

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #125 on 18 April 2023 at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum and online via WebEx virtual meeting.

Introductions, Minutes, Next Meetings, Due Outs (Fischer/Stanick)

- RRF 124 Minutes approval
 - Motion from Kirk Hansen
 - Second from Bob Stanick
 - No discussion, approved as written

- Next Meetings:
 - August 15th & 16th in Prairie du Chien
 - McGregor Lake field visit?
 - December 5th & 6th in Twin Cities, MN – venue TBD

- Due Outs carried forward from previous meetings
 - ~~COE to provide one page write up for RRF endorsement of Prairie Sand & Gravel (DeVaney)~~
 - *Complete – submitted to RRF 124, RRF endorsed by email 23-Jan-2023*
 - RWG will develop a recommendation to the RRF regarding the need for a programmatic NEPA document to cover beach nourishment and other actions at sites identified in beach management plans (Berg)
 - *Pending: Berg reported no updates*
 - Corps to consider more dialogue with OSIT regarding channel conditions (Stanick)
 - Agencies would like more information on existing conditions and what USACE is currently tracking as issues, wish to limit surprises
 - *Stanick carrying forward*
 - Corps will draft language that RRF agencies can share with tournament organizers to improve safety when boating near dredging operations. (Cottrell)
 - *Still pending – hoping to draft language over winter and have it out by nav season*
 - MnDOT to look at transportation bill to see if there's funding to address La Crosse RR Bridge issues (Phenow)
 - *Patrick requested to leave this due-out, has not found specific funding*
 - Jim Fischer to determine path forward re: spudding question
 - Identify what questions are being asked and who needs to answer
 - Assign to appropriate workgroup
 - *Fischer carrying forward*
 - Channels and Harbors will look into posting the due-outs on the RRF webpage
 - *Stanick noted the RRF Minutes are posted on the web*
 - Bob Stanick will send out a survey to RRF members seeking meeting feedback
 - *Bob carrying it forward*
 - Bob Stanick will create a due-out month before reminder email
 - *Bob carrying forward*

Agency Activities – (All)

- WI DNR – Jim Fischer
 - New secretary Adam Pain in June
 - Vacancy in Office of Great Waters (vice Galarneau) hoping to have new director in early May
 - Sara Strassman's position is still open, hung up in HR
 - LTRM project position to be announced in about a month
 - Craig Hoff passed away in Feb
 - Benefit on Apr 29th
 - MOU revisions making progress
 - Passed through USACE OC review, back with the WI DNR
 - Crystal hasn't opened it yet, not expecting a lot of feedback, hoping to swiftly review and be done
 - Attended NESP Coordinating committee on Apr 5th
 - Fish technician in Alma, just closed
 - Fisheries biologist in La Crosse is open, but not posted yet
- USACE – Bob Stanick
 - Surveyors busy, utilizing high water
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuge – Mary Stefanski
 - Regional Director retired - Chuck Trexler is acting
 - Suzanne Baird will be retiring end of May
 - Seasonals will be starting soon
 - (More in notes received, attached at end)
- MN DNR – Vanessa Perry
 - New position as MS River coordinator
 - Policy and regulatory, parks and recreation liaison
 - Holcim Mine
 - Lower Grey Cloud Island 365-acre proposal
 - Plan to dig down to 200' for aggregate mining
 - Early indication is that economic benefits are not enough to justify project
- IA DNR – Kirk Hansen
 - Chris Shlocky left DNR for DOT

Homeless Camp Cleanup (Tim Miller) – slides attached

- Houska park was open for homeless, near refuge
 - Suffered a lot of resource damage
 - Some areas where veg won't grow
 - Folks were not great at digging catholes for feces
 - Boats left abandoned / sinking
- Met with the Mayor, not sure how well that went
 - A lot of the homeless have LE issues, so not always cooperative
- How we can partner - assistance with cleanups
 - If you see something, please let us know

- If we can partner on this, it helps make the lift a little easier
- Dealing with large items abandoned, sunken vessels
- Alerting LE when you encounter long term camps or suspected on the river
- Closing areas for habitat recovery
- Jim Fischer asked - are you running into issues with sharps?
 - Tim replied that law enforcement looks sites over before cleanup
- Stuff in the water, too. Cans, bottles, broken glass
 - Greg Genz added that in Pool 2, Mile 825, had a meth lab
 - 1976 GREAT study didn't allow USACE to build more islands
 - Hard to find anyone with the county to take responsibility for enforcement
 - Legislators don't want to touch it
- Dan Cottrell asked - is it one or more contractor you've used?
 - Tim replied - 3 contractors, 2 from La Crosse, 1 from Lansing
 - Brennan, Shaffer, Weinmiller

Northern Long Eared Bat Endangered Species Listing (Jill Utrup) – slides attached

- Northern long-eared bat national recovery lead: jill_utrup@fws.gov
 - USACE Consultation POC: nick_utrup@fws.gov
- Threats & Status
 - Habitat loss, climate change, only one pup per year
 - White-nose syndrome continues to be primary threat
 - Evaluated other threats that have compounding effect
 - Ability to recover is limited due to low reproduction rate
 - Protecting surviving bats
- Interim Forestry Habitat Modification Guidance
 - Private forest landowners play important role in bat conservation
 - Not all small acreage tree clearing actions reasonably certain to harm bats
 - Developed guidance to assist landowners in assessing risk to bats
 - Risk kept low by implementing conservation measures
- Question from chat: April 18, 2023 10:07 AM from UMRBA to everyone:
Did the SSA (2021) consider floodplain forest loss from the 2019 flood?
 - Jill: Energy related mortality and climate change, not really possible to consider quantitatively
- Mary Stefanski - If you're doing something with timber stand improvement you really need to be paying attention
 - Andrew - echo with what Mary's saying
 - As we consider NESP pool wide TSI or other forestry actions - I wonder what the implications are for large scale actions
 - Jill - will vary project by project
 - Reach out to Nick with questions

Navigation Work Group Activities (Bob Stanick)

- Outdraft at LD7

- USACE looking at more comprehensive approach
 - Looking at more design alternatives, design charette in May
- PDT advancing with ERDC out of Vicksburg to do some modeling
 - Will establish virtual features then run it as a towboat simulator
- In the meantime, no great approaches right now
 - Might do some dredging, not sure how helpful that will be
 - Don't know what high water is going to bring
- Easter Sunday - towboat went up on the weir
 - Was upbound, not typical
 - Helper boat was pushed over the weir
- Jeff Janvrin: You used to be able to run the old channel near Dresbach, can't anymore
 - Has it gotten worse over the 20 year?
 - Dan Cottrell: H&H has measured the flows
 - Increased down the main channel, then break over the dam
 - That's the feeling the towboats get is the water breaking over the wall
 - Looked at dredging, but not convinced it'll hold
- Fritz Funk: hoping to keep ecological considerations in mind with the fix
 - Tim Miller: with the features, are we talking just dredging?
 - Dan Cottrell: PDT hasn't met for the design charrette yet, nothing off the table yet
 - Jeff Janvrin: that channel would be a good secondary channel for restoration
 - Yes it's expensive, but something thing we could see from the model
- Jim Fischer: one of the NESP approved projects was to look at Lake Onalaska
 - Fits well with intentions of NESP
- Patrick Phenow: when was it discovered things weren't working?
 - Dan Cottrell 2014 & 2015 changed things
 - 2018 & 2019 we added rock
 - We thought it was just in high water
 - But it's all the time
- Jim Fischer: sensitive to safety concerns
 - Actions have impacts downstream, would be nice to look at it wholistically

Water Level Management Task Force (Neil Rude)

- WLMTF has not met
 - In contact with Lauren Salvato UMRBA, not much going on
 - Mary will be POC for photo points this summer
- Kirk Hansen: WRDA2022 had a section on Water Level Management, any guidance?
 - Steve Clark: haven't seen anything yet, says we shall do drawdowns as funding allows
- Kirk Hansen: timeline for implementation?
 - Steve Clark: not going to speak for USACE, but it looks like it opens the door
 - Good step forward, removes a major hurdle for us to conduct drawdowns
- Jim Fischer: there was a recommendation for MVR to establish a task force
- Andrew Stephenson: request for public comment closed March 2023, hopefully they'll issue guidance soon after that
 - Steve Clark: not sure we'll get guidance at all, honestly

Recreation Work Group Activities (Kevin Berg)

- Kevin's update
 - Haven't pulled together a meeting yet
 - Have existing due-out
 - Hoping to get RWG meeting in-person
 - Looking for late spring or early summer
 - Somewhere where there's a recreation component
 - Blackhawk would be an option
 - Jim Fischer: have you participated in UMRCC tech session meetings?
 - There were creel survey topics
 - Jeff Janvrin: one of the targeted fall session topics
 - Trying to find balance of surveying folks
 - Travis Moore from Missouri would know the most
 - Jim Fischer: there was talking about broadening scope, maybe somewhere RWG could fit in?
 - Kirk Hansen: started with fisheries but people want more data
 - Jeff Janvrin: make sure you know the reasons for your questions
 - Can be difficult to synthesize if you don't know the answers you're looking for
 - Vanessa Perry - Qualtrax is available
 - Gold star research tool

Fish and Wildlife Work Group Activities (Jeff Janvrin)

- FWWG Met on 27th of January
 - Focus was to ID new starts for NESP program
 - A lot of the projects in the hopper didn't meet NESP guidelines
 - Wanted more simple projects
 - Not just do study-based projects
 - Want to have as much data ready as possible
 - No flood risk impacts / no real estate concerns
 - All projects were reviewed
 - Feb 16th, 2 projects have new starts
 - Johnson Island - continue to support
 - Sny Magill - NPS has mounds and erosion is occurring
 - Other techniques have been used, not holding
 - PDT has formed and meeting
 - At one time there were a series of workshops (20 years ago)
 - Time to look at getting that workshop going again w/ fish fry
- Dan Cottrell: what's the proposal for Johnson Island?
 - Jeff Janvrin: dredging within the island
 - Stabilization of the channel side of the island
 - Expand the footprint
 - Flow control for channel coming in above
- Jim Fischer: wanted to note that at 14:20 I'll be talking Sny Magill

Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMMR) (Angela Deen)

- Still tracking 8 HREPS
 - Appropriation of \$55m, FY 24 another \$55m
- Planning –
 - Robinson Lake / Big Lake
 - Ben Nelson PM
 - Site visit late May
 - Reno Bottoms
 - Submitted in Jan for approval, transitioning to plans and specs
 - Just started design, working with AE
- Design -
 - Lower Pool 10 HREP
 - Lots of little islands
 - 150k from McMillan
- Construction -
 - McGregor Lake (see slides)
 - Fully awarded, all features will be built
 - Have until 2025
 - Mississippi Gardens dredge cut granular borrow - C&H contribution
- Close-Out -
 - Bass Ponds was turned over
 - Conway, FWS has O&M manual
 - Harpers - working on O&M manual
- Other:
- Good news stories
- Trempealeau HREP reevaluation
 - Small site visit to look at pump station
 - Keep refining our list of options for these projects
 - All the way up to major modifications to new projects
- Pool 8 C8 sill repair
 - Finally last week all the stars aligned, and it was completed
 - Happy it got done!

Continuing Authorities Program Update (Nick Castellane)

- Vertical chain of USACE did not award any new starts for this FY
 - Priority list for FY24 didn't have anything for UMR
- Pigs Eye Island
 - Kickoff 25 April to discuss this year's activities
- Jim Fischer: any add'l funding under 1122?

- Nick Castellane: Not expecting any

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) (Kim Warshaw)

- New updated map
- Working on NESP charter
- NESP hoping to follow the UMRR project path
 - Inaugural meeting on 5Apr
- Projects Slide
 - Wing Dam notching groundbreaking 25 May
 - Could change
 - Wacouta Bay
 - Completed modelling
 - Public documents hopefully in September
 - PIR hopefully in December
 - Navigation -
 - Mooring cells
 - Design delayed b/c of high water
 - Construction eyed for 2025
 - Pool 4 Island 4
 - Was pulled from 1122
 - Easily picked up by NESP
 - Hoping to advertise CT in mid-April
 - Kirk Hansen - we're starting to coordinate these new mooring cells
 - Is there mitigation for these?
 - Steve Clark: I don't really know the answer on that
 - Probably looking at it on a case by case
 - Kim Warshaw: mitigations can happen anywhere along the river
 - Doesn't have to be specific to where projects are
 - Webex chat from Elliott L Stefanik to everyone: I think Steve is correct on the site-specific structures. The mitigation Kim is referencing is for systemic transportation impacts.
 - Jeff Janvrin: under normal process - how do states get involved in that process?
 - Steve Clark: weird thing is most work is in Rock Island District, Rock Island is handling environmental compliance for all of them, we're on the side
 - Jim Fischer: Pool 7 & 10 mooring cells weren't on the initial list, we haven't had a chance to participate
 - Discussion
 - Kirk Hansen: need to have a state/fed call w/o contractors
 - Vanessa: question about how non-profits can get involved
 - Kim Warshaw: that will be determined in June
 - They need to take over O&M after

- Jeff Janvrin: for a non-state/ non fed sponsor they need to show they can fund and maintain
- Kim Warshaw: cities and counties would be good for partnerships too
- Andrew Stephenson: charter for UMRR helps show who can be a sponsor
- Dan Cottrell: are nav projects going to go through the same process?
- Andrew Stephenson: navigation projects have congressional support
 - \$70m for nav projects

Minnesota Marine Art Museum Welcome to the RRF (Scott Pollock)

Channel Maintenance Program Update (Stanick, Cottrell, DeVaney, Machajewski)

- Dan Cottrell – Channel Conditions
 - Goetz still in drydock
 - Delays in getting parts
 - St. Louis and Rock Island Districts have work for the Goetz on the way up
 - 2 primary jobs in St. Paul Dist.
 - Lower Zumbro & Above Brownsville
 - Mechanical Contract:
 - Plant 1
 - Saint Paul Small Boat Harbor
 - Catch it on the falling limb of the hydrograph
 - Plant 2 we'll start below the lake, location TBD
 - Unload Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Contract:
 - Late may early June
 - Channel dredging to start
 - Laying out cuts for MS gardens for McGregor Lk HREP
- Dan DeVaney – Placement Site Actions
 - Review of Placement Site Activities Schedule
 - Pigs Eye Lake, the contractor hopes to place the remainder of granular material beginning in May (as river conditions allow) and move into the next phase of the project, placing fine sediments and rock riprap starting mid-June.
 - Upper Pool 4 Pierce County Island Sec 1122 - Groundbreaking on May 16th
 - Fisher Island Bank Stabilization - construction to start as crews are available
 - Wilds Bend & Corps Island Stabilization
 - 65% meeting was today, will share plans/specs when available
 - Empty Sites thanks to great beneficial use:
 - Fountain City 1, Homer, Lansing Highway Bridge
 - Sites with material available:
 - West Newton Chute, Alma, Trempealeau, Buck Creek
- Paul Machajewski – Unloads & DMMPs
 - WI MOU
 - Came a long way in a short time, should be ready/renewed this spring/early summer
 - Updated MN DNR general permit in Feb 2023, good thru Dec 2023
 - MPCA - new SDS was issued Apr 2023, good for 10 years
 - Emily Schneck: no public comments so pretty surprising

- IA DNR
 - Continue doing what we're doing unless told otherwise
 - Kirk Hansen: status quo for now, couple people missing from office
- Site Development
 - Rolling Prairie
 - Team is putting final touches on land use plan
 - Internal in draft form
- Jim Fischer: WIDNR is standing up industrial sand mine team
 - Might have some possibilities for material
- DMMPs
 - Pool 6
 - TSP awaiting approval from MVD
 - Jim Fischer: how do we look at places like Johnson or Mosquito Island with DMMP planning
 - Aaron McFarlane: the reason for the tiered approach was because of unknowns
 - Some aren't feasible
 - Would have to have the plans set ahead of time for when the tiers are reached
 - Jeff Janvrin: good opportunity for NESP maybe
 - Tapp wrote something up about Pool 5 islands
- Pool 10
 - 12' Sediment bypass system being investigated for fall 2023 pilot test
 - EA being developed

Beneficial Use Work Group Activities (Dan DeVaney)

- USACE Chief formally established a goal for 70% BU by 2030
- Several WRDA 2020, 125 Implementation Guidance documents, plus more on the way
- Multiple ERDC technical reports have been completed and are ongoing
- Ongoing non-standard estate coordination to expanding the Corps' real estate toolbox

Sny Magill NESP Project Endorsement (Jim Fischer)

- Kim Warshaw: we don't have the money, will have to wait and see what we get in FY24
- Kirk Hansen: what they need is something to start planning, not shovel ready
 - Steve Clark: we still need Johnson on the list to start planning
- Jim Fischer: still a couple questions
 - Do we still need to finish duck marsh design?
 - Include Johnson Island for planning
- Steve Clark: can the marsh pieces jump to the head of the line?
 - Doesn't really fit mitigation, so it would have to be a NESP ecosystem feature
- Vanessa: still some benefit, but lose some efficiency
- Neil Rude: Kim brought up Ordinary High Water Line (OHWL)
 - Kim Warshaw: it comes down to cost share
 - Estimating 30% of road is above OHWM \$53
- Jeff Janvrin: are NESP ecosystem projects meeting timelines as planned?
- Kim Warshaw: systemic mitigation, when we received the funding, we explored ways to spend it
 - Through Island 4 and some surveys

- Draft an email with revised endorsement request to RRF voting members

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

- Future Topics
 - Update on Lock and Dam 7 outdraft, under Nav Working Group
 - History of the McGregor pontoon bridge
 - Something interesting about Sny Magill
 - What happened to the former park superintendent
 - Blackhawk Bridge replacement
- Due-Outs from this RRF

Robert Stanick
Co-Chairman, RRF

