

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #127 on 05 December 2023 (In person and via WebEx virtual meeting)

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

- Introductions (see below for attendance)
 - Noted absence of co-chair, Jim Fischer, who left WI DNR after Forum #126, details below.
- RRF #126 Minutes
 - Minutes and updates discussed.
 - Question from Heather Henneman on attendance record
 - Going forward will include a list of attendees.
- Next Meetings:
 - #128 - April – 30 April – Winona, MN; Minnesota Maritime Art Museum
 - #129 - August 13th & 14th – Red Wing, MN; TBD with site visit
 - #130 - December 10th & 11th – La Crosse, WI; TBD, USGS conference room?
- Due-Outs carried forward from previous meetings:
 - Spreadsheet tracking due outs mentioned.
 - Paul – idea was to make them easier to find/track.
 - Heather – how will they be shared?
 - Vanessa – extra email?
 - Bob – we will make a spreadsheet and will send it out a month ahead of next Forum.
 - Will investigate ability to post online beside RRF minutes on webpage.
 - (Paul reminded Bob we didn't approve the RRF 126 Minutes; carried on with due-outs)
 - 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: DeVaney (for 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.
 - More regular communication pertaining to channel conditions, to limit surprise dredging locations more specifically placement site use. Fuel Gage of sites Red, Yellow, Green
 - *Bob spoke about channel volumes already present on bottom of dredging schedules.*
 - *Trying to figure out how to provide probable dredging info properly caveated based on unpredictability of changing river conditions.*
 - Jeff Janvrin – something that was relayed to me was the want for a pre-season assessment of placement site capacity, something we can track as an OSIT in case we need to look elsewhere.

- Dano mentioned that we had the LiDAR flight this fall and we're going to have a good baseline volume measurement of all our sites. Will be carrying that forward with updated surveys and flights, can share that info as needed.
 - Vanessa noted: (it would be nice if) (the dredge schedule) was not only providing the potential sequencing, but some sort of level of certainty with that, whether it's color coding or some other indication of how much people could be relying on that information.
- Jim Fischer to determine path forward re: spudding question.
 - Identify what questions are being asked and who needs to answer.
 - Assign to appropriate workgroup.
 - Discussion about what to do with it because of Jim Fischer's departure.
 - Possible map of sensitive areas where mooring, spudding should be limited. Sabrina noted that all the Refuge should be noted as a sensitive area; legally cannot allow nosing in on Refuge lands, not a compatible use.
 - Greg noted that nosing in and spudding are two different things.
 - Paul cautioned this has been explored in past, lead to 'can of worms' not knowing when enough is enough or too much.
 - Bob to carry forward to next Forum as agenda item for further discussion.
- ~~➤ Bob Stanick will send out a survey to RRF members seeking meeting feedback.~~
 - *If anyone has ideas, please email Bob. Marking this due-out complete.*
- RRF 126 Minutes approval
 - Motion from Vanessa Perry
 - Second from Sammi Boyd
 - Approved as corrected.
- Patrick Kelly had some remarks about Jim Fischer leaving WI DNR for LTRM
 - Timing was abbreviated because of possible shutdown, apologizes for abrupt departure.
 - Paul asked is the RRF wanted to write a letter in recognition of his service?
 - Bob to write letter and have voting members sign.
- Discussion about whether co-chair remains with Wisconsin.
 - Paul Machajewski maintained that it's always been Wisconsin.
 - Kirk Hansen backed up Paul, thinking it is in the Charter, but there is no Charter.
 - Andrew Stephenson noted the partnering agreement says, "a chairperson or persons for the forum will be selected by the representatives".
 - Sammi Boyd mentioned that Wade thought the new 'Jim Fischer' would be the new co-chair.
 - Tabled until next meeting.

Agency Activities – (All)

- Bob Stanick – USACE Channels & Harbors
 - Dan Cottrell out on developmental detail
- Steve Clark – USACE RPED-N

- Introduced Amanda Goldstein, Lewis Wiechmann, Carrie Nelson, and Amy Shaunette as new to RRF
- Sammi Boyd – WI DNR
 - Introduced herself as new Mississippi River Coordinator, no updates
- Jeff Janvrin – WI DNR
 - Fisheries biologist for Lacrosse, Christina Ptacek, started in late August.
 - She may have a rotation and serve as an alternate when the main point of contact (POC) is unavailable.
 - Internal coordination ongoing to determine how to divide the duties previously handled by Jim.
 - Ben Patschull started as a field ops specialist.
 - Ongoing interviews for a macroinvertebrate specialist position.
 - Jeff Janvrin's Retirement:
 - Anticipated between April and the end of the next year.
 - Uncertain attendance at the December event and the possibility of staying longer.
- Sabrina Chandler - Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge - USFWS
 - Inflation Reduction Act Funding:
 - \$10 million awarded for climate resiliency projects, nature-based solutions, and environmental justice projects on the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois rivers.
 - Collaborating with the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association to allocate 20% of funding to state-managed areas.
 - Projects selected in three states, awaiting final approval for the press release.
 - Science and Restoration Support:
 - Initiatives to support restoration efforts with science proposals.
 - First round of proposals received, including additional submissions from refuges.
 - Emphasis on climate adaptation, resiliency, nature-based solutions, and environmental justice.
 - Upper Miss Refuge Centennial Celebration:
 - Turning 100 in June 2024.
 - Planning a year of events, including a photo contest and various celebrations with partner support.
 - Staffing Updates:
 - New regional director, Will Meeks, appointed, familiar with the Fish and Wildlife Service.
 - Assistant regional director position for refuges still vacant, active recruitment ongoing.
 - Power Line Replacement Activities:
 - Ongoing power line replacement activities in the Winona district, with specific mention of the Lansing Bridge construction and McGregor district.
 - Involves a small tract of refuge right-of-way process.
- Mike Halsted – WI DOT (from online chat)

- 2024 Harbor Assistance Program Awards will be announced before Christmas.
- \$10 million in port infrastructure investment will be distributed.
- Vanessa Perry – MN DNR (as received by email, discussed in person)
 - Staffing
 - MnDNR staff continue to serve in their UMRR and NESP representative roles, with a particular push on supporting the development of factsheets for NESP/UMRR and the UMRR strategic planning initiative as it starts up
 - Kevin Stauffer retired in September and Neil Rude is serving as the Acting Area Fisheries Supervisor
 - Regulatory management
 - MnDNR received an updated EIS from the City of Wabasha in the beginning of October for the proposed port project and provided extensive review and comments within the EIS process
 - We have completed the engagement portion of the structured decision making process for the invasive carp plan and expect an updated plan to be released by the end of the year or shortly after. The last plan was updated in 2014.
 - From Dec 1 press release: “The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has confirmed the capture of 323 invasive carp on Thursday, Nov. 30 in Pool 6 of the Mississippi River, near Trempealeau, Wisconsin. Species captured were 296 silver carp, 23 grass carp, and 4 bighead carp. This is the largest single capture of invasive carp that has occurred in Minnesota to date. The capture was made possible by tracking tagged invasive carp, which led agency staff and contracted commercial fishers to them for removal.”
 - Forest floodplain
 - We are working on scoping a forest floodplain pilot study to assess the feasibility of habitat restoration using land cover data. Have been working with USACE forestry staff and the Forest Resource Assessment unit at MnDNR. We are hoping to pull in a wider group soon to identify potential assessment parameters and locations for the pilot.
 - Wanted to share the Great Lakes Silviculture Library hosted by the University of Minnesota. <https://silvlib.cfans.umn.edu/> “The Great Lakes Silviculture Library was conceived with the idea that every silviculture treatment is an experiment, every forest manager both a teacher and a learner. This site is designed to help forest managers from Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario, and Wisconsin exchange silviculture prescriptions and outcomes of actual on-the-ground management activities.”
 - It includes projects located in forest floodplains along the Mississippi and would be a great location to share some case studies from UMRR and NESP
 - Communications
 - We were excited about the RAD publication from LTRM and are preparing a write-up for our internal staff newsletter. We have a lot of DNR staff interested in incorporating climate resiliency into their work, so we anticipate some interest.
 - Working on developing a Mississippi River focused communication plan for MnDNR. Will primarily be for an internal audience, but we want to make sure we are

coordinating with the federal programs and other states as well, since partnership is such a big part of our work on the River. Please reach out if you have anything in particular we should have in mind. We are particularly interested in directing media inquiries to the best/right people, and on coordinating outreach on important initiatives and opportunities.

- Patrick Phenow – MN DOT
 - Port development assistance grant program
 - applications in in October, and we should have award announcements just after the first of the year.

- Emily Schnick – MN PCA
 - Three Savage dredge permits, for C.H.S., Cargill, and Savage Riverport, are now on public notice.
 - These permits are related to a shared site on the lower Minnesota Watershed District for water storage and replacement.
 - Permits are distinct from the Corps' permit but are identical to each other and similar to previous permits.
 - Have a duration of five years.

- Alan Robbins-Fenger – NPS – Miss Nat'l River & Rec Area
 - The National Park Service acknowledges its occasional absence from meetings and highlights recent restructuring efforts to address staffing shortages and align with current issues.
 - A natural resource land management program manager position will be opening in the park in a couple of months.
 - The Park Service is actively involved in disposition studies, especially concerning recreation aspects, and collaborated with the Corps on gathering recreational use information.
 - Expresses gratitude for the work on the Pig's Eye project and plans to support the Corps and Ramsey County in volunteer activities for habitat restoration, particularly in planting trees.
 - Shared information about a comprehensive forest assessment completed three years ago with 4,000 data points, aiming to contribute valuable insights for habitat restoration and invasive species management.
 - Engaged in a collaborative project with the University of Minnesota to study beaver populations along the park corridor from Dayton to Hastings, focusing on their impact on resources and developing best management practices to mitigate potential issues.
 - Described ongoing efforts to analyze 80,000 game camera clips to understand beaver behavior and contribute to the research.

- Andrew Stephenson – UMRBA (as received by email and *add'l comment below*)
 - On November 29, 2023, Kirsten Wallace, UMRBA Executive Director, testified on behalf of the Interstate Council on Water Policy to the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Non-Federal Cost Share Project Partnership Agreements. The two main issues with these agreements are related to Indemnification and operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation (OMRR&R), for which solutions need to be driven by Congress. This is a national issue that spans issues from flood damage reduction, disaster mitigation, to ecosystem restoration, and beyond.
 - As many as 22 states across the country reported having laws against assuming the risk legal obligations by the Corps.
 - Other panel members included:
 - Jimmy Hague with The Nature Conservancy will speak to these issues from a nonprofit entity's perspective.
 - Bren Haase with the Louisiana Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority spoke to their experiences in implementing PPAs.
 - WRDA 2024: Stakeholder Feedback on USACE Project Partnership Agreements - Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
 - Was good to see that senators knew the issue and were invested.
 - UMRBA will continue to work with many other organizations including the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, Coastal States Organization, the Great Lakes Commission, the National Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy and others to work with members of Congress and the Committee to explain the need for reforming the Corps' project partnership agreements.
 - *Erin Spry, who contributed significantly to UMRBA projects, is no longer with UMRBA and has taken a position as a natural resource specialist at the City of Vadnais Heights.*

- Linda Loomis – Lower MN Watershed District
 - The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District is planning a project on Vernon Avenue, used for hauling dredge material to and from their dredge site. The City of Savage granted a conditional use permit, making the Watershed District responsible for Vernon Avenue's maintenance.
 - State funding will be utilized to reconstruct Vernon Avenue, with all permits in place, awaiting the right-of-way permit from the City of Savage. The project is expected to go out for bidding in spring, with construction scheduled for the following year.
 - Another project at river mile 19.5 in Eden Prairie involves stabilizing a significant bluff eroding into the river. The Watershed District received \$2.75 million from the state, with plans to submit permits to the Corps of Engineers and the DNR for the work. Efforts include working with the property owner to acquire easement or ownership.
 - An evaluation of the floodplain, last assessed in 2004, is being considered due to increased development potentially impacting flood stages. Funding is sought for an analysis to determine the current flood stage. Efforts have been made to secure funding

through the MPCA and their climate resiliency grants, with ongoing coordination with the Corps.

- Discussions with cities about developing in floodplains and floodways are ongoing, with the Watershed District advising against such development.
- Accessibility to Vernon Avenue has improved due to MnDOT's Trunk Highway 13 project. Coordination is required with the railroad for two crossings and with Eureka Fiber Optic for a cable installation under the river and along Vernon Avenue.
- National Park Service, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Agency Updates (as received by email from Nancy Duncan, *{not discussed during meeting}*):
 - National Water Trail:
 - Working with City of Dayton on building two new accessible paddle launches partially funded by a \$100k NPS grant from the National Trails System.
 - Exploring a new riverside park and paddle access in the city of Newport just south of the Circle K storage facility.
 - Working with the City of Hastings to add an accessible paddle access at Lake Rebecca Regional Park using National Park Foundation and National Park Service funds.
 - Development Reviews:
 - Actively following several new development projects including a new bridge in Minneapolis, a MRCCA violation and highway projects.
 - USACE Disposition Study:
 - Working with the USACE on the LSFA/LD1 disposition study, acting as the recreational use SME and conducted a visitor use study this summer for the disposition study.
 - Research and Restoration:
 - Eagle occupancy and productivity surveys were flown again last spring, with 52 occupied nests noted in the MNRRA corridor. Of those, 35 of the 52 nests were relocated during the productivity flight a month later. The leaves were really thick in some areas. Of the 35 found nests, 29 (83%) were successful. There were 47 chicks counted. Much better than last year. Once again it was noted that there were no occupied heron nests at the Pig's Eye rookery when this was flown. Not sure what is happening with that SNA site.
 - LCCMR ENTRF funding for the beaver/cottonwood/floodplain forest restoration study was received and the study formally began late last year. This past year beaver cache surveys were flown twice, and camera traps were placed at various lodge/den locations throughout the corridor. We have gotten some excellent footage of beaver and a variety of other resident critters. Transect work was begun to look at browse in the vicinity of the lodges and dens to try and determine beaver impacts on floodplain forest regeneration. This project is ongoing with the U of MN and the Mississippi Park Connection as primary partners and was requested by many Natural Resource managers within the MNRRA corridor.
 - Frog surveys were conducted again this past summer. Frog surveys have been ongoing each summer since 2014 using acoustic monitors set up in the same 10

locations along the NPS corridor as it runs through the Twin Cities to monitor trends, change and new species.

- Dr Gary Casper was hired to do additional cricket frog research in Pool 2 this past summer using grant money and NPS funding. These frogs appear to be gone from what formerly was their highest population site but are being found in other locations. This survey is done as funds are available.
- Mussel work was ongoing again in the MNRRA this summer with zebra mussels being found in greater quantities than previously. We will continue to monitor this.
- Work on the Applied Silviculture for Climate Change (ASCC) project at Crosby Farm Regional Park in St. Paul is ongoing.
- The MNRRA and MPC have completed the \$165,000 National Park Service Natural Resource grant to restore 20 scenic view-shed sites along the 72-mile Mississippi corridor that have lost ash due to EAB, and that are identified in our Visual Resources Protection Plan (VRPP). A youth and young adult crew with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa along with many volunteers cleaned up and replanted many of these sites to diverse canopy and understory trees over the past couple of years.
- The recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provided approximately \$30 billion to the Department of the Interior for Ecosystem Restoration (BIL-ER) to be expended over five years, across ten specific activities. Guiding priorities from DOI: Build adaptation and resilience for ecosystems and communities, restore or improve cores and connectivity, and build and leverage partnerships for restoration at scale. MNRRA received \$250,000 in 2023 under BIL-ER “A1a: Contracts to restore ecological health on not fewer than 10,000 acres of federal lands” to work on restoring/replanting floodplain forest areas along the river that have lost trees to EAB.
- MNRRA also received \$950k in IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funds to work towards restoring the large swaths of floodplain forest in Pool 2 and elsewhere within the corridor that have been lost to Emerald Ash Borer. Those funds are directed to address climate change, restore ecosystems, add recreational options, and preserve treasured landscapes and are currently being used on work in Pool 2.

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

- Al VanGuilder – Channel Conditions
 - Overview of 2023 dredging season referencing slide & Dredge Schedule
 - Dredging commenced on May 15th and concluded on November 17th.
 - Significant material dredged: 1.3 million yards.
 - Job count increased to 52, compared to 38 in the previous year.
 - Comparison with Historical Averages:
 - Showed a 20-year plus average, noting a significant increase due to a large project in Pool 10 (over 200,000 yards).
 - Excluded the large project, the dredging activity aligns more closely with historical averages.
 - Dredging Season Details:

- Two contract plants started in mid-May, and the government mechanical dredge began operations.
- Operations initiated in different pools based on river conditions.
- Operational Challenges:
 - Constant surveying due to material dropping out and changing priorities.
 - Maximum of five dredges operating in the district.
 - Faced challenges from high water in spring and near-drought conditions later in the season.
- Operational Decisions:
 - Plant 1 last job was at Grand Encampment
 - Plant 2 last job was at Boulanger Bend Lower Light, but a bad area was discovered in Pine Bend, prompting a shift to finish the season there.
 - Dredge GOETZ left the district on 07-Sep, a bit later than usual.
- Notable Projects:
 - Mentioned the McGregor HREP project in Pool 10, dredging almost 220,000 yards.
 - Highlighted the successful dredging of Mississippi Gardens, last dredged in 2010.
- Grounding Incidents:
 - Acknowledged an increased number of reported channel issues compared to the last two years.
 - Emphasized ongoing efforts to finalize the grounding spreadsheet and communication with industry for risk assessment.
- Overall Assessment:
 - Despite challenges, communication with industry regarding channel conditions and dredging priorities was effective.
 - Awaiting finalization of grounding spreadsheet for a comprehensive assessment of the season.
 - No EAtoNs (Electronic Aids to Navigation) were deployed this year other than those already in place.
- Reporting of Groundings and Complaints:
 - Encouraged reporting any complaints or groundings, given limited survey resources for the 250+ mile river stretch.
 - Increased priority for areas with repeated reports, enhancing response efficiency.
- Draft Restrictions and Dredging:
 - Four areas experienced draft restrictions in June and August, with the channel draft restricted to eight feet.
 - Dredge crews efficiently lifted all restrictions within three days, allowing for the swift resumption of navigation.
 - Close collaboration with the Coast Guard in managing draft restrictions and groundings.
 - Draft restrictions determined in consultation with the Coast Guard, with a preference for restrictions over closures.
 - Draft Restriction Process:
 - Draft restrictions communicated to the towing industry, specifying the maximum allowed draft for barges.
 - Draft restrictions set based on navigation safety and shoaling concerns.
 - Incremental adjustments made by the Coast Guard in collaboration with dredging activities.
 - Impact on Vessel Types:
 - Discussion on how different types of vessels may be affected by draft restrictions.
 - Highlighted that certain vessels may still transit depending on their draft and type of cargo.

- Notification Process:
 - Acknowledgment that the final removal of draft restrictions is officially communicated by the Coast Guard.
 - Dan Fasching had a suggestion for consideration to include decision-makers in initial and final communications to ensure awareness.
- Dano DeVaney – Placement Site Actions
 - Pine Bend Operations:
 - Majority of unloading activities done last year to support Pigs Eye.
 - Encountered fines and compacted fines on-site, hindering complete excavation.
 - Additional dredging this year removed 31,000 yards, bringing the total to 277,000.
 - Due to fall dredging, 69,900 yards were added back, making Pine Bend a challenging hotspot.
 - Boulanger Islands:
 - Upper Boulanger contributed fines for Pig's Eye, and Lower Boulanger unloaded granular material.
 - Emphasized the temporary nature of material removal, as the islands will be filled again.
 - Bank Stabilization Contracts:
 - Contracts awarded for bank stabilization at Pool 3 Corps Island, and Pool 5A Wilds Bend.
 - Reed's Landing:
 - Reed's Landing witnessed significant material removal for projects, totaling 163,000 yards with more planned.
 - Fisher Island Stabilization:
 - Fisher Island stabilization completed, with photos illustrating improvements.
 - Lansing Highway Bridge Site:
 - Site officially offline, with Kramer North America occupying additional space during construction through spring 2024.
 - Challenges with beneficial use due to sand removal by local users.
 - Site remains operationally available for more material with prior notification.
 - General Updates:
 - LiDAR flown over all sites for accurate placement capacity.
 - Signs installed at six out of ten public-use beneficial sites.
 - Ongoing efforts to explore non-fee title interests for material placement.
 - Lock and Dam 2 Protective Island:
 - Still progressing to use lower Pool Two material for island construction, aiming for approximately 285,000.
 - Nonstandard Estates:
 - Two nonstandard estates (Red Wing Commercial Harbor and Isle LaPlume in La Crosse) used for material placement, easing Corps site capacities.
 - Neil Rude commented that it would be nice to convene the OSIT to Corps Island and/or Wilds Bend during their stabilizations.
- Paul Machajewski – Long Term Placement
 - MoUs and General Permits:
 - Successfully executed a five-year MoU with Wisconsin DNR in September.
 - Acknowledged coordination efforts with team members Crystal, Jim, Jennifer, and Steve.
 - Highlighted the achievement of securing a five-year cycle for continued collaboration.

- Crystal shared a draft of the three-year 401 water quality certification for review before public notice.
- 401 Water Quality Certification:
 - Indicated that more details will be provided in the future.
 - Steve and others expressed the need to review the 401 certification thoroughly before making comments.
- Opened the floor for Crystal, Steve, and others to share any additional information or comments on the 401 certification.
 - Steve indicated he hadn't fully reviewed the certification but would provide input as needed.
 - Crystal provided a brief overview of the water quality certification draft document, emphasizing its role as a supporting document for the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Army Corps in Wisconsin.
 - She clarified that the document, once finalized and signed, would already be effective. The certification allows coverage for water quality standards for each reviewed project under the MOU process. Crystal highlighted the cooperative conversations and coordination involved in the MOU process, ensuring compliance with water quality standards.
- Permits:
 - The Minnesota DNR general permit is set to expire soon, prompting the need for a renewal starting this winter.
 - A ten-year permit with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) was secured, ensuring compliance until 2033.
 - The Iowa DNR 404(t) permit for after-the-fact issuance remains in effect for placement operations in Iowa waters.
- Site Development:
 - Rolling Prairie, a 1000-acre site acquired in July 2020, is progressing. A 40-acre parcel has been prepared for material placement, and an access road is under construction.
 - Fungicide use on the site was discussed. No reported use was confirmed, adhering to the terms of the agricultural lease.
 - The draft land use plan for the 1000 acres received minimal feedback, and development will continue based on the provided plan.
- Site Unloads:
 - A contractor is engaged under an indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract to unload specified quantities (up to 100,000 yards) from island sites.
 - Plans include unloading material from Above West Newton through West Newton Chute into Rolling Prairie, or potential unloads in Pool 8.
 - Major island unloads are not planned for the immediate future, with smaller unloads being the focus.
- Dredged Material Management Plans:
 - Pool 4
 - An agreement with the city of Wabasha is signed, allowing for material movement from the Wabasha gravel pit to designated sites. Real estate and financial considerations are being addressed.
 - The city of Wabasha is working through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for a barge terminal. Comments have been provided, and an aggressive timeline aims for completion by April 2024.
 - Discussion from Sabrina Chandler and Lucas Youngsma:
 - Site Purpose Clarification:

- Concerns were raised about whether the site's purpose aligns with the stated primary purpose or if there are intentions for broader commercial uses in the long term.
 - Issues arose from a lack of clarity in distinguishing between the stated purpose and implied purpose of the site, particularly in connection with a 217 agreement with the Corps.
- Comments from regulatory agencies, especially Sabrina Chandler from the Fish and Wildlife Service, highlighted discrepancies in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
 - Questions were raised about the site's ultimate goal, which seemed to extend beyond dredge material movement, involving a port facility for various commodities.
 - Concerns were expressed about potential impacts on recreational users, wildlife, and aquatic habitats.
 - The need for proper consultation on endangered species was emphasized, and discrepancies between the EIS and the Dredge Material Plan (DMP) were noted.
- Questions were raised about the time horizon of the 217 agreement.
 - It was clarified that the agreement is for ten years with the possibility of another ten, aligning with the DMP's need for a 20-year solution.
 - Participants suggested having a deeper conversation with the city to gain updates and address concerns regarding the project's goals and the potential expansion into commodity movements.
 - Regulatory agencies emphasized the need for additional details in the EIS to facilitate and streamline the regulatory process.
 - Plans for pre-meetings or follow-up discussions were mentioned to ensure clear understanding and address concerns from all stakeholders.
- Pipeline A Update:
 - Pipeline A, which extends from Reads Landing to the Wabasha Gravel Pit site, was awarded in September.
 - Pipeline A is a part of the Dredge Material Management Plan, aiming to streamline material handling. Material from dredging sites, such as the Chippewa Delta, will be transported via the pipeline to reduce handling and associated costs.
 - A pre-construction meeting was held, and plans include tree cutting along the pipeline route starting in mid-December. The pipeline construction is set to commence in mid-March.
 - The construction sequence involves tree cutting, bridge construction over Brewery Creek, and pipeline fusion. The goal is to complete all aspects by the end of August.
- Booster Pump Acquisition:
 - The Corps plans to acquire a booster pump needed to move material through the pipeline. The booster pump will likely not be acquired and in place until the 2025 dredge season.
 - The booster pump is portable and primarily intended for use with the 20-inch dredge that operates in the district during the summer. It may be used elsewhere if needed for other projects with advance notice.
- Water Use Consideration:
 - The booster pump is sealed, eliminating the need for water use in the process, addressing a potential issue.
- Pool 6 DMMP

- City of Winona Port Authority Agreements:
 - The City of Winona Port Authority has agreed to annual agreements for the use of Tech Park and the East End Boat Landing for material needs on the east side of Winona.
 - A one-year agreement for 2024 is under consideration, with the possibility of extending the agreement to assist in material management.
- Existing Agreements:
 - A two-year agreement is in place for the continued use of the Winona Harbor (Dick's marine site) until 2025.
 - A ten-year agreement initiated under the DMMP allows the use of the Port Authority Road for material transportation, contributing to both the Corps and the city's interests.
- Collaboration with Fastenal:
 - Negotiations are ongoing with Fastenal for real estate agreements to use their property for material storage, potentially commencing in 2024.
 - Discussions may involve bringing in material for future development within the community.
- Utilization of Kohner Airport pit in Winona:
 - Exploring the utilization of the Kohner airport pit in Winona for gravel mining operations, contributing to pit reclamation under future material management agreements.
- Continued Site Utilization:
 - Going forward, material management will continue at various sites, including Homer, Port Authority, Winona Harbor/Dick's Marine, and Tech Park.
- Safety Improvements at Homer Site:
 - Collaboration with Canadian Pacific Railroad to enhance safety at the Homer site by installing crossing arms, lights, and bells.
 - Construction is expected to commence in the summer of 2024, potentially followed by MnDOT improvements to highway 61.
 - Pedestrian Study and Noise Mitigation:
 - A pedestrian study is planned to facilitate the turning off bells and lights when the train is stationary and the crossing arms are down, addressing noise concerns expressed by the community.
 - The study is scheduled for the upcoming spring.
- Pool 9 DMMP
 - The current plan for dredged material management in Pool Nine involves collaboration with the decommissioned Genoa power plant.
 - Wisconsin granted a low hazard exemption permit to Dairyland Power, allowing the use of river sand for reclamation, with plans to cap a 19-acre coal storage area.
 - Approximately 10,000 yards of sand from the Lansing Highway bridge site have already been hauled to begin the reclamation process.
 - The Genoa power plant is interested in a long-term dredge material placement site for future community use.
 - The draft Dredge Material Management Plan for Pool 9 is expected to be presented to stakeholders for review in the spring or summer.
- Pool 10:
 - Consideration is underway for a sediment bypass system in dredge cuts at McMillan Island to address shoaling and sediment transport.

- A 12-foot sediment collector, currently being tested in Lake Altoona, Eau Claire, is intended for a pilot study in Pools 9 & 10.
 - Internal work, modifications, and redeployment of the sediment collector are planned for spring after initial testing issues.
- Mechanically bringing material off Pool 10 is being explored, with potential upland offload sites considered, possibly in the Guttenberg area.
- Collaborative efforts with the Lower Pool 10 HREP project are discussed for backwater and access dredging channels to address dredged material needs.
- A draft report for Pool Ten Dredged Material Management Plan is not expected for stakeholders until approximately a year from now.

Beneficial Use Work Group Activities (Dano DeVaney)

- The Beneficial Use Work Group has not officially met, but there has been constant communication between the co-chairs, including discussions on various projects in the Saint Paul district.
- The Saint Paul district claims 100% beneficial use, categorizing sand placed on an island as staged beneficial use, and material going to a permanent site as realized beneficial use.
- Updates on specific sites include Alma Marina, West Newton Shoot, Farm City One, Homer, Trempealeau, Brownsville, Lansing Highway Bridge, and Buck Creek.
- Trempealeau and Brownsville highlighted to entice potential use, with Trempealeau being less utilized due to its location.
- An Aquatic Placement Workshop is planned for January 24th and 25th at the Saint Paul district office. The workshop aims to engage participants in discussions about different approaches to material placement, fostering dialogue and collaboration. The official announcement for the workshop will be sent out soon.
- The Beneficial Use Work Group, in collaboration with ERDC and Chuck, is finalizing the Beneficial Use Comprehensive Benefit Tool. This tool will be used as part of the decision document aligned with the 2020 Section 125 beneficial use language. The language allows a 25% increase above the federal standard if the material's benefits are demonstrated.
- The team is actively reviewing the Beach Nourishment technical review paper, focusing on the cost-effectiveness of transporting river sand from the Saint Paul district to locations such as Lake Michigan in Wisconsin by rail.
- Collaborative efforts with the Iowa Waste Exchange are ongoing. The Iowa Waste Exchange specializes in connecting entities with unused materials, fostering discussions with concrete plants and exploring opportunities for beneficial use.

Water Level Management Task Force (Neil Rude)

- The Water Level Management Task Force has not had a recent meeting, but an upcoming meeting is scheduled for next week.
- Lauren Salvato from UMRBA will present information on water level management, focusing on their work with the SDM and Report 53.
- Aaron McFarlane from the Corps will provide updates on water level management within USACE and related projects.
- The meeting schedule will be finalized based on the poll, and participants will receive notifications accordingly.
- Photo point updates, usually provided by Mary Stefanski, are pending as data from other agencies is awaited.

- The task force is in standard operating procedure mode, and the upcoming resources forum may provide further updates.
- Neil, as chair and responsible for the task force, has received pertinent files from Mary Stefanski.

Recreation Work Group Activities (Dano DeVaney)

- Kevin Berg was unable to attend the meeting but provided a brief email update on the Recreation Work Group's activities.
 - The focus remains on the recreational survey, and Kevin expressed uncertainty about its current status.
 - Kevin proposed a meeting by the end of the year at the La Crescent office to discuss and clarify the ongoing work.
 - Participants can expect further communication from Kevin regarding the proposed meeting and updates on the recreational survey.

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

- Ackerman's Cut due-out was brought up.
 - Former due-out
 - Channels and Harbors conducted a site visit, very interesting slough.
 - MVP Survey crew has surveyed, will provide update.

End 05-Dec, Reconvened 06-Dec 09:00.

Upper Locks Disposition Study Update (Karla Sparks)

(see slides for add'l info)

- Upper Saint Anthony Falls
 - Addition of conveyance activities to the disposition study
 - Relationship between conveyance activities and disposition study
 - Separation of disposition effort between Upper and Lower Saint Anthony Falls
 - Status of funding for Upper Saint Anthony Falls project.
- Disposition Study Purpose
 - Determining federal interest in owning and operating structures
 - Potential outcomes: continued ownership, disposal through General Services Administration, or transfer to another entity.
 - Factors considered: benefits, costs, and other federal purposes for infrastructure.
- Scope of Disposition Studies
 - Inclusion of navigation channel in the disposition study
 - Evaluation of federal interest in maintaining navigation channel
 - Consideration of positive benefits associated with dredging the navigation channel.
- Scenarios in Disposal Action
 - No action alternative
 - Full disposal
 - Partial disposal options
 - Modification of locks and dams for new purposes
 - Broad-level evaluation of removal of locks and dams
- Disposition Study Timeline
 - Seven-year duration of disposition studies

- Initiation in 2014, separation of studies in 2018
- Upper Saint Anthony Falls progress, pause in 2020, add conveyance activities.
- Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1 resumption in 2022, funding challenges, and adjusted completion timeline.
- Public Engagement in the Disposition Study
 - Comparison to typical NEPA and feasibility evaluations
 - Scoping effort completion
 - Future public meetings, report release, and congressional action
- Conveyance Activities at Upper Saint Anthony Falls
 - Direction from Congress in 2020 to convey land to the city of Minneapolis.
 - Designee for conveyance, Friends of the Falls
 - Timeline deviation, potential modification to the site, and concurrent 408 application
 - Public comment period, out grant considerations, and budget details.
- Disposition Study for Upper Saint Anthony Falls
 - Resumption of disposition study after conveyance clarity
 - Scope: lands not wanted by the city of Minneapolis
 - FY 24 funding allocation and utilization
 - Updates to cost baseline, cultural resources, tribal cultural properties, and new purposes.
- Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1
 - Overview of Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1
 - Decline in navigational traffic and routine maintenance.
 - Public scoping comment period in 2022 and scoping report themes
- Funding Challenges for Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1
 - FY 20 funding expectations vs. reality
 - FY 24 funding and its impact on the schedule
 - Headquarters guidance on future funding levels
- Ongoing Activities at Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1
 - Collection of information on existing conditions
 - Evaluation of potential HTRW issues in sediment
 - Recreational use surveys
 - Programmatic agreement initiation for cultural resources
- Revised Schedule for Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 1
 - Original completion goal in 2025
 - Funding challenges and ongoing evaluation
 - Anticipation of a new realistic schedule

Discussion:

- Concerns were raised about the potential impact of limitations and funding on the project schedule and scope.
 - Emphasis on the importance of efficient funding requests to prevent higher costs later.
 - Extended project timelines could lead to team turnover and increased inefficiencies.
- Addressed challenges with Upper Saint Anthony related to parcels and the need for maintenance.
 - Highlighted the reluctance of the City of Minneapolis to operate Tainter gates due to mitigation concerns.
- Discussed the Corps of Engineers' responsibility for flood control at lock and dam sites.
 - Clarified that the authorization for structures is primarily for navigation, not flood control.
 - Acknowledged that future evaluations would estimate costs for sediment cleanup after demolition.
- Explained the goal of informing potential entities about the financial implications of taking on such projects.

- Explored the possibility of private entities or other agencies operating structures, citing examples like the Bureau of Reclamation.
- Discussed the need for an act of Congress for reauthorization, especially when recommending removal of structures.
 - Considered the historical context of 100% federal funding for construction and the changing landscape of cost-sharing partnerships.
- Raised questions about the potential impact of existing legislative language on structures
- The need to explore whether changes in navigation status could affect other programs.
- Examined the hypothetical "no action" scenario, highlighting its typical evaluation period of 50 years.
 - Discussed the potential consequences, including ongoing annual costs and the impact on power generation contracts.
- Explained that de-authorizing navigation would remove minimum elevation requirements, opening possibilities for redefining pool levels for various purposes.
 - Addressed potential challenges with power generation contracts and the leasing of structures.
 - Considered the long-term implications of decisions, emphasizing the need to balance current actions with their potential effects on future projects and regulations.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) (Jim Cook)

- NESP has a dual purpose, focusing on navigation and ecosystem restoration, with a specific congressional authorization for the navigation mission.
 - The program aims to improve navigation while making ecosystem gains on the Upper Mississippi River and the Illinois Waterway.
- Jim highlighted various ecosystem projects in the Saint Paul district, including Pool 4 Wacouta Bay, Pool 9 Sny McGill Effigy Mounds, Pool 6 Johnson Island, Systemic Forestry, and Water Level Management.
- The discussion included updates on specific projects, such as Pool 4 Wacouta Bay, which is in the partnership stage, and Pool 9 Sny McGill Effigy Mounds, which is working on a draft implementation report.
- Questions and concerns were raised during the meeting, including inquiries about public comments, tribal engagement, and project selection efficiency.
- Jim mentioned that Kevin Berg is leading the Recreation Work Group and provided a brief update on ongoing efforts related to the recreation survey.
- In the context of outreach, Jim emphasized the importance of effective communication and discussed the program's website, project fact sheets, and the schedule for consultation committee meetings.
- Attendees expressed interest and raised questions about potential nest projects, with a focus on engaging counties, cities, and private landowners in project sponsorship.
- Participants discussed the need for simplified communication, outreach materials, and support for potential sponsors, addressing concerns about operation and maintenance (O&M) responsibilities.
- Jeff mentioned interest from the City of La Crosse and raised questions about the application process for grants and the need for clarity on O&M responsibilities.
- Attendees emphasized the importance of providing clear information to potential project sponsors and simplifying the message to encourage participation.

- Vanessa highlighted the NESP Design toolkit as a valuable resource for sharing project options and commended the team for its creation.
- Concerns were raised about how the program addresses projects with multiple elements and the potential challenges in servicing a broader area without alienating existing project sponsors.
- The need for ongoing communication, feedback, and collaboration to address concerns and improve the program's effectiveness was emphasized.

Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMMR) (Angela Deen)

(see slides for add'l info)

- Eight projects outlined for FY 24.
 - Color-coded phases: planning (blue), design (yellow), construction (green and gray).
- Project Updates:
 - Reno Bottoms awarded for design work.
 - Lower Pool 10 stage one construction contract to be awarded.
 - McGregor Lake construction progressing, including thin layer placement challenges.
 - Collaboration with UAS program for aerial surveys of project areas.
- Planning Projects:
 - Feasibility studies for Robinson Lake and Big Lake discussed.
 - Alternatives for Robinson Lake presented, ranging from 20 to 120 million.
 - Public review completed for Big Lake; feasibility report expected by May.
- Construction Update (McGregor Lake):
 - Thin layer placement lessons learned shared, emphasizing material characteristics.
 - First-time trial run for thin layer placement in upland areas.
- UAS Program Collaboration:
 - Utilization of Unmanned Aerial Systems for project surveys.
 - Footage and images aid in project documentation and outreach.
- Future Project Planning Challenges:
 - Concerns raised about the sustainability of the current project size and budget.
 - Discussion on the need for intentional project sizing (small, medium, large).
 - Exploration of strategies to handle surprises, uncertainties, and changing conditions.
- Five-Year Outlook and Project Size Considerations:
 - Visual representation of the potential challenges in handling large projects.
 - Discussion on the need for agile planning and considerations for budget fluctuations.
- Strategic Questions and Considerations:
 - Discussion on where to focus future UMRR dollars and time.
 - Evaluation of strategies for dealing with unknown funding fluctuations.
 - Exploration of intentional project sizing and more realistic cost estimates.
 - Consideration of limitations on study area size for efficient planning.
- Fact Sheet Development and Review:
 - Discussion on the potential subdivision of large fact sheets into smaller project areas.
 - Questions about editing existing fact sheets and the need for Fish and Wildlife input.
 - Emphasis on focusing on PDF plans to streamline team efforts.
- Challenges and Recommendations:
 - Concerns about the pace of large project completion and potential impacts on smaller projects.
 - Discussion on the need for improved coordination and planning efficiency.
 - The conversation revolved around the challenges associated with large projects in the Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program, particularly in terms of cost and timelines. The participants discussed the implications of a significant annual budget, such as \$8 million,

- and the difficulties in managing and completing large projects efficiently. There was a suggestion to explore the possibility of the National Ecosystem Restoration (NESP) program taking on certain project features to streamline the process and reduce costs.
- Concerns were raised about the prolonged planning phases and the need for better cost estimates early in the planning process. The idea of breaking down large projects into smaller, more manageable phases to expedite construction and claim acreage more quickly was also discussed. The conversation touched upon revisiting projects, potentially using supplemental feasibility reports for additional features within the same study area, and coordinating efforts between UMRR and NESP.
 - The group acknowledged the importance of strategic planning and interagency collaboration to address these challenges. Ultimately, decisions on how to navigate these issues will involve discussions within the Fish and Wildlife Work Group (FWWG) and coordination with other relevant stakeholders. The need for proactive measures to align with the goals of UMRR and NESP was emphasized.

Fish and Wildlife Work Group Activities (Jeff Janvrin)

- A call is scheduled for December 15th to plan virtual meetings.
 - Further coordination is needed for January virtual meetings and a small partner meeting with refuge managers, tentatively set for January 11th or 12th.
 - A full workgroup meeting is planned for January 29th or February 2nd.
 - Detailed updates, including a tutorial on GIS tools, will be presented.
- Jeff emphasized collaboration and feedback on project ideas will be discussed in the small partner meeting.

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

- Future Topics
 - Please send topics to Bob or Dano
 - Suggestion for 'history lesson' for new members of RRF
- Due-Outs from this RRF
 - Bob to re-visit co-chair question and present findings to next Forum

Robert Stanick
Co-Chairman, RRF

Introductions around the room 05-Dec:

1. Dano DeVaney – Placement Site Manager – USACE MVP
 2. Steve Clark – Environmental Compliance Section Chief – USACE MVP
 3. Vanessa Perry – Mississippi River Coordinator – MN DNR
 4. Dan Fasching – Water Management – USACE MVP
 5. Alan Robinns-Fenger – Minnesota River Recreation Area Manager -NPS
 6. Jeff Janvrin – Mississippi River Habitat Specialist, FWWG Chair – WI DNR
 7. Sammi Boyd – Mississippi River Planner – WI DNR
 8. Bob Stanick – Chief, Channels and Harbors, USACE MVP
 9. Geoff Kramer – Hydrologic Engineer, USACE MVP
 10. Heather Henneman – Chief, Hydrologic Engineering – USACE MVP
 11. Grace Freed - DA Fellow
 12. Al VanGuilder – Chief of Surveys, Channels and Harbors, USACE MVP
 13. Greg Genz – Friends of Pool 2, Lansing Bridge, Mississippi Waterway Association, Red Wing Harbor Commission
 14. Paul Machajewski – Long Term Planning, Dredged Material Manager, USACE MVP
 15. Jim Cook – Project Manager – USACE MVP
 16. Trevor Cyphers – Biologist – USACE MVP
 17. Amanda Goldstein – Biologist – USACE MVP
 18. Emily Schnick – MN Pollution Control Agency
 19. Linda Loomis – Lower MN River Watershed District
 20. Patrick Kelly – LTRM Station Manager – USGS
 21. Neil Rude – Mississippi River Habitat Specialist – MN DNR
 22. Charlene Anderson – Area Fisheries Supervisor – MN DNR
 23. Lucas Youngsma – Area Hydrologist - MN DNR
- On the Line:
24. Angela Deen – UMRR Program Manager - USACE MVP
 25. Jon Schultz – Environmental Section Chief - USACE MVP
 26. Kacie Opat – Hydraulic Engineer - USACE MVP
 27. John Incha – Hydraulic Engineer - USACE MVP
 28. Sabrina Chandler – Refuge Manager – Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge - USFWS
 29. Kendra Pednault – McGregor District Manager – USFWS
 30. Mike Halsted – Harbors and Waterways Program Manager – WI DOT
 31. Crystal vonHoldt – Waterway Regulatory Program – WI DNR
 32. Kirk Hansen – IA DNR
 33. Andrew Stephenson – UMRBA
 34. Barry Drazkowski - Isaac Walton League
 35. Dale Gentry – Director of Conservation – Audobon
 36. Brandon Buchanan – Environmental Defense League