to transport live Asian Carp at the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center
 - There are two bills in Congress right now to provide the FWS a greater role in preventing the introduction of harmful species
 - Dan Dieterman questioned whether or not the RRF could support the bills in Congress
 - It was discussed that the COE can't support legislation
- IDNR (Mike Griffin)
 - No significant changes, continuing to monitor commercial harvests
- EPA (Larry Shepard)
 - Taking ongoing control measures

Agency Update on FRAC (All)

- WDNR (Jim Fischer)
 - Permit applications appear to have leveled off somewhat
 - There are proposals for off-loading sites in Pepin and Stockholm, they have strong opposition
 - A letter was sent to the Wisconsin Sand Association (WISA) containing a list of common violations
 - This letter was meant as a reference for self-policing
 - Jim Fischer will try to send a copy of the letter to Olivia Dorothy for reference
- FWS (Tim Yager)
 - Superior Sands is building a loading site adjacent to the Wabasha Gravel Pit
 - ~400 trucks per day are crossing the Wabasha Bridge for FRAC purposes
 - Minnesota City wants to double production
- MDNR (Dan Dieterman)
 - Goodhue County made a good presentation regarding FRAC and its impacts
 - Several counties have a FRAC moratorium in place
- COE (Paul Machajewski)
 - Superior Sands is developing a conveying system that will run from the Wabasha Gravel Pit to elevators to the train
 - System will be constructed within the railroad right of way, CP Rail
 - The access road for trucking purposes will be entirely throughout Corps property
 - Their plan is currently under review

- 4 sites have been tested: Wabasha Gravel Pit, Crats Island, Grand Encampment, and Lost Island- sediment sampling results are coming back
 - At least 50% of the material meets the size requirement
 - Shape, composition, and crush strength tests are still being processed
 - Must pass a 4,000 pound crush test
 - Plan on meeting with the FRAC industry next to present the results and identify options for how we would get the material to them
- Headquarters has hired a consultant to deal with the FRAC concerns on the east coast
- Tim Yager questioned if the COE was going to determine the true value of material from FRAC through an economic analysis
 - Paul Machajewski responded that they are working with a contact at Headquarters to determine that value in the future, focused on preliminary market response now
- COE will provide guidelines for removal and the contractors would be held to determined standards/guidelines for removal
- FWS questioned whether or not NEPA is required pertaining to the end point of the material if a large quantity is removed
- IWLA (Olivia Dorothy)
 - Put out a letter at a national meeting stating that the Izaak Walton League opposes all steps of the FRAC process
 - Still not a significant national focus for the IWLA

Fish and Wildlife Work Group Activities (Elliott Stefanik)

- Met once since the August forum, last week
- Dave Potter presented pertaining to hydro-power at the LSAF lock & dam
- HREP completion reports- project updates were made
- UMR-EMP design handbook- looking to update in 2013
- Repository- considering whether or not a repository is worth the effort it would take to put something together
 - If we determine to go forward with it, we need to determine who the lead (agency/individual) is and how the data will be stored
 - Elliott agreed to contact Scott Yess to see if a repository should be addressed at the UMRCC level
 - There may be duplication of data storage that can't be easily avoided
 - May not be good for LIDAR data, photos, etc.
 - No need for further discussions at the RRF level
- Program integration between LTRMP (pool and system scale) and HREP (project level) to define projects

Regional Forestry Update (Randy Urich)

- UMR Systemic Forest Stewardship Plan has NESP origin

- Plan's purposes are to: use as a guide for regional coordination, develop regional goals and objectives, identify data needs, and commit to adaptive management
- It is a bluff to bluff plan that focuses on federal ownership, but others can use the data to support management
- Approach to make projects constructible as soon as funding comes
- Ecosystem services provided by floodplain forests: water quality, living resources, land based resources, education and research, cultural and recreational resources
- Resource trends are primarily from wooded areas to agricultural areas
- System wide goals / vision statement: to seek long-term sustainability of the economic uses and ecological integrity of the Upper Mississippi River System
- Next steps: public meetings and presentations, program neutral plan, potential applications and use, additional discussion anticipated at the UMRCC meeting this spring
- Implementation: use of O&M dollars is limited to land that is Corps owned in fee title, UMRR-UMRR-EMP dollars can be used for Corps/FWS owned lands, unless there is a cost-share with the state, then state lands are included
- Will discuss forum endorsement of the UMR Systemic Forest Stewardship Plan at the next meeting
 - Mike Griffin's motion on behalf of the IDNR remains on the table for the April forum
- There was a recommendation that the states write letters to endorse
- Also recommendation that the RRCT and RRAT endorse

Recreation Work Group (Kevin Berg)

- No meetings since the last RRF, meeting will be scheduled in January 2013
- Need to revisit beach plans
- Need to revisit recreational boating data and the use/posting of said data
- Will revisit the status of the MDNR efforts pertaining to canoe trails
- Discussion of the potential to rotate the Recreation Work Group chair- FWS will consider rotation
- Tim Yager commented on the summer themes
 - 2012- summer of paddling
 - 2013- summer of cycling
 - 2014- summer of fishing
 - Brought up the possibility of the RWG assisting in obtaining increased involvement in the 2013 activities for the "summer of cycling" theme and in the planning for the 2014 "summer of fishing" theme
- Inland Waterway Trust Fund- Olivia Dorothy questioned the potential to charge a user fee for recreational lockages in order to increase fund revenues
 - Could the RWG check into feasibility and impacts?
- Jim Fischer commented that the top priority from the WDNR's perspective is completion of the beach plans

March 4th, 2013

RRF #95

- Funds are available to do the work, but we can't complete that work until we have plans
- Discussion of completing a programmatic EA to cover all of the beach plans

Steve Tapp

Co-Chairman, RRF