

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

**August 7, 2002
Summer Quarterly Meeting**

**Sheraton West Port Hotel
St. Louis, Missouri**

Charlie Wooley of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called the meeting to order at 1:43 p.m. on Wednesday, August 7, 2002. Other EMP-CC members present were Steve Cobb (USACE), Scott Stuewe (IL DNR), Kevin Szcodronski (IA DNR), Amy Denz (MN DNR), Gary Christoff (MO DOC), Terry Moe (WI DNR), Leslie Holland-Bartels (USGS), and Bob Goodwin (MARAD). A complete list of attendees follows the minutes.

Wooley expressed thanks to Mike Thompson for the Corps' excellent work on the Swan Lake and Batchtown habitat projects. Roger Perk announced that Keith Beseke is retiring effective August 16. Perk expressed the Corps' thanks for Beseke's excellent work over many years.

Minutes of the May Meeting

Terry Moe moved and Kevin Szcodronski seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 16, 2002 meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

Program Management

FY 02 Fiscal Performance

Roger Perk reported that the EMP has expended \$9.759 million through the third quarter of FY 02. This is 56 percent of the program's \$17.303 million in scheduled expenditures for the year. With construction spending expected to increase significantly in the fourth quarter, Perk said the program is on target to expend fully for the year. He reported that MVR has transferred some funds to MVS for the Batchtown project. In addition, MVP transferred funds that were allocated to the Ambrough Slough project, which has been delayed due to a bid protest. MVS anticipates that Stage 2 of the Batchtown project will be 95 percent completed by the end of FY 02. Perk observed that the flexibility to move funds among the three districts is quite helpful in optimizing fiscal performance.

MVD's implementation proposal for the EMP Independent Technical Review Committee (ITRC) remains under review in Washington. Perk said he does not expect the ITRC to be established until sometime in calendar year 2003.

Terry Moe asked about the districts' HREP bio-response monitoring plans for FY 03. Perk said MVR will focus its bio-response monitoring on continuing work at Chautauqua and Peoria Lake. Mike Thompson said MVS plans to study aquatic response at Pharris Island. Thomas Novak said he was not personally familiar with MVP's FY 03 bio-response study plans. Moe asked whether, given the anticipated budget problems, the districts had considered reducing FY 03 funding for bio-response work. Perk said all aspects of the HREP program would be reduced, including bio-response and HREP evaluation efforts.

FY 03 Appropriations and Allocation

Perk reported that the Senate Appropriations Committee has included \$15.0 million for the EMP in its FY 03 energy and water appropriations bill (S. 2784). The full Senate has not acted on the measure. The House Appropriations Committee has not yet marked up its FY 03 energy and water package. However, Perk said the House Subcommittee reportedly included \$12.2 million for the EMP in the measure it forwarded to the full Committee. With the appropriations process behind schedule, Perk said a continuing resolution appears increasingly likely.

Perk said there would be significant impacts to both the LTRMP and HREP components under either a \$12.2 million or a \$15.0 million scenario. Kevin Szcodronski noted that, at the May EMP-CC meeting, the states and the Fish and Wildlife Service advocated keeping the LTRMP at its baseline level. Steve Cobb acknowledged this recommendation, but noted that the May discussion had also included a recognition that a different approach would be required if FY 03 marked the beginning of a multi-year trend toward substantially reduced funding. If the trend is long-term, Cobb emphasized that there is no way to avoid impacts to both the LTRMP and HREP components. Perk explained that the prospects for the Administration's FY 04 budget request do not appear good. The same fiscal constraints and competing demands that shaped preparation of the FY 03 budget will once again be factors.

Perk reviewed the Corps' proposed EMP allocations under both \$12.2 and \$15.0 million funding levels (see attached), as well as the district-specific impacts under a \$12.2 million scenario. According to Perk, a \$12.2 million appropriation would result in the districts eliminating the following work entirely in FY 03: MVP — Lake Winneshiek (planning), Spring Lake Islands (design and construction), Long Meadow Lake (construction), Pool 8 Islands Phase III (construction), Harpers Slough (design and construction), a new planning start, and both baseline and biological monitoring; MVR—Smith's Creek (design), Rice Lake (construction), Pool 11 Islands Stage II (design), Pool 12 Overwintering (design), Lake Odessa (design), and a new DPR start; MVS — Reds Landing (planning and design), Stone Dike Alterations (design), Salt Lake Side Channel (design), Ted Shanks (planning), Calhoun Point Phases I and II (construction), and Schenimann Chute (design and construction). Virtually all other HREP work in the districts would be scaled back in FY 03. Perk said this approach would allow the Corps to allocate approximately two-thirds of HREP funding toward construction. He explained that this is generally the percentage that the Corps tries to maintain, with the goal of directing the majority of HREP resources to construction while maintaining adequate investment in planning and project evaluation. He noted that the Report to Congress, scheduled for \$300,000 in FY 03, is virtually the only EMP element that would not be cut under the Corps' proposed allocation. Some Corps staff currently working on habitat projects would be reassigned due to the HREP reductions.

Leslie Holland-Bartels reported that USGS has reviewed options for maintaining the LTRMP's physical structure and core professional staff under reduced funding. She said she has also drafted, but not yet sent, a letter to LTRMP cooperators regarding the budget situation. According to Holland-Bartels, FY 03 funding of \$3.422 million would allow retention of key staff and physical structure, but would not permit any data collection. She observed that \$3.422 million would be \$353,000 above the Corps' proposed LTRMP allocation if the EMP appropriation is \$12.2 million. The strategy for a \$3.422 million LTRMP would involve reducing field station funding by 15 percent and UMESC funding by 45 percent, relative to their baseline funding levels. LTRMP staff would be reduced as follows under this approach: 15 state seasonal employees, 12 university positions, 6 permanent federal positions, and 1 term federal position. In addition, some permanent staff at UMESC would reduce the percentage of their time that they spend on LTRMP work. Positions lost would include land coverage/land use and water quality lab personnel. According to Holland-Bartels, funding of \$3.501 million in FY 03 would provide 25 percent restoration of operating funds in the field component and minimal funding for supplies to process any water quality samples collected. She said this could be viewed as a 25 percent collect and hold scenario relative to the baseline program level. Because of staff reductions, discipline specialists would have to do any data collection.

Kevin Szcodronski asked what the LTRMP field station staff would do during FY 03 if they do not collect monitoring data. Holland-Bartels said field station staff would contribute to data analysis and strategic planning efforts. The goal of this work would be to contribute to restructuring the LTRMP for FY 04 and beyond, including developing a more readily scaleable program by breaking down scientific information needs into more discrete tasks. However, she emphasized that she does not view eliminating absolutely all data collection in FY 03 as a good option. She elaborated that the \$3.422 million option is not her recommendation, but was rather an attempt to determine the minimum FY 03 funding level that would preserve key staff and physical structure. She noted that she would need Washington-level approval to reduce UMESC staff any further than what is outlined in the \$3.422 million plan.

If there is some data collection in FY 03, Holland-Bartels said she would recommend prioritizing work that will link well with future data collection efforts. Such work might include focused testing of models that have been under development. Holland-Bartels said she would not favor a reduced version of current monitoring protocols and schedules, but stressed the need to consult with USGS and field station staff as well as the A-Team before identifying FY 03 priorities.

Terry Moe asked how the Corps would respond to a state recommendation to fund the LTRMP at \$3.501 million. Steve Cobb said he thought the Corps could allocate \$3.4 million to the LTRMP under a \$12.2 million appropriation. Kevin Szcodronski asked Cobb about the likely impacts of EMP budget cuts on Corps staff. Cobb said Corps employees would be shifted from the EMP to other projects. Cobb said the districts appear to have enough other work that the Corps would not have to consider a reduction in force (RIF) in FY 03. Szcodronski asked how many years of reduced funding can be considered an anomaly, noting that FY 03 may mark the start of consecutive years of substantially reduced EMP appropriations. Cobb said the Corps is willing to look at what it can do to augment LTRMP funding in FY 03, but emphasized that FY 04 is also shaping up as a very difficult budget year. He stressed the need to start evaluating permanent changes. Moe observed that maintaining the LTRMP at

\$3.501 million in FY 03 would allow for the careful consideration of program restructuring options.

Cobb said that the Assistant Secretary plans to submit three programs to OMB for FY 04 — i.e., a base program, a capability program, and a mid-range program between the two. Perk said the EMP will still be able to show a \$33 million capability for FY 04, but said that is becoming increasingly difficult. He explained funding cuts reduce resources for HREP planning and design, thereby diminishing the EMP's out-year capabilities.

Holland-Bartels noted that the savings and slippage rate becomes particularly important given how tight the budget situation is likely to be. Perk said the Corps will not know the actual rate until Congress completes its conference committee work on the energy and water appropriations bill. Deb Foley said her calculations suggest that the Senate bill includes a 16.9 percent savings and slippage rate.

Szcodronski asked how much data collection the field stations could realistically do if there is no temporary staff. Holland-Bartels said data collection capacities will likely differ significantly among the field stations because they have relied to varying extents on temporary staff. Szcodronski asked about opportunities for professional staff to work on non-LTRMP funded activities, noting that this could be a way to retain key staff for a year or two in hopes of bringing the EMP appropriations level back up. Holland-Bartels said she has already done this with UMESC staff, but said most states do not have this sort of flexibility with their field station staff.

Moe said Wisconsin supports providing \$3.501 million to the LTRMP in FY 03 under a \$12.2 million budget scenario, with the understanding that this will permit a modest (i.e., approximately 25 percent) data collection effort. Scott Stuewe and Amy Denz said Illinois and Minnesota also support a \$3.501 million funding level. Szcodronski expressed concern at the prospect of a 75 percent reduction in the data collection effort, and urged that every effort be made to find additional resources. He voiced appreciation for the Corps' willingness to deviate from a straight proportional allocation of the anticipated funding cut. Gary Christoff said he favors further reductions to the HREP program in order to maintain the LTRMP at \$4.3 million in FY 03. Perk observed that this would require canceling HREP contracts that have been let. Christoff said that would still be his preferred course of action. Perk cautioned that canceling contracts would incur penalties and other costs close to the outstanding amounts on the contracts. Thus, there would be relatively little in savings, and no HREP progress to show for the money expended. Christoff suggested cutting planning and design, rather than canceling construction contracts. Perk said planning and design would have to be eliminated entirely to achieve the savings envisioned by Christoff, and noted that this would imperil the program's ability to function in the future. Christoff said he could support Szcodronski's approach of funding the LTRMP at \$3.501 million and making every effort to find additional resources for data collection.

Charlie Wooley emphasized that the Fish and Wildlife Service is concerned with the impacts of budget cuts on both the LTRMP and the HREP program. Under a \$12.2 million funding scenario, Wooley said the Service is willing to support allocating the cut disproportionately and providing \$3.501 million for the LTRMP in FY 03. As part of this approach, Wooley said the Service would want to see a careful reassessment of the program for FY 04 and beyond. In

response to a question from Deb Foley, Bill Franz and Larry Shepard said they do not see any prospect for EPA's Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) to fund work at UMESC or the field stations.

John Chick asked why the EMP's funding situation is so bleak. Cobb said funding is extremely tight within the Corps' construction general account and stressed that the EMP is not being singled out for cuts. Rich Worthington concurred, but also noted that Congress is not reversing the Administration's proposed EMP cuts, something that it has done with many other Corps construction projects. Worthington said this lack of Congressional support is a major problem for the EMP. Szcodronski said the EMP cuts make it very difficult for the states and others to participate enthusiastically in the Corps' restructured navigation study, with its emphasis on environmental sustainability. According to Szcodronski, Corps Headquarters, the ASA, and OMB need to understand that their lack of support for the EMP will make it much more difficult for the states to support navigation improvements. Cobb suggested that the states share such concerns directly with OMB, noting that the Administration will be preparing its FY 04 budget request over the next several months. Holly Stoerker observed that there is significant Congressional support for the EMP, as evidenced by the activities of the bipartisan UMR Congressional Task Force. However, she emphasized that there are limits to what program advocates can accomplish in the absence of support from the Administration, noting that it is difficult for members of Congress to increase the Administration's request for a single project year-after-year.

After some further discussion regarding various strategies for building Administration and Congressional support for the EMP, the states and Fish and Wildlife Service reaffirmed their recommendation to allocate \$3.501 million to the LTRMP in FY 03, assuming a worst case final appropriation for the EMP of \$12.2 million. They cited a desire both to retain key professional staff and permit at least some data collection. They also concurred with Holland-Bartels' recommendation that LTRMP staff focus on data analysis and strategic planning in FY 03, with the goal of restructuring the program to enhance its flexibility and ability to function effectively if funding remains low in FY 04 and beyond. Cobb agreed that the Corps would work with USGS to provide \$3.501 million for the LTRMP in FY 03, but cautioned that the fiscal picture may not improve in FY 04. If reduced funding continues beyond FY 03, Cobb said the Corps will be inclined to allocate future appropriations proportionately between the HREP and LTRMP components.

Long Term Resource Monitoring Program

Leslie Holland-Bartels provided a brief update on the LTRMP's water quality component review. The review panel met in June and discussed topics including component objectives and work quality. The water quality panel is expected to issue a draft report in mid-August. As part of the macroinvertebrate component review, a web survey was conducted and 39 responses have been received. Holland-Bartels noted that the macroinvertebrate review is focused primarily on considering future objectives rather than on modifying the current program, which is quite limited. A macroinvertebrate workshop is scheduled for September 10 and 11. According to Holland-Bartels, other FY 02 scope of work items are on schedule, including completion of bathymetry for selected pools, progress on the land cover/land use data for 2000, and development of an independent platform for the habitat needs assessment query tool. New UMESC staff includes a replacement for Carl Korschgen, an invasive species

specialist, and a statistician. While the two latter positions are non-LTRMP, Holland-Bartels said the expertise could be made available to the program if needed.

Terry Moe said he still has concerns regarding distribution of the HNA query tool. Once testing of the new platform is complete, decisions will have to be made on how the tool is to be distributed and who will pay for that distribution. Moe emphasized his opposition to using EMP resources to pay for non-EMP-related distribution. Holland-Bartels said UMESC was tasked with developing the tool. She said the Corps and USGS have not yet determined a distribution strategy.

HREP Planning

Roger Perk described efforts to review and revise the HREP planning and prioritization process. Fundamental objectives identified by EMP partners include using the HNA, pool plans, and enhanced fact sheets to assess the pool and reach scale benefits of potential new projects. Perk emphasized that project funding decisions will ultimately be based on a range of considerations, including the project's anticipated contribution to ecosystem goals, program budget considerations, geographic balance, cost sharing, and other factors. He briefly described MVR's pilot application of the Corps' May 2001 draft HREP planning and prioritization guidance. In consultation with some members of the Fish and Wildlife Interagency Committee (FWIC), MVR staff attempted to apply the guidance to five potential projects forwarded by the FWIC for planning. The pilot allowed the Corps to test application of HNA goals and other considerations, including the project's maintenance/ sustainability, ecosystem value, logistical value, geopolitical location, use of innovative restoration practices, value to people, relationship to other projects, and multi-species benefits. According to Perk, the pilot demonstrated the value of the HNA and pool plans in evaluating HREPs, but also underscored the need to consider a range of other factors. In several instances, the Corps needed additional information concerning the proposed projects before they could be fully evaluated.

Terry Moe said he thought MVR's pilot was to be simply an application of the HNA to the proposed HREPs. Gary Christoff and Barb Naramore said they understood the pilot was designed as a dry run of the Corps' draft HREP planning and prioritization guidance, with the goal of using the pilot experience to refine the draft process. Perk concurred with this characterization. Moe asked how the HNA will be used to eliminate projects from further consideration. Chuck Theiling described several limitations of the current HNA, including the lack of bathymetric data, which precludes thorough assessment of aquatic habitat. Theiling also urged consideration of projects' pool scale benefits to gain perspective on their relative merit, noting that virtually all projects look good at more local scales. Kevin Szcodronski said another limitation of the HNA is that it does not identify high quality habitat that is deteriorating and thus in need of protection. He said there is a role for HREPs in protecting high quality areas as well as in restoring degraded habitat. Perk said this is precisely why the HNA should not be the only tool used in evaluating proposed HREPs.

Perk said those involved in the pilot recommended deferring planning on highly ranked projects that involve acquisition until the real estate interest is acquired. These deferred projects would remain a high priority. Under this approach, the sequencing of projects awaiting planning would be revisited as real estate interests are acquired.

Based on the pilot and his review of previous HREP planning efforts, Perk said the HREP Prioritization Framework dated May 2000 and endorsed by the EMP-CC in August 2000 explicitly provides for flexibility and consideration of the full range of relevant factors. He briefly described that document and said he would like to use it, rather than the Corps' May 2001 draft guidance, as a basis for moving forward. Noting that the May 2000 framework would require some changes, Perk said he will coordinate with program partners concerning possible revisions. In response to a question from Moe, Perk said he was not sure whether the revised framework would be ready for consideration at the EMP-CC's November meeting. Moe asked Perk to circulate the revised framework for review in advance of the EMP-CC meeting at which it is presented for endorsement.

Christoff said people have been urging the EMP partners to approach HREP selection on more of a geomorphic reach than a pool scale. Perk said this is something that merits consideration. In answer to a question, Perk said the Corps is committed to implementing its EMP Public Involvement Plan. He noted that MVP has done quite a bit of public outreach for individual HREPs as well as pool planning, but said the program as a whole needs to enhance its public involvement efforts.

Report to Congress

Roger Perk reported that several of the RTC issue papers were revised based on discussions at the May workshop. In addition, two new theme papers were identified for development. Perk reminded EMP-CC members that the papers are being used to help define issues and themes that may be addressed in the RTC, identify potential options, and focus discussions. The papers present a range of options for each issue and workshop participants will be asked to narrow the options to be considered and identify the pros and cons associated with those options. The workshop discussions will then feed into subsequent EMP-CC business meetings, at which the program partners will be asked to articulate their positions on the issues under consideration. Perk noted that agreement among all partners may not be possible on all issues. If there is not unanimity on a particular issue, the RTC will convey the different perspectives.

Perk briefly reviewed a revised RTC schedule, which includes workshops associated with all EMP-CC meetings between August 2002 and August 2003. An issue resolution conference is slated for August 2003, with the public review period following in September. The schedule calls for submitting the final report to MVD in January 2004. Steve Cobb stressed the importance of resolving all major issues before the report is forwarded to Corps Headquarters.

Jon Duyvejonck asked whether one of the issue papers will address the relationship between the EMP and the navigation feasibility study. Perk said he will be working with Denny Lundberg, Ken Barr, and other Corps staff to ensure proper coordination between the RTC and the navigation study. However, he said he did not see a need to make this coordination the subject of an issue paper. Teresa Kincaid noted that the draft RTC outline includes provisions for considering interconnections with the navigation study.

Other Business

Gary Christoff distributed a written report from A-Team Chair Tom Boland.

Barb Naramore announced that the quarterly meeting schedule includes meetings on November 19-21, 2002 in the Twin Cities; February 25-27, 2003 in Rock Island; and May 13-15, 2003 in St. Louis. EMP-CC business meetings will take place on either the second or third day of each meeting cycle. Report to Congress workshops will be held on the third day.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

EMP-CC Attendance List
August 7, 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
Thomas Novak	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Teresa Kincaid	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Jan Hodges	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Chuck Theiling	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
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Tim Yager	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Dan Stinnett	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Twin Cities Field Office
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Dick Steinbach	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mark Twain Refuge Complex
Jon Lindell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
John Chick	Illinois Natural History Survey
Bob Goodwin	Maritime Administration
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Larry Shepard	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
Gary Wooten	Natural Resources Conservation Service, Midwest Region
Allen Hance	Northeast-Midwest Institute
Ted Illston	The Nature Conservancy
Catherine McCalvin	The Nature Conservancy
Tom Edwards	River Rescue
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

FY03 EMP FUNDING

(\$000's)

President = \$12.2M
 Senate = \$15 M
 House = \$12.2 M??
 Capability = \$33 M

TOTAL BUDGET	12,200	15,000
S&S Assessment	16.0%	16.0%
S&S Amount	1,952	2,400
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	475	485
Regional Management	85	95
Independent Technical Review Comm.	50	50
Public Involvement	40	40
Report to Congress	300	300
SUB (TOT – ADMIN)	9,773	12,115
LTRMP 31.4%	3,069	3,804
HREP	6,704	8,311
St. Paul District	2,346	2,909
Rock Island District	2,682	3,324
St. Louis District	1,676	2,078