

**Minutes of the
Upper Mississippi River Restoration
Environmental Management Program
Coordinating Committee
(UMRR-EMP CC)**

**August 28, 2013
Quarterly Meeting**

**Radisson Hotel
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Mark Moore of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. on August 28, 2013. Other UMRR-EMP CC representatives present were Kevin Foerster (USFWS), Barry Johnson (USGS) on behalf of Mike Jawson, Dan Stephenson (IL DNR), Diane Ford (IA DNR), Kevin Stauffer (MN DNR), Janet Sternburg (MO DoC), Jim Fischer (WI DNR), Ken Westlake (USEPA), and Jon Hubbert (NRCS). A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Minutes of the May 29, 2013 Meeting

Kevin Foerster said his name is spelled incorrectly on the first line of page A-1. Diane Ford moved and Janet Sternburg seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 19, 2013 meeting with Foerster's name corrected. The motion was approved unanimously.

Program Management

Marv Hubbell acknowledged the importance of UMRR-EMP's partnership collaboration. Hubbell said the partnership is receiving tremendous positive feedback from external stakeholders on the ways it works together to effectively advance very important science and restoration work. He emphasized the importance of the partnership maintaining open lines of communication and talking through issues at hand.

FY 13 Final Appropriations and Work Plan

Hubbell reported that Headquarters released its FY 13 work plan for USACE on June 26, 2013, following the passage of a full-year FY 13 continuing resolution authority (CRA) on March 26, 2013. Thus, UMRR-EMP's final FY 13 appropriation was not known until the fourth quarter. Hubbell recognized that the considerable uncertainty in UMRR-EMP's FY 13 appropriation throughout most of the fiscal year made internal budget planning very challenging. In addition, UMRR-EMP's FY 13 final allocation of \$24,131,160 is 42 percent above its planning amount of \$16.986 million. Hubbell explained that, because of the partnership's effective collaboration, the program is capable of executing at 98 percent by the end of this fiscal year. The additional funding will be directed to three HREPs, with one in each District, and repairs to spring flood damages at Fox Island, Rice Lake, and Lake Odessa. Hubbell said he anticipates awarding the annual LTRMP contracts (i.e., MIPRs) to USGS and the states for FY 14 in late September or early October. Hubbell expressed appreciation to partners for their cooperation throughout this year's internal budgeting process, particularly in executing the additional funding received late in the fiscal year.

Jim Fischer applauded the partnership for its accomplishments in building UMRR-EMP to be a successful and well-respected program. Fischer said the partnership's efforts are now being recognized with increased funding. Hubbell echoed Fischer's comment and said the partnership is being emphasized in USACE's budget considerations and was continually endorsed by various stakeholders during the Mississippi River Commission's hearings along the Upper Mississippi this summer.

Hubbell provided an overview of the FY 13 program allocations under the \$24.13 million budget, as follows:

- Regional Management — \$676,000
- LTRMP — \$5,129,000
- HREPs — \$18,326,640
 - Program model certification and regional support — \$150,000
 - MVP — \$5,564,234
 - MVR — \$8,448,172
 - MVS — \$4,164,234

[Note: In FY 12, MVP transferred \$600,000 to MVS. The FY 13 allocations to MVP and MVS above reflect repayment.]

FY 14 Appropriations Status

Hubbell reported that the Senate Appropriations Committee's FY 14 energy and water spending bill matches the President's FY 14 budget request of \$31.986 million for UMRR-EMP. The House approved \$30.370 million in FY 14 funding for the program. Hubbell said this is a substantial increase above the President's past requests and the historical appropriations for UMRR-EMP, and nears the program's annual authorization amount. He explained that the increase in the President's request is understood to be the result of UMRR-EMP's ability to effectively and efficiently construct important habitat restoration projects that provide jobs and other important economic benefits. Hubbell said District staff were asked to provide proposals for work to advance in FY 14 with the additional funding above its historical levels. He said District staff were able to quickly identify several important work efforts that would advance the Administrations' priorities — i.e., project execution, jobs supported, and on-the-ground construction.

Janet Sternburg asked if UMRR-EMP would need to assume its FY 13 planning number of \$16.986 million for FY 14 if Congress should pass a continuing resolution. Gary Meden and Hubbell said Headquarters would issue guidance determining the program's planning number, but said it would likely be either of the FY 14 funding proposals — i.e., \$31.986 million or \$30.370 million. Meden reiterated that UMRR-EMP's FY 14 planning number would not fall back to its FY 12 appropriation.

In response to a question from Ken Westlake, Hubbell said the three HREPs being advanced with the increased FY 13 funding include Capoli Slough in MVP, Pool 12 Overwintering in MVR, and Ted Shanks in MVS. In response to a question from Linda Leake, Hubbell explained that UMRR-EMP is well positioned to execute at \$32 million. He noted that UMRR-EMP's flexibility and the number of non-federal project sponsors and LTRMP contributors allow the program to spread out its capability.

Hubbell explained that USACE staff requested FY 14 funding for UMRR-EMP through a new approach, where a complete list of planned program activities and associated funding was supplied to the Administration for its consideration. Under this new approach, the annual amount for regional activities was reduced and funding was requested for all ongoing habitat projects, rather than only those in construction. He said science funding was also requested in activity-based increments, but the

Administration only selected long term monitoring at \$5.225 million. He noted that LTRMP was allocated \$5.129 million in FY 13. Hubbell said additional science efforts will require a specific work plan and budget as well as an explanation of how the science will generate insights about the UMRS ecosystem and inform the program's restoration efforts. He said approximately \$1 million will be allocated to additional science efforts in FY 14. The A-Team is currently considering which science efforts to advance with the additional funding.

Mike Jawson recalled that partners agreed to budget LTRMP at \$5.129 million in FY 13 given the constrained planning level for the program, delaying investments in necessary equipment refreshment and land cover/land use (LC/LU) processing. He said that funding amount was adopted only to get by for one year and is not sufficient to sustain the current definition of base monitoring for multiple years. Continuing to operate at that level would have significant implication for USGS and the states. If sustained, partners would need to reconsider what is included in the program's long term monitoring in order to effectively maintain the data's integrity going forward. Hubbell assured that LTRMP will receive additional funds if the program is appropriated above \$17-18 million. As a way of making more funds available for long term monitoring, Hubbell suggested funding equipment refreshment with base funding and a portion of LC/LU with a portion of FY 14 funding that is available for science work. [Note: In the past, LC/LU has been funded under base monitoring and equipment refreshment with non-base funding.] Hubbell said the net impact will be enhanced capability for UMRR-EMP's science work. Hubbell acknowledged that considerable uncertainty remains in the future appropriations outlook and stressed the need for the partnership to maximize this year's approach by identifying the most critical restoration and science priorities. Hubbell emphasized that this will require a partnership effort with ongoing open and honest dialogue.

Leake asked USACE staff to describe its budget development process. Hubbell explained that District staff first develop a programmatic budget based on the previous fiscal year's appropriation. District staff include additional options (or increments) that would be advanced with additional funding. All three Districts are involved in developing those increments. MVD then reviews the Districts' proposal, selects its priorities among the additional increments, and submits its recommended program budget to Headquarters. Once the budget is submitted to Headquarters, District staff are rarely involved further in the budget process, unless there is a request for information. Headquarters submits its approved budgets to the Administration and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Meden explained that, once the budget is sent to Headquarters, District staff have very limited opportunity to provide input. He also stressed that, for many reasons, USACE staff are not allowed to share budget information externally prior to the President's budget being published. In response to a question from Leake, Meden said Headquarters often accepts UMRR-EMP's recommended budgets, especially compared to other programs and projects. Hubbell said that, while details are not shared publicly during budget development, District staff showcase UMRR-EMP's habitat projects and its LTRMP products and explain how they contribute to enhancing the UMRS ecosystem.

Janet Sternburg said she is thrilled with the potential increase in program funding and expressed support for the new budget approach. Sternburg applauded partners on their ability to quickly execute the funds in a short timeframe. She acknowledged that the new internal budget process leaves considerable uncertainty for LTRMP, especially for USGS and the field stations in planning their budgets and making staffing decisions. Hubbell said he understands partners' staffing concerns and acknowledged that the new budget approach is different than past ways of allocating money internally. He explained that the new program-based approach will fund the highest priority activities and allow partners to think critically about how best to advance its objectives for the river. Hubbell recognized that the partnership might stumble a bit with implementing the new approach, but said the new approach should result in a very positive opportunity for all partners, including increased program funding and other resources. He stressed the need for open communication to minimize misunderstandings. In response to a question from Sternburg, Hubbell said the *ad hoc* LTRMP funding group has scheduled a conference call for

September 4 to discuss FY 14 budget considerations. Sternburg and Hubbell concluded that the *ad hoc* group serves a great forum for partner discussion. Sternburg suggested that the group also include habitat restoration staff.

In response to questions from Sara Strassman and Diane Ford, Hubbell explained that USACE's budget process is kept private until the President's budget is officially released and thus non-USACE partners do not have an opportunity to provide input in the budget formulation. Hubbell said District staff use products and other efforts as examples to demonstrate the program's science capabilities and need for continued funding. Ford asked if the *ad hoc* LTRMP funding group could provide recommendations for pieces of the scalable budget – i.e., identify high priority science projects and discuss their relevance to enhancing the UMRS ecosystem. Meden said he appreciates Ford's suggestion, but said that would only trigger questions about any changes to partner recommendations, including unfunded items, and may lead to unintended consequences.

Ford and Jim Fischer stressed that the FY 13 and planned FY 14 funding level for LTRMP does not cover actual expenses to implement base monitoring. Fischer noted that UMRR-EMP's authorization allows for transferring funds between HREPs and LTRMP with consultation among partners. In response to a question from Fischer, Hubbell said that consultation occurs through the UMRR-EMP CC. Meden explained that LTRMP's FY 14 planning amount is a minimum. Additional funds will be allocated to science work, which will be prioritized by the program's work groups – i.e., A-Team and the *ad hoc* funding group.

Hubbell said USACE staff promote UMRR-EMP's high quality restoration, monitoring, and research to the Administration, emphasizing the value of the UMRR-EMP, the quality and efficiency of its implementation, and its capability to perform. Continuing to implement the program effectively and communicate its successes are proactive ways that partners can provide USACE staff with the examples necessary to build those messages. He said UMRR-EMP is evaluated as a program, and efforts to integrate science and restoration will be important to explaining UMRR-EMP's relevance and future needs. Hubbell said UMRR-EMP has restored over 60 percent of acres reported nationally in some reporting years compared to other programs and the Administration expressed its desire for the program to do more.

Strassman said it is incumbent on the scientists to articulate the importance of the program's individual and cumulative science efforts. She said LTRMP staff are currently developing proposals for science work that include language explaining such importance. Strassman suggested that UMRR-EMP also communicate how its science efforts support non-governmental jobs.

Barry Johnson suggested that the *ad hoc* LTRMP funding group be expanded to consider funding priorities in a programmatic context. Sternburg suggested that the *ad hoc* group craft messages articulating the program's importance that can inform District staffs' budget explanations. Johnson explained that the LC/LU dataset is decadal and requires substantial funding for few years. Right now, LC/LU processing requires more money than the \$1 million figure being proposed for additional science work with FY 14 programmatic funds. Johnson said partners need to articulate LC/LU's tremendous value in restoring the UMR. He said the program's LC/LU, bathymetry, and LiDAR datasets are used extensively to design and evaluate habitat projects. Johnson asked about the decision to fund science work at \$1 million. Hubbell agreed with Johnson's statement that LC/LU is an extremely valuable tool for the program as well as for external uses. He said the amount of money budgeted to LC/LU and the capability to execute the processing still need to be discussed. It involves a substantial commitment of time and resources and should be evaluated in light of other priorities. Hubbell explained that the Administration is focusing on project execution and cost efficiency. The \$1 million figure is a target amount. He said partners are currently exploring priorities to advance with

the additional funding. The \$1 million figure can be increased if there are high quality and high priority science projects that can be executed.

Jim Fischer recognized that the program is fortunate to be considering these spending questions. Fischer asked for clarification on the role of USACE's science planning team relative to the A-Team, particularly related to science planning. Hubbell explained that USACE recently formed an internal science team to identify its science needs in all three UMR Districts and create a single list of USACE priorities to present to the A-Team and other science planning discussions. He said the team has been coordinating with UMESC and field station staff to add more detail in scopes of work. In response to a question from Fischer, Hubbell said the team includes Ken Barr, Kat McCain, Dave Potter, Chuck Theiling, Nate Richards, Derek Ingvason, Kara Mitvalsky, and Mike Dougherty. Fischer expressed support for the Corps' approach to creating a unified voice, but cautioned that the group does not duplicate or replace the current coordination infrastructure or UMESC's or the states' science roles and responsibilities. Sternburg echoed Fischer's comment and stressed that the A-Team is the program's science team and the appropriate forum for those discussions about priorities and study designs. Hubbell assured that there is no intent to change the way business is conducted. USACE's science team will not override or duplicate any of the current roles and responsibilities, as these are codified in the UMRR-EMP's Joint Charter. Hubbell said USACE's science team has been focusing on enhancing transparency, maintaining a systemic perspective, and ensuring that individual efforts complement the entire program. Ken Barr said the team has mainly focused on adding substance to partners' science proposals in preparation for the A-Team's evaluation.

Hubbell said a science coordination meeting with all LTRMP partners is being planned for early 2014. This meeting will include a discussion of the partnership's collective science needs. He encouraged all partners to begin identifying their science needs in preparation for the meeting. In response to a question from Kevin Stauffer, Hubbell explained that staff involvement on USACE's science team is being funded partially from the LTRMP technical support account and regional activities to support integration. He said these efforts will be captured in the program's scopes of work.

FY 2015-19 UMRR-EMP Strategic Planning

Marv Hubbell reported that the FY 2015-19 UMRR-EMP strategic planning team held its second in-person meeting on June 18-20, 2013 in Rock Island. The team discussed potential actions for the program to take in FY 2015-19 related to the following issue areas: defining success, ecosystem restoration, ecosystem monitoring, collaboration, communication, funding, and integration. The team brainstormed important elements of a vision and mission statement for the program as well as short- and long-term goals and funding implications. Hubbell said the team also developed a rough draft outline of a strategic plan, with four goals related to enhancing knowledge and habitat, collaboration with external stakeholders, and coordination among the organizations that actively participate in implementing UMRR-EMP. In addition, the outline has an introductory section that includes a vision, mission, assumptions, and guiding principles. Subgroups were then formed to further develop the plan's components.

Hubbell said the UMRR-EMP strategic planning team convened a conference call on August 22, 2013 to discuss the draft strategic plan components. Individual team members are now tasked with providing written comments on the draft components for the subgroups to consider. The UMRR-EMP strategic planning team is scheduled to meet on November 5-7, 2013 in Rock Island, where the team will discuss the revised plan components. The team will also consider how best to engage the broader partnership in the near future. Hubbell said two or three more meetings may be required.

Kevin Stauffer said the strategic planning effort has been going well. While each member agency and an NGO are represented on the planning team, Stauffer said an important next step is to obtain feedback

from all program partners. Olivia Dorothy said she outlined some suggestions for UMRR-EMP's strategic planning effort in UMRBA's August 27 meeting. Those suggestions include a) raising UMRR-EMP's awareness/visibility among the general public through enhanced branding and external communication, b) securing resources needed to effectively implement construction and monitoring, and c) non-federal partners increasing their lobbying efforts on behalf of the program. Barry Johnson agreed that the planning effort is going well thus far and the team has made substantial progress, but said holding only two more meetings would be aggressive. Johnson said a two-step process may be needed to develop implementation details, such as the FY 10-14 LTRMP Strategic and Operational Plan. Jim Fischer said he is pleased with the planning effort to-date and applauded Beth Carlson and Brian Stenquist of MN DNR for their facilitation support. Fischer echoed Johnson's comment that additional meetings may be needed for implementation planning, including prioritizing program efforts. He also expressed support for Dorothy's suggestion regarding the need for branding and highlighting successes. Hubbell agreed.

Patti Johnson-Kelly suggested that the UMRR-EMP CC form a committee specifically for outreach and education. Hubbell expressed support for the suggestion, and said external communication is not a primary expertise for those directly involved in UMRR-EMP's implementation. Stauffer said the group should include partners' outreach staff, noting that they are more familiar with external communication tools and approaches. Linda Leake suggested making a line item in UMRR-EMP's budget specifically devoted to outreach and creating a standing commitment to focus on outreach delivery and outcomes. Sternburg said there are many groups that do already engage the broader public on river issues – e.g., the *Our Mississippi* newsletter. She said a standing committee be particularly helpful in determining how best to engage universities and other external groups where efforts could be leveraged. Ken Barr suggested that partners engage the *Our Mississippi* publication team for expertise. Dorothy suggested that partners contact universities, which have communications professionals with extensive networks. Tim Schlagenhaft recalled that the UMRR-EMP CC agreed to fund a communications specialist for LTRMP, saying that the Committee determined outreach to be a priority. Bryan Hopkins stressed the value of attending meetings with outreach opportunities – e.g., the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative's meetings. Hopkins said many majors along the UMRS are not aware of UMRR-EMP.

Long Term Resource Monitoring Program

Product Highlights

Barry Johnson said UMESC updated the logo it uses for UMRR-EMP. The logo includes member agencies' logos. Johnson overviewed LTRMP's accomplishments in FY 13's third quarter, as follows:

- Four manuscript published on the following topics:
 - The role of wetlands in reducing sediment and nutrient loading to the UMR
 - An Asian carp size structure index and its application
 - Methods comparison for estimating Shovelnose sturgeon mortality in the Upper and Middle Mississippi River
 - Evaluation of Silver carp aging structures in Midwestern rivers
- A pixel-level regression tool for mapping spatial patterns that is available at http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/management/dss/curve_fit.html
- A new LTRMP landscape web page to provide ready access to various indicator graphics, available at http://umesc-gisdb03.er.usgs.gov/landscape_viewer/indicators.aspx
- Continued outreach and assistance to internal and external stakeholders

Johnson said UMRCC recently created a video demonstrating LTRMP's aquatic vegetation sampling method. The video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJv3pnl6150>.

In response to a question from Marv Hubbell, Johnson explained that the mapping tool can be used to evaluate change in habitats over time, including a mosaic of habitats. Johnson said partners can contact Nate Richards for more information about the tool's applications. Jim Fischer recognized the tremendous high quality outputs that component specialists can generate when they are given time and resources. Johnson acknowledged that the other component specialists are given additional responsibilities that consume their available time for research and analysis.

USGS-UMESC Science Leadership for UMRR-EMP

Barry Johnson said that, at its May 29, 2013 webinar, the UMRR-EMP CC supported Mike Jawson's proposal to employ a partner survey regarding LTRMP's future needs for scientific leadership. The results will be summarized in a brief paper to inform the program's strategic and science planning efforts. On July 30, 2013, UMESC distributed a partner survey to get input on the program's future scientific leadership needs. So far, there have only been 25 respondents. In response to a request by Johnson, the UMRR-EMP CC agreed to extend the deadline to September 30 and then include a discussion at its November 20, 2013 meeting on the survey results and the Committee's perspectives on the future of UMRR-EMP's scientific leadership. The survey is available at <http://www.surveyact.com/s/MEkMI6p66ryj6nPz>.

In response to a question from Kevin Foerster, Johnson said the survey request was sent to the UMRR-EMP distribution list and other LTRMP science technical staff. In response to UMRR-EMP CC's request, Kirsten Mickelsen said she will send each Committee member a list of individuals in their respective state/agency who received the survey announcement. UMRR-EMP CC members will then forward the survey to additional staff.

In response to a question from Olivia Dorothy, Johnson explained that the survey is intended to obtain input on the program's scientific leadership going forward, given the substantial evolution of its scientific understandings and capabilities over time. The hope is to create a shared vision for UMRR-EMP's science leadership and determine how best to meet partners' needs. Dorothy asked what the term scientific leadership means. Johnson said the purpose of the survey is to define science leadership for the program. He said his interpretation is to identify science needs and determine how best to address these needs within the context of the program.

USACE LTRMP Report

Karen Hagerty said the A-Team is currently prioritizing work to advance with base monitoring funding as well as funding available for additional science work. This will inform the program's scope of work. In addition, the *ad hoc* LTRMP funding group has scheduled a conference call for September 4 to discuss budget considerations for FY 14 and beyond. Hagerty said that some partners have indicated that they anticipate some FY 13 carry-over funds. She said the group has raised questions about the uncertainty and timing of funds and how to more proactively use the program's strategic planning documents.

Hagerty said an LTRMP science meeting is being planned for early next year that will be similar to the February 15-17, 2012 meeting. She anticipates distributing more details shortly, but said all LTRMP partners are strongly encouraged to attend. The 2012 meeting included field station staff, component specialists, USACE technical representatives, the USACE and USGS LTRMP management team, HREP coordinators, and UMRR-EMP CC and A-Team members. In response to a question from Sternburg, Hagerty said the meeting has not been scheduled yet, but it will likely be held early in 2014.

A-Team Report

On behalf of Rob Maher, Janet Sternburg provided the A-Team report. Sternburg said the A-Team convened a conference call on August 26, 2013 to discuss proposals for science work in FY 14, including those funded as part of LTRMP's long term monitoring activities (i.e., as part of base monitoring). A-Team members will rank the proposed activities, and leads of the top ranked proposals will further refine them for funding consideration in FY 14. In doing so, the A-Team is considering past proposals submitted as additional program elements (APEs) and partners' identified critical science questions. Sternburg said the A-Team will present its recommendations regarding which proposals to advance in FY 14 to the UMRR-EMP CC at its November 20, 2013 meeting.

Jim Fischer observed that this process was very similar to the APEs development and prioritization, where partners are under a compressed timeframe to review proposals and make recommendations for the program's scopes of work. Fischer advised that future efforts are planned over a greater time span and also consider relationships to the program's restoration work. Sternburg said partners should reference LTRMP's component research frameworks and other planning documents when considering science proposals. This would be particularly helpful when there is staff turnover. Karen Hagerty suggested that the 2014 LTRMP team meeting include a discussion on enhancing this process.

LTRMP Highlight: Water bird Mortality Research Framework

Jennie Sauer presented the water bird mortality research framework involving the Bithynia snail (also known as faucet snail), which is a relatively new invasive species to the region. The framework was developed by an interagency work group to evaluate the key questions of managers working to reduce water bird mortality and understand the snail's lifecycle. Sauer explained that the snail is a host for intestinal trematodes that is causing substantial bird mortality. The snail was only present in Pool 7 in 2002, but has now spread south to Pool 13. It represents a major threat to migratory birds passing through the Mississippi flyway, which is the route used by about 40 percent of North American migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Since 2002, the total mortality estimate has grown to more than 70,000 birds, and the greatest impact has been experienced by the American widgeon, Scaup, and Northern pintail. Sauer explained that USGS's Midwest Region has been providing funding to UMRR-EMP to collect snail samples in coordination with LTRMP's vegetation sampling.

Sauer said that, on March 16-17, 2010, an interagency workshop was held on water bird mortality research issues. The workshop was aimed at sharing information, fostering collaboration, and identifying potential action items. Participants discussed factors and issues associated with the Bithynia snail, research questions and ideas, and potential management strategies. The discussion eventually was used to inform the water bird mortality research framework. Sauer listed participants' priority research areas of interest, including the primary drivers of the Bithynia snail's abundance and distribution, movement and activity, population dynamics, and other host species of trematodes. Other priority research areas include temporal and spatial Scaup and coot distribution and their foraging patterns relative to snail distribution and abundance, as well as improving mortality estimation and potential vehicles for the Bithynia snail and/or trematodes. Sauer stressed that understanding invasion pathways of disease-causing organisms and their host is a major key in limiting future disease outbreaks. She said that participants also identified potential management strategies, including managing vegetation to reduce snail density, releasing chemicals targeted at the parasites, covering rip rap, and modifying island designs. Sauer said USFWS has expressed interest in convening a follow-on workshop.

In response to a question from Chris Erickson, Sauer said trematodes are believed to be invasive. In response to a question from Marv Hubbell, Sauer said covering rip rap has proven effective at controlling the Bithynia snails and research suggests that modifying island slopes could also slow their spread. She said management strategies should aim at reducing the Bithynia snails to eliminate them as

a food source for birds. In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Sauer and Tim Yager said the snail has also been found in multiple surrounding lakes in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In response to a question from Sternburg, Sauer said there is no knowledge about the rate of mortality or why only certain birds are being affected. In response to a question from Ken Westlake, Sauer said there is no evidence of impact to predator species to the affected birds. Barry Johnson added that USGS staff in other regions are aware of the Bithynia snail and are monitoring for its presence.

Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects

MVS and MVR District Reports

Marv Hubbell said MVS has been focusing on awarding a construction contract for Ted Shanks by the end of this fiscal year. The contract has been let and District staff are now working on a modification in preparation for the next construction stage.

Hubbell said MVR is finalizing a construction award for Pool 12 Overwintering and said bids are coming in lower than the federal government estimate.

Spring Flood Damages

Hubbell reported that spring floods have resulted in between \$7 and \$8 million in cumulative damages, affecting Fox Island, Rice Lake, and Lake Odessa. District staff will determine the actual cost to repair damages once water levels lower. Hubbell said repair work will continue into FY 14.

Planning New Project Starts for 2017

Hubbell said that, with increased UMRR-EMP funding for restoration work, it is projected that new project starts for planning will be needed in FY 2017-18. The process for selecting projects will likely be initiated within the next year. At an upcoming meeting, the UMRR-EMP CC will discuss process details, including how to incorporate adaptive management concepts and information needs to better prioritize projects based on ecological goals and objectives.

Tim Schlagenhaft said that, given the increased frequency and intensity of flooding, partners should focus this round of project selection on designs that involve smaller-scale construction features and that allow the river to adapt to numerous flood events. Hubbell agreed, and said he would like the planning process to allow enough time for partners to critically evaluate and select the best sequence of rehabilitation project for the river. In response to a question from Barry Johnson, Hubbell said this planning effort would likely begin following completion of the FY 2015-19 UMRR-EMP Strategic Plan.

Emiquon Preserve Floodplain Restoration Project

Hubbell said USACE, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Illinois DNR are currently discussing the possibility of transferring from the Section 206 authority to UMRR-EMP a floodplain restoration project at Emiquon Preserve on the Illinois River. Emiquon Preserve is owned by TNC as part of the Emiquon Complex, and is adjacent to USFWS's Chautauqua and Emiquon Refuges as well as Dixon Mounds State Museum. Hubbell said the estimated cost for the floodplain restoration project as designed exceeds Section 206's total project cost limit. Project plans are nearly complete and it would be construction ready within a relatively short timeframe. Hubbell clarified that USACE still needs to coordinate with Illinois DNR regarding the project transfer and thus UMRR-EMP CC is not being asked for an endorsement today. Rather, today's discussion is meant for initial conversation purposes only. He anticipates that UMRR-EMP CC will have a more formal discussion of whether to advance Emiquon in the program's current project sequence at its November 20, 2013 meeting.

Doug Blodgett of the TNC gave an overview of the project area and objectives. Blodgett said that, between TNC's owned land and adjacent refuge land, there is about 14,000 acres of floodplain land in conservation. However, he explained that the complex is in critical need of water control capabilities in order to restore the functional floodplain. Currently, the area receives very limited inflows. Blodgett said the project includes the construction of up to 10 islands to create habitat diversity and reduce wind fetch, which would also help protect valuable archeological resources in the project area.

In response to a question from Sara Strassman, Blodgett explained that the project's goal is to restore the area's natural hydrology and floodplain connectivity as well as other natural ecological processes and habitats. Blodgett said the project should capture nutrients and enhance backwater and main channel fisheries as well as main channel mussel populations, increasing commercial and recreational fishing and hunting. He said TNC is monitoring key ecological attributes to inform an adaptive management analysis that will inform future floodplain connectivity restoration efforts. Hubbell noted that Blodgett managed the Havana Field Station and has extensive experience with LTRMP's monitoring protocols.

Ken Westlake asked what the project expense would be for UMRR-EMP given work already completed. Roger Perk said UMRR-EMP's cost would likely be around \$15 million to construct the water control structures and islands, depending on land values. Perk added that the Administration is strongly interested in partnering with a non-profit organization and this would represent USACE's first ecosystem restoration project involving a non-profit cost share sponsor. Thus, it would be a great opportunity to highlight UMRR-EMP as a premier program. In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Perk said the project planning would be completed under Section 206 and would be essentially free to UMRR-EMP.

Hubbell said USACE is in contact with Illinois DNR to first get its opinion on the transfer. Hubbell recalled that partners have been working to identify two projects to implement on the Illinois River and this represents a great possibility to do restoration work there. Perk noted that the project is cost shared and so UMRR-EMP would be responsible for 65 percent of the total project cost, which is estimated to be around \$15 million. Hubbell also acknowledged that this project would directly involve NRCS in the program's restoration activities. Renee Turner recognized that USACE, TNC, and Illinois DNR have already addressed the project's policy issues and other challenges.

In response to a question from Schlaghaft, Perk confirmed that TNC has successfully shown its ability and willingness to provide O&M for the project's life. In response to a question from Kevin Foerster, Blodgett explained that some of the project area extends into USFWS refuge lands, but that TNC will assume full O&M responsibility for the project. In response to a question from Strassman, Blodgett explained that the Illinois River's hydrology has been so drastically altered that water control structures are required rather than more passive approaches. Blodgett added that active control can also help to slow the spread of invasive species. In response to a question from Foerster, Perk said the project's NEPA review was completed under Section 206.

Perk said partners can contact him or Doug Blodgett with any questions related to the Emiquon project.

MVP District Report

Tom Novak said MVP's planning priority is North and Sturgeon Lakes. Novak explained that Minnesota's Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund for natural resources has allocated money for the state to cost share the project. However, Minnesota's state law prohibits Minnesota DNR from signing the project agreement because of the indemnification provision. USACE is exploring options for a proxy to serve as a cost share sponsor. Some of the project lands are owned by a tribal nation, which is

not supportive of the project agreement's requirement to waive sovereign immunity. Novak said MVP will likely advance Conway Lake and McGregor Lake next for planning. Novak said District staff are considering opportunities to coordinate with USACE's channel maintenance program.

HREP Highlight: Capoli Slough

Novak said Capoli Slough is located five miles below Lansing, Iowa on the left descending bank of the main channel. He compared the historical and present-day ecological conditions of the project area, which has experience a loss of islands, decline in aquatic vegetation, loss of running sloughs, and a lack of overwintering habitat. Novak overviewed the project objectives and how the project features will work to achieve those objectives. They include increasing aquatic plant growth, maintaining running sloughs, increasing emergent wetlands and island acreage, and enhancing habitat for turtles, waterfowl, and fish. Novak said MVD approved the project's design in April 2011, construction of Stage 1 began in fall of 2011 and Stage 2 in fall of 2013, and project completion is anticipated in late summer/early fall of 2014.

Program Bulletin

Question of the Quarter

Marv Hubbell said he would like to include a "Question of the Quarter" on UMRR-EMP CC quarterly meeting agendas as a fun way to explore participants' knowledge of UMRR-EMP's policies, implementation processes and products, and coordination mechanisms. Dru Buntin asked the question: "What is the role of UMRBA as described in the Water Resources Development Act of 1986?" With no guesses, Buntin explained that UMRBA was authorized two specific purposes: 1) promote and coordinate state participation in UMRS management, development, and protection; and 2) be the caretaker of the Comprehensive Master Plan. Hubbell recognized that UMRBA also supports UMRR-EMP through advocacy, meeting and other planning-related services, and general interagency facilitation.

In response to a request from Olivia Dorothy, Buntin said UMRBA staff will explore options for providing the Master Plan electronically. Buntin also welcomed partners to UMRBA's office to view a hard copy of the Master Plan.

Office of Management and Budget Briefing

Hubbell reported that, on June 19, 2013, District staff and Col. Mark Deschenes briefed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on UMRR-EMP and its capabilities to execute at the President's FY 14 budget request of \$31.97 million. Hubbell said Col. Mark Deschenes emphasized UMRR-EMP's strong partnership involving several interagency teams; its tremendous economic and social value to the region, nation, and world; and maturity that is now informing other large aquatic ecosystem restoration and monitoring programs.

Planning for Member Agency Leadership Meeting

Hubbell recalled that a recommendation in the 2013 Implementation Issues Assessment calls for more direct and frequent engagement with partners' upper level leadership. Hubbell said the UMRR-EMP CC formed a subgroup to determine logistics and themes for an event with partner agencies' upper level leadership. The subgroup includes Dru Buntin, Diane Ford, Hubbell, Kirsten Mickelsen, Tim Schlagenhaft, and Janet Sternburg. On an August 23, 2013 conference call, the subgroup agreed to recommend a June 2014 event in Dubuque or La Crosse that would include a briefing on the program's

accomplishments and relevant policy issues as well as a field trip to a project site. Hubbell said the subgroup will finalize basic logistics and distribute invitations shortly.

Bob Clevenstine and Janet Sternburg asked the subgroup to consider holding the event further south — e.g., St. Louis. Tim Schlagenhaft suggested that the event include a discussion on resolving program issues in order to enhance program implementation. Buntin suggested that the meeting focus on program successes and a select number of high-level, policy issues to engage the leaders and get their input. However, he cautioned that any issue discussion does not get too detailed and complicated. Hubbell offered that it may be helpful for USACE to work with UMRR-EMP CC members to brief their respective agency leaders prior to the event.

Mark Moore said his introduction to UMR issues and coordination groups at UMRBA's quarterly meeting yesterday and at today's meeting has been very informative. Moore expressed support for the event's concepts and agreed that any issue discussion should not get too technical. Jon Hubbert suggested that the event is located in close proximity to a major airport.

Hubbell said it will be critical for the group to determine the date within the next couple months and distribute invitations. Jim Fischer and Sternburg stressed the importance of sending invitations to agency leaders as soon as possible in order to reserve their calendars. In response to a question from Linda Leake, Hubbell said the invitees have not yet been identified. He anticipates invites will be distributed to agency directors and deputy directors. Leake expressed support for the event to include a combination of a program briefing and a discussion of challenges to implementation.

Roger Perk suggested that the subgroup consider coordinating with UMRBA or inviting its Board members. Sternburg cautioned against holding the event in conjunction with UMRBA and UMRR-EMP CC's quarterly meetings since the members would also be those responsible to coordinate with their agency leaders attending the event. Ken Westlake suggested that the subgroup consider hosting the event in conjunction with the Midwest Natural Resource Group's annual meeting.

In response to a request by Hubbell, Fischer agreed to participate on the event planning subgroup.

Mississippi River Commission Tour

Hubbell reported that UMRR-EMP's restoration and science successes were highlighted throughout the UMR portion of the Mississippi River Commission's low water inspection tour in August 2013. Buntin said that, in his testimony to the MRC, he underscored the value of UMRR-EMP's partnership and restoration and science outputs. Buntin said many individuals' testimonies gave recognition to the program's local and regional importance. Hubbell said District staff focused on UMRR-EMP's relationship to improving the Lower Mississippi River and its role in multi-purpose management of the river. For example, improving the river's fisheries enhances recreation and generates local economies. Hubbell said he believes those messages were well received by the Commission.

Jennie Sauer said the Commissioners toured UMESC, where USGS staff discussed LTRMP's graphical browsers, how Pool 8 monitoring informs the Pool 8 Islands HREP, LC/LU tools, vegetation responses to management, mussel monitoring and habitat restoration, nutrients, and Asian carp research. In response to a question from Tim Schlagenhaft, Gary Meden said MRC typically transits the UMR once every four to five years. However, Meden said Gen. John Peabody expressed interest in having the Commission tour the UMR more frequently. Meden said Hubbell and Gretchen Benjamin did a great job co-briefing the MRC on UMRR-EMP. Janet Sternburg said she attends the MRC tour almost every year when it is in Missouri and highlights UMRR-EMP. Sternburg acknowledged Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh's efforts to portray the Mississippi River and its watersheds as an interconnected system. Roger Perk said the Commissioners were impressed by their tour at UMESC.

Bassmaster Tournament in La Crosse

Hubbell said the June 2013 Bassmaster Tournament was held in La Crosse for the second consecutive year. This year, nine of the top ten winners fished over HREP sites. Hubbell applauded Randy Hines for his efforts in leading a successful publicity campaign to showcase UMRR-EMP at the tournament. Johnson added that Hines worked with Tournament staff, La Crosse Chamber of Commerce, and District staff to develop and place outreach materials, creating a visible presence for UMRR-EMP at the Tournament. Johnson said the primary messages focused on UMRR-EMP's cutting-edge research and effective restoration projects. Hines developed window screens with great images, QR codes that directed individuals to UMRR-EMP's website, and a free half-page advertisement in La Crosse's Summer 2013 Fish La Crosse Magazine (see page 29, <http://www.explorelacrosse.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/BassMaster-MAG-WEB.pdf>.) Hubbell said Hilary Markin created a web page targeted to Tournament participants with maps of the Pools within the Tournament area. In addition, ESPN will air a segment on the Tournament in La Crosse that may include an interview with Jeff Janvrin from Wisconsin DNR.

Public Involvement and Outreach

Hubbell said *Our Mississippi* staff have extended an invitation to have a full edition of the newsletter specifically devoted to UMRR-EMP. It would cost the program \$34,000. It would explore all three UMR Districts and all 10 offices that are directly involved in UMRR-EMP's implementation. Hubbell said he believes this would be a valuable, proactive opportunity to communicate to the public about the program's benefits. Hubbell asked UMRR-EMP CC for its feedback and whether the program should allocate funds to do this.

In response to a question from Ken Westlake, Meden said USACE prints 50,000 hard copies of its editions and directly mails about 7,000 copies. Visitor centers and other local businesses are included in the mailed distributions, so they reach an extensive and broad audience. Remaining hard copies are distributed at various river-related events and public outreach meetings. Ken Barr said the edition is also published on the *Our Mississippi* website.

Westlake expressed his support for the opportunity, noting that the publication has a good established reputation. Stauffer agreed, and suggested that the *Our Mississippi* publication highlight the various agencies and individuals who work behind the scenes. Westlake suggested that UMRR-EMP staff contact the states' natural resource agency publications as well as The National Geographic to potentially do a piece on the UMRS. Strassman suggested that partners also identify other possible publications and other communication venues for UMRR-EMP outreach given that material will already be developed. Jennie Sauer noted that Neal Reddic from The National Geographic lives within the region and may be interested in doing a story on the UMRS. Kevin Foerster said the UMR Refuge is currently working with The National Geographic regarding national geotourism. Foerster said the publication is very interested in river issues. Sauer also suggested contacting Big Rivers Magazine and said there are multiple venues partners could explore.

Patti Jackson-Kelly and Olivia Dorothy observed that a focused, dedicated outreach group would be helpful to identify and undertake opportunities on an ongoing basis. Sauer noted that public outreach is a central theme for the FY 15-19 UMRR-EMP strategic planning team, and was also prioritized in the FY 2010-14 LTRMP Strategic Plan. Linda Leake added that a long term commitment is needed to ensure that outreach is a continual effort for the program and does not get side tracked. Hubbell agreed with the suggestion to form a dedicated outreach group and said Angie Freyermuth and Hilary Markin would be USACE's participants.

The UMRR-EMP CC agreed to form a group to identify and implement outreach opportunities for the program. Partners interested in participating in the group should contact Karen Hagerty by Friday, September 20. Within the next couple months, the group will first work with the UMRR-EMP strategic planning team members to define outreach priorities.

Other Business

Joint Charter for the UMRR-EMP Coordinating Groups

Marv Hubbell recalled that, at its May 28, 2013 meeting, the UMRR-EMP CC endorsed the Joint Charter for the UMRR-EMP-CC, A-Team, and HREP Planning and Sequencing Framework Teams unless any major concerns were raised by June 15. Since no comments were raised, the Joint Charter is considered final. The UMRR-EMP CC members signed the Joint Charter. UMRBA staff will finalize the signatories and send an electronic copy to the program's distribution list. The Joint Charter will also be made available on USACE's and UMRBA's web sites.

Webinar Feedback

Kirsten Mickelsen said she received generally positive feedback on the May 29, 2013 UMRR-EMP webinar. However, several individuals expressed reluctance to using webinars for quarterly meetings in the future unless necessary or there is a lack of major discussion items. However, the UMRR-EMP CC acknowledged that meeting agendas are developed only a month in advance when hotel and other logistics need to be made several months in advance of the meeting. Mickelsen also noted that there are sometimes disturbances — e.g., sounds when participants' phones are placed on hold.

Kevin Foerster said it was very challenging to chair the webinar, especially given the amount of discussion and roll call votes required. Olivia Dorothy said the read ahead material and PowerPoints were helpful to prepare for the meeting. Jim Fischer acknowledged the importance of face-to-face discussions, but said the webinar was advantageous for the visual presentations. Jennie Sauer and Mickelsen expressed appreciation to Foerster for his contributions as Chair of the meeting.

Jon Hubbert said videoconferencing may be a good option. However, several partners acknowledged that they do not have the technical capabilities to support videoconferencing. Foerster said partners should keep that option in mind as technology evolves and becomes more available. Mike Jawson noted that it was generally effective because the webinar was a half-day. He said the webinar would not have been an effective option for a longer duration.

Future Meetings

The upcoming quarterly meetings are as follows:

- **November 2013 — St. Paul**
 - UMRBA WQEC — November 18-19
 - UMRBA Board — November 19
 - **UMRR-EMP CC — November 20**

- **February 2014 — Quad Cities**
 - UMRBA Board — February 25
 - **UMRR-EMP CC — February 26**

- **May 2014 — St. Louis**
 - UMRBA — May 13
 - **UMRR-EMP CC — May 14**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

**UMRR-EMP CC Attendance List
August 28, 2013**

UMRR-EMP CC Members

Mark Moore	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Kevin Foerster	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC [On behalf of Mike Jawson]
Dan Stephenson	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Diane Ford	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Stauffer	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Janet Sternburg	Missouri Department of Conservation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Ken Westlake	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Jon Hubbert	U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS

Others In Attendance

Renee Turner	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Tom Novak	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Chris Erickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Gary Meden	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marvin Hubbell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Ken Barr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Chuck Theiling	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Larry Shepard	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Tim Yager	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Bob Clevestine	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Patti Jackson-Kelly	U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS
Linda Leake	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Mike Jawson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennifer Dieck	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jeff Houser	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Walt Popp	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Sara Strassman	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Tom Boland	AMEC
Tim Schlagenhaft	Audubon
Olivia Dorothy	Izaak Walton League
Brad Walker	Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Doug Blodgett	The Nature Conservancy
Dru Buntin	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association