

**Minutes of the
Upper Mississippi River System
Environmental Management Program
Coordinating Committee**

**May 16, 2002
Spring Quarterly Meeting**

**Radisson Quad City Plaza Hotel
Davenport, Iowa**

Steve Cobb of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2002. Other EMP-CC members present were Charlie Wooley (USFWS), Scott Stuewe (IL DNR), Kevin Szcodronski (IA DNR), Amy Denz (MN DNR), Gary Christoff (MO DOC), Terry Moe (WI DNR), and Leslie Holland- Bartels (USGS). A complete list of attendees follows the minutes.

Minutes of the February Meeting

Kevin Szcodronski moved and Terry Moe seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the February 28, 2002 meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

Program Management

FY 02 Fiscal Performance

Roger Perk reported that the EMP has expended \$5.683 million through the second quarter of FY 02. This is 34 percent of the program's \$17.303 million in scheduled expenditures for the year. Perk said program execution should increase in the third and fourth quarters as construction activity accelerates in the spring and summer months. He said spending associated with the Report to Congress is also expected to increase in the second half of FY 02.

Perk reported that award of the Ambrough Slough Stage 2 contract has been delayed due to a bid protest. As a result, the dredging work likely will not be initiated until October and the work may extend into the next year. Funds allocated to Stage 2 work in FY 02 will be reassigned within the EMP so as not to impair fiscal performance. Perk said high water has delayed construction on the Pleasant Creek HREP, but work will likely resume within the next month. The Pool 11 Islands project will be put out for bid within the next couple of weeks. Definite Project Reports (DPRs) for Lake Odessa and Rice Lake should be completed by the end of FY 02. Phase II of the Batchtown project area is still under high water, but Mike Thompson expects construction to be completed by the end of this year. Kevin Szcodronski asked whether any HREPs are expected to sustain damage from this spring's flooding. Perk said MVR does not currently anticipate any damage. Thompson said water

levels are still too high to assess damages in MVS, but said he is not seeing any problems so far.

FY 03 Appropriations Update

Perk reported that the House and Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittees are expected to mark up their FY 03 spending measures in the June/July timeframe. He noted that EMP supporters, including several members of Congress, are urging the appropriators to provide substantially more for the EMP than the \$12.2 million President Bush requested. Steve Cobb reported that the Administration has started development of its FY 04 budget. Preliminary indications are that the budget constraints facing the Corps will be similar to those that drove formulation of the FY 03 budget request.

Szcodronski asked about the Corps' initial FY 03 budget for the EMP. Cobb and Gary Loss explained that the EMP's capability was documented at full funding. However, the EMP budget request, after the OMB passback, came in at \$12.2 million. Szcodronski said he understands the Corps is capable of executing the program at full funding; but said that, in a very competitive budget environment, state decision makers want to know what the Corps requested for the program before the state presses for increases to the President's budget. Szcodronski noted that the President's request for the Missouri River fish and wildlife mitigation program doubled this year, a striking contrast to the EMP request. Rich Worthington said the Missouri River increase illustrates what can happen when a program is an Administration priority.

In response to further questions regarding development of the Administration's FY 03 budget, Cobb explained that OMB gave the Corps a \$1.4 billion ceiling for its construction general account nationwide. This was approximately half the amount the Corps originally requested. After funding Administration priorities, including projects that can be completed in FY 03, this resulted in an across-the-board funding cut of approximately 40 percent to other construction projects. For the EMP, this translated into a \$12.2 million request.

Moe asked whether the Corps had reached any further conclusions regarding how funding would be allocated if the EMP is cut to \$12.2 million. Perk and Cobb replied that the Corps' allocation proposal under such a scenario remains unchanged from the February meeting. That is, the Corps believes the EMP would be best served by allocating the cut proportionately to the HREP and LTRMP components (see attached allocation proposal). However, Cobb and Perk further explained that the Corps would like to await a better indication of the expected FY 03 appropriation before making allocation and implementation decisions. Cobb stressed that the Corps will consider partner input, including the recommendation made by the states, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environmental Protection Agency at the February EMP-CC meeting. He noted that at least some decisions will likely have to be made prior to the August 8 EMP-CC meeting, if it appears that the FY 03 appropriation will fall significantly below the FY 02 level. In this event, Cobb said the Corps will hold an EMP-CC conference call to seek partner input.

Holly Stoerker described efforts by the states and others in support of EMP funding and distributed a packet of materials related to those efforts. In particular, Stoerker noted that the House Water Resources Subcommittee held a March 7 hearing on the "Impacts of a Reduced

Corps of Engineers Budget.” UMRBA staff worked with the Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) to highlight the drastic effects the President’s budget would have on the EMP. In addition, UMRBA staff testified about the EMP at a March 21 hearing of the Mississippi River Congressional Caucus and also visited a number of Congressional offices at the same time. The UMR Task Force sent a letter to the House Appropriations Committee advocating \$25 million for the EMP in FY 03. Stoerker reported that the UMRBA’s energy and water budget testimony supported full funding for the EMP. In addition, UMRBA staff prepared a draft letter that each of the states could use in preparing a letter for its Governor’s signature supporting increased funding for the EMP. Stoerker said she is not aware that any of the states have sent a Governor’s letter as yet.

Independent Technical Review Committee

Perk reported that MVD’s implementation plan for the Independent Technical Review Committee (ITRC) remains under review in Washington. Perk said Corps Headquarters is expected to respond to the ITRC plan within the next few months.

PCA Template

Perk said Headquarters is also reviewing the proposed project cooperation agreement (PCA) template. MVD expects a response on the PCA template by the end of the calendar year. Perk attributed delays in HQ review of the ITRC plan and PCA template to overall workload, Assistant Secretary Parker’s resignation, and other general factors. Perk said he was not aware that HQ has any particular concerns with either the ITRC plan or the PCA template.

Long Term Resource Monitoring Program

Redirection of Staff Time

Leslie Holland-Bartels briefly reviewed the changes that have been made to the fish monitoring protocol, noting that the elimination of selected gears will enhance overall efficiency. She presented an overhead showing the estimated time savings associated with the modifications. FY 02 savings are estimated to total 312 staff days across all field stations, with a range from 18 days saved for the Open River station to 64 days saved for the Pool 8 station. Total time savings in future years are estimated at 394 days. Holland-Bartels explained that the FY 02 savings will accrue solely from reductions in staff time required to collect data, while the outyear savings also reflect reduced staff time associated with data analysis, quality assurance, and other data management activities. She said UMESC staff, the field station team leaders, and the A-Team were in agreement that the FY 02 staff time available due to the modifications should be used to develop a systemic fish trends report. Each field station will produce a trend analysis report covering its 1993-2001 fisheries data. These reports will then be combined into a single report. Holland-Bartels said a draft of this report is scheduled for October 1. She said that decisions regarding how to redirect staff time in future years will not be made until the results of the FY 03 appropriations process are known.

FY 02 SOW Update

Holland-Bartels reviewed progress on the following FY 02 LTRMP work items:

- Field sampling and reporting — on schedule
- Invertebrate review — developing on-line survey; workshop planned for September
- Water quality review — 5-member review team selected; reviewing procedures manual; meeting set for June 3
- Fish cross component analysis — on schedule; analysis of variance in progress; potential causal variables chosen
- Modeling mayfly abundance — initial models completed for Pool 13; working on testing these models in other pools
- Bathymetric mapping — completing data from last year's survey; updating web; report in progress on sediment transects
- 2000 land cover/land use — on schedule; Pools 9-12, 24, and 25 and Alton Pool completed; approximately two-thirds of the system will be complete by the end of FY 02

Holland-Bartels said the A-Team will be consulted as part of the invertebrate and water quality reviews. The focus of these component reviews will be on ensuring that the monitoring efforts are scientifically defensible and on identifying what questions are not being addressed under the current designs. Holland-Bartels said she anticipates that the fish cross component analysis will prove very useful in identifying what else we need to know in order to understand fisheries dynamics.

Potential FY 03 Budget Cuts

Holland-Bartels reported that UMESC has laid out a range of options for responding if the EMP is funded at \$12.2 million and the appropriation is allocated proportionately. All of these options would involve significant disruption to the LTRMP. As a result, Holland-Bartels said she would like to hold off on implementation actions until the Committee mark-ups provide some insight into the likely funding level. At the same time, she noted that USGS and program partners will need some lead time to implement many of the potential cuts; thus decisions cannot be deferred indefinitely. Assuming standard allocations and no increase in the savings and slippage rate, Holland-Bartels estimated that the EMP funding level would have to be at least \$19.0 million in FY 03 to avoid significant cuts to the LTRMP. She said some decisions on redirection will have to be made prior to the August EMP-CC meeting if it appears that the final appropriations will fall below \$19.0 million. USGS will consult with the A-Team, field stations, and EMP-CC prior to finalizing any decisions on redirection.

Holland-Bartels also reported that USGS is considering changes to its business practices that could increase the agency's assessments against the LTRMP. A decision on these changes, which would be national in scope, is expected in the relatively near future.

A-Team Report

Tom Boland reported that Gary Christoff is replacing Ken Brummett as Missouri's representative on the A-Team. At its last meeting, the A-Team discussed the LTRMP's history as well as the group's own evolution. Boland said the A-Team will be assessing how it functions, reviews LTRMP tasks, coordinates with the field stations, and provides other input to the program. The A-Team has also asked USGS to establish an A-Team section on the UMESC web site.

Boland expressed the A-Team's support for the plan to redirect staff time freed up by the modifications to the fish monitoring protocol. He said the systemic fish trends report should be very helpful and also expressed support for the on-going fisheries cross component analysis. Boland reported that John Sullivan will be the A-Team's representative on the team reviewing the water quality monitoring component.

Boland said the A-Team is very concerned with the potential FY 03 budget cuts and appreciates the EMP-CC's support for the LTRMP. According to Boland, the loss of people would be the greatest negative impact from substantial funding reductions.

Boland described an emerging consensus among resource managers that the LTRMP is just reaching the point at which it is providing key information to inform river management decisions. As an example, he noted that Iowa is very concerned with declines in the walleye/sauger fishery. Boland said LTRMP data is key to the state's ability to make decisions regarding management of this highly valued resource.

Terry Moe stressed the importance of maintaining and following key elements of the LTRMP management plan, including the LTRMP Operating Plan, UMESC Strategic Plan, and annual scopes of work. Moe said following the vision established in these documents is the best way to ensure that the LTRMP does not wander off track over time. Holland-Bartels said the Operating Plan is good for long term strategic direction, but is too conceptual to be useful in annual planning. She said UMESC is working to break the Operating Plan down into more concrete pieces—i.e., specific tasks that USGS could offer in response to funding opportunities.

Kevin Szcodronski asked whether USGS decision-makers feel much ownership of the LTRMP. Holland-Bartels said she has focused on expanding understanding and support for the program within USGS. She said things are certainly better than they were, but the level of agency ownership is not yet where she would like it to be. She noted that Director Groat and USGS's congressional liaison office are certainly aware of the program and encouraged others to discuss the LTRMP with USGS leaders. Holland-Bartels observed that the appropriations subcommittees are very insulated from one another, but said efforts are underway to promote some cross-committee awareness. In response to a question from Szcodronski, Holland-Bartels said that LTRMP funding accounts for approximately one-third of UMESC's total budget and about one-sixth of the funds that are actually retained at the Center.

HREP Planning

Roger Perk briefly reviewed efforts to develop an HREP planning and sequencing process that will support the scientific selection of projects and enhance confidence in project selection. Tools in the new process will include the habitat needs assessment (HNA), pool plans, enhanced fact sheets, and project sequencing at pool and reach scales. Perk emphasized that the HNA will be a very useful tool, but will not be the sole determinant of project selection and sequencing. Other key factors will include pool plans, managers' judgment, and program management considerations such as budget circumstances. He noted that the HNA needs a variety of refinements, including a better understanding of species-habitat relationships.

Perk described MVR staff's efforts to test the new HREP planning and sequencing process by applying it to the five potential new start projects identified by the River Resources Coordinating Team (RRCT). MVR staff quickly concluded that they needed additional information concerning some of the projects in order to complete the pilot effort. Perk said Corps staff is working with a small group from the RRCT's Fish and Wildlife Interagency Committee (FWIC) to refine the fact sheets. Key information needs included anticipated project outputs, spatial data with which to analyze the distribution of key habitats, projected contributions to interagency management plans, and recommendations regarding the phasing of large projects. Bob Clevenstine said he has requested this information from FWIC members and is just starting to receive responses.

Clevenstine said projects that require acquisition of lands or easements will be placed on hold until those interests are acquired. Clevenstine said he anticipates that the district groups will need to revisit their sequencing decisions periodically as lands/easements are acquired. In answer to a question from Kevin Szcodronski, Perk explained that, while planning will not commence until the necessary lands/easements are acquired, the acquisition of those property interests will be considered as part of the non-federal sponsor's cost-share.

Terry Moe asked whether the HNA was helpful in the pilot effort to apply the new HREP planning process. Clevenstine said the HNA essentially confirmed managers' best professional judgment. For example, Clevenstine said the Fox Island/Gregory Ditch project is a fairly basic HREP. However, because of its location in Pool 20, where there is very little habitat, FWIC members had ranked the project quite highly. Subsequent analysis using the HNA confirmed this judgment.

Perk said next steps will include analyzing the five projects with the additional information provided by FWIC members; documenting the test case experience; and presenting that information to the EMP-CC, possibly at the August meeting. By the end of FY 02, Perk said MVR also hopes to finalize the HREP planning document, in consultation with the program partners. In addition, within the next month, MVR will select one or more of the RRCT's recommended projects for initiation of planning. Terry Moe asked Perk to consult with Jeff Janvrin of Wisconsin DNR as he proceeds with the steps identified.

Habitat Needs Assessment

Mike Thompson briefly reviewed the history of the HNA, noting that the effort was initiated prior to reauthorization of the EMP in the 1999 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The WRDA reauthorization included a directive to assess habitat needs. Thompson recounted the basic HNA goal of assessing habitat needs at the system, reach, and pool scales, with the objective of developing a tool that can help guide the selection, design, and evaluation of HREPs. Because of data and resource limitations, the first iteration of the HNA necessarily relied extensively on managers' best professional judgment and includes a great deal of qualitative information. A GIS-based Query Tool was developed to enable users to explore relationships between habitat and species. According to Thompson, next steps in refining the HNA include updating data sets, integrating modeling software into the Query Tool, upgrading software to facilitate Query Tool operation by a wide range of users, and developing a web platform for the HNA.

Terry Moe expressed the opinion that the level of effort required to update the HNA is relatively modest. Moe said he does not see the need to make any major changes in the assessment or Query Tool. Thompson concurred that the next steps are largely in the nature of refinements.

Linda Leake said the Query Tool was initially based in ArcView. However, ArcView is moderately expensive and requires a fair amount of user training. As a result, UMESC has been working to develop an independent platform that does not require users to have any specialized software. Leake said the new platform retains GIS functionality and will accept additional data layers provided by users. A matrix wizard allows users to define matrices. The platform also includes some new functions, such as grouped analyses. Leake said one shortcoming is that the platform's capability to print maps is not currently well-developed. Maps can, however, be exported for printing. Leake estimated the licensing cost of the software embedded in the platform at \$100, approximately one-tenth the cost of ArcView.

Moe asked how the master Query Tool will be maintained given the ability of users to add additional data layers. Leake said a protocol remains to be established. UMESC and the Corps have been discussing that issue, along with licensing options. Leslie Holland-Bartels said the ability for users to add data is very useful, but does pose potential problems if different versions of the Query Tool develop and users think they are operating the same version. Holland-Bartels said UMESC will track the history of the Query Tool and maintain the metadata essential to preserving the tool's scientific validity. However, she noted that questions surrounding distribution and updating pose programmatic issues for the partnership as well as site management concerns.

Mike Thompson introduced Tracy Butler of ACI Technologies, which has proposed providing access to the Query Tool via the web. Butler described a variety of challenges associated with the Query Tool, including the varied level of technical expertise among end users, users' hardware limitations, timely distribution of updates, cost-effectiveness for both the provider and the end users, and ease of use. Butler suggested that these challenges could be addressed successfully by providing access via the web and relying on a centrally-based server to do the computing. Under this approach, both the application and the data would reside on the server. Butler then provided a brief demonstration of his proposed approach.

In response to a question from Moe, Thompson said the Corps has not contracted with ACI, nor has it decided on what approach to take. Roger Perk said the Corps is reviewing options to optimize distribution and usability. Among the Corps' concerns is facilitating use for those with relatively low-end PCs. Holland-Bartels offered the perspective that the web will ultimately be the best means for providing access to the Query Tool. However, she said it is not as obvious that the web is the best current option. One concern with web-based sharing is the potential for misuse of the Query Tool. Holland-Bartels explained that the tool requires a certain amount of training in order to ensure it is used appropriately. She stressed that the issue of user training should be resolved before the tool is made more readily accessible via the web. According to Holland-Bartels, other issues include how to allocate the costs associated with making the Query Tool more broadly accessible. Mark Beorkrem expressed an appreciation for the data integrity issue, but emphasized that environmental groups have many skilled staff who want to be able to use the Query Tool.

Moe encouraged the Corps and UMESC to consult the A-Team regarding use and distribution of the Query Tool. Moe also said he would object to using EMP funds to make the tool accessible for non-EMP uses. He said it is perfectly reasonable to ask these beneficiaries to pay the costs associated with providing them access. More generally, Moe expressed concern that the HNA is being used for a wide variety of non-EMP purposes while he has yet to see a demonstration of how the assessment can be used to facilitate HREP selection and planning.

Report to Congress

Roger Perk reported that staff from the Corps, USGS, and UMRBA had developed 11 papers to capture discussions from the January and February Report to Congress (RTC) workshops. Nine of these papers relate to potential issues that may be addressed in the RTC, while the other two describe possible themes that might be reflected in the report. Perk explained that the issue papers are designed to define the issue, identify potential options, and focus further discussion, with the ultimate goal of facilitating a partnership decision regarding what, if anything, to recommend concerning the issue in the RTC.

Perk said the papers would be the subject of more in-depth discussion at the RTC workshop immediately following the EMP-CC meeting. However, he invited comments from the EMP-CC concerning whether the papers appropriately frame the issue, capture the range of options, and merit continued consideration. EMP-CC members made a variety of specific suggested changes, which will be reflected in revised versions of the issue papers. In addition, they offered the following more general comments:

- Modify the HREP planning and prioritization paper to avoid any suggestion that the previous process was not based on sound scientific judgment.
- Several members expressed concern that the general approach to addressing LTRMP funding issues has been to identify the least damaging cuts that can be made to meet budget constraints. Terry Moe suggested developing a new issue paper that would address what the LTRMP must look like if it is to provide the information needed for adaptive management.

- Eliminate innovation as a major theme, replacing it instead with an emphasis on the EMP's accomplishments and effectiveness.

Other Business

Barb Naramore announced the following dates and locations for future EMP-CC meetings: August 8, 2002 in St. Louis; November 21, 2002 in the Twin Cities; and February 27, 2003 in the Quad Cities. Depending on RTC workshop scheduling needs, the EMP-CC business meetings may be adjusted slightly, perhaps by moving them to the preceding afternoon. [Note: Subsequent to the May 16 meeting, the summer EMP-CC business meeting was changed from August 8 to August 7.]

Steve Cobb reminded EMP-CC members that the Committee may need to meet via conference call prior to its August meeting in order to discuss the FY 03 budget situation. Kevin Szcondronski asked that the EMP-CC be informed via e-mail of funding figures as they emerge from mark-ups.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

**EMP-CC Attendance List
May 16, 2002**

Steve Cobb	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Charlie Wooley	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Leslie Holland-Bartels	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Scott Stuewe	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Szcodronski	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Amy Denz	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Gary Christoff	Missouri Department of Conservation
Terry Moe	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Rich Worthington	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, HQ
Greg Ruff	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Don Powell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Gary Loss	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Charlene Carmack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Mark Cornish	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Jan Hodges	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Kara Mitvalsky	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Deb Foley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Mike Thompson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jon Kauffeld	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Dan Stinnett	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Twin Cities Field Office
Bob Clevenstine	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Keith Beseke	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pam Thiel	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Karen Westphall	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mark Twain Refuge Complex
Linda Leake	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Tom Boland	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Steve McIntosh	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Mark Beorkrem	Mississippi River Basin Alliance
Barton Olwey	ACI Technologies
Tracy Butler	ACI Technologies
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

FY03 EMP FUNDING

(\$000's)

TOTAL BUDGET	12,200
S&S Assessment	16.0%
S&S Amount	1,952
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	475
Regional Management	85
Independent Technical Review Comm.	50
Public Involvement	40
Report to Congress	300
SUB (TOT – ADMIN)	9,773
LTRMP 31.4%	3,069
HREP	6,704
St. Paul District	2,346
Rock Island District	2,682
St. Louis District	1,676