

## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of River Resources Forum Meeting #126 on 15 - 16 August 2023 at the Prairie Du Chien Memorial Library, Prairie Du Chien, WI

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

- Introductions
- RRF 125 Minutes approval
  - Motion from Kirk Hansen
  - Second from Bob Stanick
  - No discussion
    - Corrections to last names, and change to Sny Magill
      - Approved with above mentioned corrections.
- Next Meetings:
  - December 5th & 6th in Twin Cities, MN – (MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center)
    - Sabrina confirmed venue has been booked.
- Mary Stefanski's Retirement
  - Letter read recognizing Mary Stefanski contributions to upper the Mississippi River.
  - Stories and memories of working with Mary Stefanski.
- Due Outs carried forward from previous meetings.
  - 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.
    - More regular communication pertaining to channel conditions, to limit surprise dredging locations more specifically placement site use. Fuel Gage of sites Red, Yellow, Green
    - Stanick & Dano carrying forward.
  - 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.*
      - *Decisions on where to spud equipment based on habitat and species present. Work Crews places to stage equipment during construction activities. Nosing into islands, possibly install mooring cell to reduce further soil erosion.*
      - *Possible map of sensitive areas where mooring, spudding would be limited. Possible evaluation NESP Jim Fischer to determine path forward re: spudding question.*
      - *Identify what questions are being asked and who needs to answer.*
      - *Assign to appropriate workgroup (what larger focus group could look at this issue) ... (FWWG, NESP coordinating meeting) Andrew Goodall....*
  - Bob Stanick will send out a survey to RRF members seeking meeting feedback.
    - Bob carrying it forward.

- *Bob Stanick will ask for informal comments on ways to improve or topics to discuss for Future RRF forums.*

## Agency Activities – (All)

- WI DNR – Jim Fischer
  - New director for Office of Great Waters
  - Interviewing/Evaluating for Mississippi Planner Position
  - MOU with St. Paul District ready to be moved up chain to secretary, then to back to COE for District Commander.
  - 29th August, Demonstration of 12' sediment bedload collector happening in Eau Claire; Interest from WI DNR Great Lakes and Mississippi River personnel to attend.
- USACE –Bob Stanick
  - Waiting on announcement for Replacement of DPM
  - C&H had numerous people out so far during NAV Season.
    - Relied heavily on position by committee, personnel status is starting to come back to full strength.
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuge – Mary Stefanski
  - Wendy Wycheck will be filling in for Mary Stefanski upon her retirement.
  - Jason Shelle departing
  - Working with Audubon Society to fund forest ecologist.
  - Districts posted closed areas for upcoming hunting seasons.
  - Pool 5, 5a, 7 or 8. Jones Fish will be spraying invasive species starting next week 8/21
  - Round Lake dock in Trempealeau will be replaced.
  - New bridge construction in Lansing, IA is scheduled to start in September.
    - Will replace Blackhawk bridge.
- IA DNR – Kirk Hansen
  - Upcoming personnel changes
  - On Friday August 19, 2023, Kirk Hansen will be promoted.
    - Kirk will continue to be representative for the RRF.
  - LTRM station sampled its one millionth fish.
    - It was little catfish.
- USCG – LT Alex Kwolek
  - Busy with inspection projects
    - Investigating maritime accidents
    - USACE Vessel certificates and inspections
- MNDOT – Patrick Phenow
  - Port Development Bill was passed for 18.1 million dollars

- UMWA – Greg Genz
  - Problems with increased sedimentation in the channel as well to recreation
  - Sediment disposition in POOL 2 has eliminated 40 fleeting spots.
  - FRIENDS OF POOL 2 – Tour September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, invited National Park Service and hoping to extend invitation to the National Forest Service as well.
  - Improving river access locations in pool 2
    - State Representative Rick Hansen has allocated \$1.2 Million to improve river access throughout the pool.
      - Currently working with Joe Atkins from Dakota County in identifying spots
      - Difficult to make new access as there are very zero new/willing sellers.
      - Driving the search to identify and improve existing river access locations.
  - Thanks to Jim Fischer for UMRBA testimony.
  - Pool 2 tour scheduled for 08 SEP.
  - Pool 2, Grey Cloud, Agg Industries needs sand.
  
- MN DNR – Neil Rude / Vanessa Perry
  - Kevin Stouffer retiring
    - Assistant area of fisheries supervisor
  - Neil Rude interim area of fisheries supervisor
  - Structure decision making process for invasive carp, identifying management techniques. Possible solutions identified next actions after that.
  - Dr. Bonnie Keller with MI University implementing revolutionary work with Chatbots to conduct surveys from New Orleans up to Minn, at water access sites.
  
- National Park Service –
  - St. Croix National Scenic Riverway has begun a multi-year planning process to develop a comprehensive river management planning process. The plan, once complete, will provide direction for management of the national park unit for the foreseeable future.
  - The Trego and Hayward Dams on the Namekagon River are currently going through the relicensing process with FERC. Both facilities are run-of-the-river and are managed by Xcel.
  - Much work is taking place to monitor, survey, and/or treat invasive species throughout the adjacent to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway: zebra mussels, yellow iris, purple loosestrife, invasive carp.
  - Effigy Mounds National Monument (EFMO), working with USACE, USFW, IA DNR & WI DNR have begun study of a bank stabilization at the Sny Magill Unity through USACE's Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program \*(NESP)
  - A survey of the rusty patch bumble bee presence at EFMO is being conducted by park staff and will compliment work being done by U of M, Department of Entomology.
  - IA DNR is studying CWD amongst deer populations in EFMO and Yellow River State Forest.
  - EFMO is part of the USGS Dragonfly Mercury Project, collecting dragonfly larvae at National Park Service and USFW locations nationwide to test for the presence of PFAS chemicals.

- Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network sampled fish species in Dousman Creek, tributary of the Yellow River and identified cold and warm water species (EFMO).
- Park staff at EMFO continue to remove flowering rush, garlic mustard and other invasive plants.
- USGS and EFMO have received funding for FY24 to test the environmental health of the Yellow River as it enters the park.

## Navigation Work Group Activities (Dan Cottrell)

- Boating Safety around Dredges -Draft for review- No other NWG action items (fishing tournament handout (previous RRF Due-Out)

## Channel Maintenance Program Update (Stanick, Cottrell, Schroeder, Machajewski)

- Dan Cottrell – Channel Conditions
  - Dredge GOETZ dredging operations.
    - Started dredging June 27<sup>th</sup> in Pool 4; Dredged Reads Landing, Crats Island & Teepeeota
    - Progressed through Pool 5; Dredging at Mule Bend (1 & 2), Fisher Island & Lower Zumbro
    - Currently working in Pool 8; Completed job at Picayune Island, currently dredging at Above Brownsville
      - Two additional jobs remain in Pool 8 for the GOETZ
      - Tentatively scheduled for one job in Pool 9 at Lansing Upper Light
      - Estimated to be complete with dredging operations late August or Early September before moving downriver.
  - Government Mechanical dredging operations
    - Started in Pool 6 at Homer, Below Winona RR Bridge
      - Pulled off job due to channel restriction in Pool 7 at Lower Approach to LD 6.
        - Channel was opened within 48 hours.
        - Resumed dredging in Pool 6
      - Currently dredging in Pool 5A, where they have two jobs (Betsy Slough and Wilds Bend)
      - Expected for them to finish their season in Pool 5 at Below Mt Vernon
    - Contract Mechanical Plant 1 was strategically placed below Lake Pepin
      - Started dredging operations in Pool 4
        - Pulled off dredging in Pool 4 to mobilize to Pool 5 to address channel restriction at Fisher Island.
          - Once Channel was re-opened plant finished Pool 4.
        - Relocated to Pool 7 to continue to address area of previous channel restriction to restore maximum width and depth.
        - They are anticipated to continue dredging their way down through Pool 7
        - Tentative schedule for remainder of year will be possibly dredge one job in Pool 8 and 10, then move back up to Pool 4 at end of season.
      - Contract Mechanical Plant 2 is strategically placed Above Lake Pepin

- Spent significant time dredging in Pool 2
  - Moved up to the MN River and completed one job before being relocated due to grounding.
    - Addressed channel restriction area in Pool 2 at The St. Paul Barge Terminal
      - Upon completing mission at St. Paul Barge Terminal will mobilize to finish dredging operations on MN River
  - Tentatively scheduled to conduct dredging operations before end of season in upper Pool 4 and Pool 3
- Contract Mechanical Plant 3 IDIQ Contractor
  - Completed two jobs in Pool 9
- Contract Mechanical Plant 4 Newt Marine
  - CM4 is dredging material in Pool 10 in support of the McGregor HREP Project; estimated 200,000 cubic yards.
- Kurt Schroeder – Placement Site Actions
  - Placement Site Briefing
    - Island C8 repair was completed rock stored at Brownsville.
    - Shoreline Stabilization Projects
      - Corps Island Pool 3 and Wilds Bend Pool 5A.
      - 95% DQC completed 14-July.
      - 100% Expected to start 31-July.
    - Above Fisher Island – Pool 5 Shoreline Stabilization Project
      - Work to be started in Fall of 2023
      - Will be coordinating willow planting effort in fall 2023 after completion.
    - LiDAR surveys of all active placement areas are scheduled for fall of this year (leaf off conditions). Surveys will be used to establish base line volumes/capacities at respective sites.
    - Signs were installed at 5 of 11 beneficial use sites; listed name of site, POC, rules and QR codes to access beneficial use site.
    - Iowa DOT (Lunda Construction) is set to start construction on the replacement Lansing Hwy Bridge (Blackhawk) in the fall of 2023 with completion of the new bridge in estimated to be in 2025. The existing bridge is set to be taken down in 2026. We will be good neighbors with Lunda construction during this.
  - Other Projects & Beneficial Use Highlights
    - As of July 26th, 50% of our dredged material from this year went to either beneficial use sites or used for known projects.
    - Pool 2 DMMP Implementation Status is moving slowly but ongoing; once real estate is complete progress is expected to pick up dramatically.
    - C&H commitment to providing an additional 37,000 cubic yards of granular material to support construction at Pigs Eye Island HREP continued. A total of 372,000 cubic yards of material was used in last two years from channel cuts as well as Boulanger and Pine Bend placement sites.
    - Completed project at Sturgeon Lake/Buffalo Slough Tribal Partnership Program (TPP)

- Section 1122: Pierce County Island Projects are expected to start the 1st week of September. With the cumulative total of 300,000 cubic yards of material is expected to be removed from Reads Landing.
  - Trempealeau site in Pool 7 is full; transitioned to placing at Dakota Island.
- Lansing Highway Bridge Site-
  - Swallows were present; barricaded off, placed material without affecting them. Swallows still present.
  - Beneficial use is ongoing.
- Fountain City 1
  - 35,000 – 50,000 cubic yards placed there is being used for shaping to make it operational for hydraulic placement again.
- Brownsville Containment Site
  - Still dealing with swallows there
- MN River – Breach of berm at Bass Ponds UMRR project looking to support that fix.
- UMRR Big and Robinson Lakes – looking to contribute as much as 240,000 cubic yards.
- Paul Machajewski – Unloads & DMMPs
  - MOUs recap
    - MOU with Wisconsin is close to being final.
    - MOU with MDNR go through this year.
    - MOU with MPCA good for 10 years
    - Process with IDNR still doing after the fact for placement in Iowa.
  - Site Development
    - Pool 5, Rolling Prairie
      - Land Use Plan Public meeting held 21-Jun in Kellogg, MN, about 15 members of the public attended. Only out-of-the-ordinary question was regarding the use of fungicides on the crops. This suggestion is being evaluated.
      - DRAFT Land Use Plan was shared with OSIT in May, no agency comments to date.
      - Anticipate COE's M&R crew to resume site prep on Fitzzy 40 this fall; goal is to have site ready for material placement in 2024.
  - Site Unloads
    - None anticipated in 2023 with IDIQ contractor due to main channel dredging needs and other funding priorities.
    - Lower Pool 4 Reads starting this fall for 1122 project.
    - 2024 unload possibilities include.
      - Pool 5: Above West Newton through West Newton to Rolling Prairie
      - Pool 8: Above Brownsville to Brownsville Containment
    - No major site unloads anticipated in next 1-3 years.
    - Pool 3 would be coming up next.
    - Jim Fischer stressed still need to plan for major offloads because resource agencies prefer to use backwater dredging to build islands not always channel material.
  - Lower Pool 4 DMMP
    - 217 MOA (Memo of Agreement) with the City of Wabasha was signed by Mayor Durand and Col Swenson 24-Jul. Working to finalize material mgmt. details.

- Anticipating material mgmt. to begin from the Wabasha Gravel Pit this winter and from Grand Encampment Island summer 2024.
- Reads Pipeline contract advertisement, award and construction anticipated this fall. Ready for use Fall of 2024 but 1<sup>st</sup> use by Goetz Spring 2025.
- Discussion:
  - Address early on concerns regarding permits/logistics/regulatory pertaining to 217 projects.
  - FWS and MN DNR have not heard anything pertaining to permits for Wabasha Port (not a Corps action). Lack of engagement throughout process. A&E Firm supposed to be working with EIS. Permits/EIS are responsibility of City of Wabasha, Paul will encourage Wabasha to reach out to partners/agencies.
- Pool 6 DMMP
  - RRF endorsement via email early June
  - Anticipating real-estate agreement with Fastenal; predicting 20,000 cubic yards for filling in low area by Fastenal Store, then stockpiling for bene use
  - Tech Park – Will continue to use when desired by City of Winona and provide material for future economic development in Winona.
  - Homer – CP Rail crossing arms, lights and bells are all still in the works, hoping for installation next year.
    - Working with MDOT to mitigate risk due to increase traffic (i.e., turn lanes).
- Pool 9 DMMP
  - Genoa Power Plant – Reach out to Kevin Bartell pertaining to Permits.
- Pool 10 DMMP
  - 12' bed load collector is slated to be tested in Eau Clair at the Lake Altoona, Peaceful Canoe Landing. Goal is to implement that in area of McMillan Bend dredge cuts or possibly on Upper Iowa River.

### Water Level Management Task Force (Neil Rude)

- No meeting since last RRF
- Talked with UMRBA staff, presented under water level management and regional committee. NESP fact sheet was approved for systematic.

### Recreation Work Group Activities (Kevin Berg)

- Rec Work Group looking to hold meeting in early October.

### Beneficial Use Work Group Activities (Kurt Schroeder)

- No recent meetings due to the low water and busy navigation season.

### Disposition Update Upper and Lower St. Anthony Falls & LD1 (Carla Sparks)

- Upper St. Anthony Falls Disposition
  - Conveyance Activities
- Lower St. Anthony Falls @ Lock and Dam 1 Disposition

- Discussion Questions:
  - (Greg Genz) Friends of Pool 2: Lock 1 sediment sampling 2 million yards of tier 3 material that they do not want in pool 2...
  - (Q)Friends of Pool 2: Three power plants operating until 2050.
    - (A) Those power plants are not on federal land so they could continue to operate.
  - (Q)Friend of Pool 2: Who would resume flood control operations for upper saint Anthony falls. Control Flood. Flows over 40,000 cfs is where tainter, gate goes up and flow is directed through lock.
    - (A) Technically that is not the purpose of the lock gates, could be a possible outcome after disposition study
  - (Q)Exclusion zone for construction if work needs to be conducted on structures.
    - (A) Requirement to maintain site, to maintain need to have crane pads, which have been used by multiple entities to achieve desired results. However, sections of these lands have been not included in disposition study as they are needed for use.

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

- Kim taking 120-day detail with MVR, backfill TBD.
  - Pool 2 Wing Dam Notching
    - First NESP project completed.
    - 13 Wing dams notched.
    - Construction completed 26 June 2023
    - Ribbon cutting dedication ceremony 25 July 2023
  - Pool 4 Wacouta Bay
    - Partnership with WI DNR and MN DNR
    - Final Project Implementation Report to go to Division on 8 Dec 2023.
  - Water Level Management
    - Managed out of St. Louis (MVS)
    - Kickoff meeting was 11-Jul.
    - Internally Deciding on path forward
      - Programmatic Project Implementation Report (PIR)
      - Multiple PIRS
      - Early Screening of Pools
      - Partners Engagement
    - Developing a proposed course of action for NESP CC – Should be talking about the program as a whole not just the ecosystem side.
  - Next Up PIR: Pool 6 Johnson Island
  - Pool 10 - Sny Magill-Effigy Mounds
    - NESP authorization is a unique opportunity to work on a project focused on cultural resources.
    - Protecting burial mounds from eroding into the river
    - Sponsors are NPS and USFWS
    - Partners are IA DNR and WI DNR
    - Extensive partner and tribal coordination
    - Draft PIR planned for February 2024.



- Systematic Forestry
  - MVP working with MVS and MVR foresters.
  - Long-term, strategic planning for forestry actions
  - Contract awards started in FY23.
  - IA DNR Kirk: Comments were provided, no final report yet? Kim will check on comments.
- Pool 7 Lake Onalaska
  - H&H Modeling
  - Project area was too big for NESP trying to break it down in to smaller projects.
  - To inform the river teams and USFWS for future project development
- When NESP has construction funds: Pool 4 Marshes (was not executed as part of Sec: 1122 project so it was broken out into a NESP project)
- Navigation Mooring Cells
  - Small scale efficiency improvement
  - 5–10-minute time savings per lockage
  - Locks and Dams 7 and 10 within MVP
  - Navigation industry and USACE Operations engaged.
  - IA DNR: Comments submitted concerns raised by agencies, “mussel sled is inadequate” now invited to meetings but not a lot of engagement.
  - Construction planned for FY24.
- Navigation Systemic Mitigation Upper Pool 4 Island 4
  - Kim will send project details to Rylee with LPLA
  - First navigation mitigation project, fully funded by NESP in partnership with WI DNR, contract was awarded on 14 July 2023.
  - \*\*Fact sheets that have been approved by USACE and other partners should be publicly available on NESP website.
- Johnson Island – Next PIR once NESP has funds.
- NESP program update
  - Project planning with River Teams
  - FWWG has the “Sideboards” for proposing NESP projects.
  - NESP and UMRR are both considering how to consider Environmental Justice in this process.
  - RRF endorsement of projects submitted to Corps (like UMRR process)
  - Aiming for completion in 16 months
- Program Outreach
  - TBD
- NESP Coordinating Meeting (Quarterly meetings (next one is Nov 9, 2023).
- MN DNR Perry: NESP strategic planning supposed to be held this winter not sure who all is going to participate.

## Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) (Angela Deen)

- UMRR funding as a whole \$55 Mil FY 23 Pres Bud states that as well
  - Program \$11 Million in St. Paul District this FY.
  - WRDA 22 gave authorities up to \$90 Mil for entire program.
- **PLANNING**

- Robinson Lake- Pool 4, MN
  - Site Visit (2 Aug)
  - Measure Development Meeting (14-Aug)
  - Cultural Phase 1 Survey (Fall)
- Big Lake – Pool 4, WI
  - Selected Plan approved by MVD 21-Jul
  - District Quality Control (Aug)
  - Concurrent Reviews (Sep)
- **DESIGN**
- Reno Bottoms HREP – Pool 9, MN/IA
  - Main driver for tree mortality was 2018 and 2019 record flooding and prolonged days of inundation. Silver Maple trees are dying, invasive reed canary grass is impacting the forest.
  - Forests are having a difficult time naturally regenerating and getting reestablished.
- Lower Pool 10 HREP - Pool 10, IA
  - Awarded A/E for Design (June) for Stages 1, 2, and 3.
  - 65% Review Stage 1 (Fall)
- **CONSTRUCTION**
- McGregor Lake – currently working on stage II features hauling granular from Miss Gardens, thin layer placement starting 2nd or 3rd week of September. Should be wrapped up by the end of 2024.
- Trempealeau HREP Re-evaluation
  - Drafting Letter Report with Agency concurrence (WI, MN, FWS) on proposal.
  - Could increase gravity flow by adding additional culvert under the BNSF railroad.

## Fish and Wildlife Work Group Activities (Jeff Janvrin)

- Meeting held Aug 10th.
- Staff at USGS highlighted tools that could assist in planning and/or selection of projects. As well as using Lidar for monitoring project areas post constructions.
- Tentative schedule voting members for FWWG 1st week October.
- Spring 2024 have multiple Fact Sheets ready for review and with forwarding to RRF in Nov 2024.
- Working on process to improve feasibility, recommendations, ability, implementation, staffing and to be transparent when bringing multiple projects up the board to RRF and to the Corps. Projects spread out amongst the FWS districts opposed to 4 projects all within one district. Sort via ecological merit or vs. distribution
  - Discussion:
    - NESP Advisory board is authorized and is implemented at HQ, however that criteria set forth has yet to be determined and/or implemented or disseminated down to other agencies for how to properly select and categorize projects either via UMMR or NESP.
    - How to reach out to NGOs up and down the AOR? Any possibility of looking at projects beyond the flood plain pertaining to Environmental Justice and how to seek all their inputs into projects?
      - Mississippi River Network is possibly becoming an umbrella network of all other NGOs. County economic advisory should have contacts with all NGO members.

- Upcoming and possibly due out to discuss staffing of FWWG.

## Continuing Authorities Program Update (Nick Castellane)

- No update provided.

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

- Ackerman's cut below LD10 was discussed.
- Due-Outs from this RRF
  - C&H: Include list of due outs from previous RRF in presentation files or at a minimum not on teams and is readily accessible.
  - NESP: Due outs: Ordinary Highwater Mark definitions, possibly share with river teams as they are developing projects and is there potential for this to extend past RR Tracks
    - NESP guidance on recreational type activities and access dredging for future projects.
  - Discuss staffing issues of Fish and Wildlife Service; Specifically staffing at districts where there are numerous projects occurring or scheduled.
  - Look at LD7 outdraft project are these impacts and/or anticipated future improvements being taken into account for other Lake Onalaska NESP projects and is there communication between NESP and LD7 outdraft PDT.

Links provided from personnel via WebEx:

(UMMR Forest Loss Flier)

[https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Portals/48/docs/Environmental/UMRR/Key%20Docs/UMRR\\_forest%20loss%20flyer\\_2023.pdf?ver=AZj4eHSViySjKvAJBLPrHQ%3d%3d](https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Portals/48/docs/Environmental/UMRR/Key%20Docs/UMRR_forest%20loss%20flyer_2023.pdf?ver=AZj4eHSViySjKvAJBLPrHQ%3d%3d)

1122 Pierce County Island Public Review

<https://www.dredgingtoday.com/2022/05/12/modified-upper-pool-4-island-project-available-for-public-review/>

UMRR find an HREP tool has fact sheets associated for projects

<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental-Stewardship/Upper-Mississippi-River-Restoration/Habitat-Restoration/Find-an-HREP-Project/>

Water Level Management Benefits, Costs, and Risks (2004 and 2022 Report)

<https://umrba.org/document/wlm-benefits-costs-risks>

UMRBA 2022 Water Level Management Priority Actions

<https://umrba.org/document/umrba-2022-water-level-management-priority-actions>

Robert Stanick  
Co-Chairman, RRF