

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

**February 24, 2005  
Quarterly Meeting**

**Radisson Hotel  
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Charles Barton of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 24, 2005. Other EMP-CC representatives present were Charlie Wooley (USFWS), Rick Mollahan (IL DNR), Mike McGhee (IA DNR), Tim Schlagenhaft/Scot Johnson (MN DNR), Janet Sternburg (MO DOC), Gretchen Benjamin (WI DNR), Linda Leake (USGS), and Al Fenedick (USEPA). A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

**Minutes of the November Meeting**

Gretchen Benjamin moved and Charlie Wooley seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the November 18, 2004 meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**Program Management**

*FY 05*

Roger Perk reported that the FY 05 scope of work for the LTRMP has been completed and covers both the minimum sustainable program and additional program elements projects. Perk also reported that the three Corps Districts are currently determining which HREP contracts will be advertised over the next few months.

Starting with an appropriation of \$17.5 million, savings and slippage of \$1.8 million, a rescission of \$126,000, and program administrative costs of \$503,000, results in \$4.7 million for LTRMP and \$10.3 million for HREPs in FY 05. Don Powell reported that MVP's FY 05 HREP planning priorities include Harpers Slough (complete this year), Capoli Slough and Conway Lake (continue), and Lake Winneshiek (initiate). Construction priorities include minor work to complete Ambrough Slough and continued construction on Spring Lake Islands. Powell said MVP would also like to start construction on Pool Slough and Pool 8 Islands Phase III and would like to award the construction contract for Long Meadow Lake. In addition, MVP's plans call for completing project evaluation reports on seven projects.

Perk reported that MVR's FY 05 planning priorities are Rice Lake, Fox Island, Pool 12 Overwintering, Lake Odessa, and Smith Creek. Planning on the first four of these should be

completed in this fiscal year, with only Smith Creek continuing into FY 06. MVR will focus its HREP design efforts on the first phase of Lake Odessa. The District's construction priorities are Pool 11 Islands Stage 2, which should be almost completed this year, and Lake Odessa Stage 1, which MVR hopes to award this year. Construction on the Lake Odessa project will take place largely in FY 06. MVR will also be working on several HREP evaluation reports.

Mike Thompson reported that MVS will allocate \$667,000 in planning funds among nine HREPs. Among the projects in planning, Thompson said he anticipates forwarding the Schenimann Chute project to MVD shortly. The schedule for project design work includes minor redesigns to address problem areas at Swan Lake and Stump Lake. MVS's FY 05 construction priorities are Phases I and II of Calhoun Point. Thompson said the District will be looking for additional construction funding this year.

Holly Stoerker asked how decisions are being made about which HREPs to shift over to the Navigation and Environmental Sustainability Program (NESP). Perk explained that the only EMP HREPs transferred to NESP have been ones that were not likely to get done under the EMP anytime soon. For example, he said that the Pool 11 Islands element that is now under NESP had been shelved under the EMP because of delays associated with Higgins Eye mussels. The Navigation Study's systemic Section 7 consultation on Higgins Eyes resulted in a streamlined process for addressing such issues. But, by the time that process was established, this element of the Pool 11 Islands project would have been very far down on MVR's HREP list, so it was shifted to NESP. Thompson said the logic was similar in moving the Stone Dike Alternations project from EMP to NESP. According to Thompson, the Stone Dike project was quite a ways off on MVS's HREP list, so it was a good candidate for NESP. Thompson said MVS plans to submit Schenimann Chute for approval under the EMP, but will pursue construction under either EMP or NESP, depending on which program offers the earliest prospects for funding.

In addition to the prospects for expediting certain HREPs, Ken Barr said the Corps looked for three characteristics in the projects it transferred to NESP:

1. a "winner" project that had been thoroughly vetted,
2. a project from which the NESP partners can learn, and
3. a project ready to go to construction in FY 06 if funding is available.

Gretchen Benjamin said she understands the Corps' rationale, but voiced concern that doing planning and design work under the EMP and then shifting projects to NESP could diminish the EMP's vitality. While acknowledging the argument for transferring the Pool 11 Islands element, Benjamin said she does not see the same justification for shifting Schenimann Chute. Janet Sternburg said Missouri DOC supports transferring Schenimann Chute if doing so will expedite construction. But Sternburg also acknowledged the validity of Benjamin's concern and stressed the importance of maintaining plenty of projects in the HREP pipeline.

Stoerker cautioned that, in a performance-based budgeting environment, it is important to ensure that any project transfers do not hurt the EMP's budget prospects. She also noted that one of the arguments for NESP's environmental projects authorization is that it will allow the

partners to pursue projects that cannot be done under the EMP. Focusing the first NESP efforts on projects that have been transferred from the EMP would seem to undermine this argument.

*FY 06*

Roger Perk reported that the President's budget request, released February 8, includes \$33.5 million for the EMP. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also directed the Corps to rename the EMP as "Upper Mississippi River Restoration" and to develop a 10-year aquatic ecosystem restoration plan, using \$3 million of the \$33.5 million request. Greg Ruff explained that the precise purpose and implications of the OMB directives are not yet clear, but he said it appears OMB wants to focus more on restoration. Ruff said he does not know how the OMB-mandated plan would differ from the 15-year ecosystem plan included in the recently completed Navigation Study. Janet Sternburg noted that the EMP's project purpose has also been changed in at least some budget documents to navigation/mitigation. Ruff said nothing in the EMP authorization refers to mitigation and said he does not see the EMP's project purpose changing. Ruff said this shift in terminology may have simply been inadvertent.

EMP-CC members expressed a variety of concerns regarding the OMB directives and changes, including the fact that they appear to reflect some confusion between EMP and NESP. Ruff said Corps personnel are consulting with OMB staff. He said his interpretation of the planning directive, given that there's no NESP funding in the President's budget, is that OMB is asking what the UMR's 10-year plan for ecosystem restoration would look like if there is no NESP. Ruff also noted that Congressional response to these modifications is not yet known.

Dan McGuinness stressed the need for any restoration plan to make the LTRMP's importance explicit. McGuinness also emphasized that any strategy for transitioning from the EMP to NESP needs to ensure that the LTRMP is preserved. Jon Duyvejonck noted that it is time to update the Habitat Needs Assessment (HNA) and asked how the HNA might relate to the 10-year plan OMB has called for. Linda Leake expressed concern with the fiscal implications if \$3 million is set aside for planning and the overall program receives an appropriation comparable to this year's. Perk acknowledged that people are raising valid questions, but said he and Ruff simply do not have all of the answers at this time. For example, he said the \$3 million set aside for a 10-year plan assumes full funding. It is not clear what, if anything, the Administration would want to spend on planning under a less than full funding scenario. Perk said the Corps will be coordinating further with OMB on this and other questions.

Perk briefly summarized each District's potential work plan for FY 06. He explained that the plans include a core amount of planning, design, construction, and management activities that could be done under a \$20 million EMP appropriation. Each District has also identified another increment of work that would be done with additional funding up to the \$33.5 million requested by the President. Perk explained that, under an increased funding scenario, the HREP program would increase its focus on constructing projects that have been waiting for funding, while also maintaining appropriate levels of planning and design. He emphasized that any funding increase will not be used to increase planning to develop projects for construction under NESP.

Gretchen Benjamin asked about the Corps' capacity to implement a \$33.5 million EMP, noting that Corps staff is already stretched at times. While acknowledging the importance NESP, hurricane relief, and the Corps' overseas missions, Benjamin stressed the need for the EMP to remain a Corps priority. Perk agreed that the Corps does indeed face staffing challenges and that it has become especially difficult to respond to fluctuations in program funding levels. However, he assured the EMP partners that various strategies are in place to ensure adequate personnel. This includes the use of Corps staff from other MVD Districts and increased use of contractors for HREP planning work, if necessary.

#### *Status of EMP-CC Representatives*

Roger Perk reported that, since the committee's November 2004 meeting, he has received letters naming Rick Mollahan and Tim Schlagenhaft as the Illinois DNR and Minnesota DNR EMP-CC representatives, respectively. Mike McGhee reported that he inquired last week about securing a letter confirming his status. McGhee said he would follow-up with Perk shortly. Perk said he would consult with Mike Sullivan regarding NRCS's future participation on the EMP-CC. Perk noted that, once things are confirmed with Iowa DNR and NRCS, the status of all partner agencies will be current.

#### *Public Involvement and Program Advocacy*

Gretchen Benjamin reported that she and Don Hultman have discussed sending out an EMP action alert via the Upper Mississippi Basin Stakeholder Network (UMBSN) before the network dissolves. Barry Drazkowski explained that the UMBSN is losing its funding at the end of February. He said St. Mary's University will self-fund the network for a few months to see if new sources of support can be found. However, during this period, the UMBSN will operate at a reduced level of effort. In answer to a question from Tim Schlagenhaft, Drazkowski said the cost of the UMBSN would vary depending on the level of operation desired. Over the past year, UMBSN operations cost approximately \$35,000.

Benjamin also reported that Ron Kind's River Advisory Council will be meeting on March 8. Tim Schlagenhaft noted that the Mississippi River Citizen Commission is sponsoring a March 21 briefing for Congressional staff concerning current river issues. Gary Loss observed that communication from states and stakeholders to members of Congress can be quite effective. Linda Leake reported that USGS has been talking with Representative Kind and Senator Kohl over the past few months concerning UMESC's capabilities relative to the EMP and NESP in the future. UMESC will be briefing USGS's Headquarters on related issues at the end of March.

Janet Sternburg said she has briefed Missouri DOC's senior staff on the importance of, and distinctions between, EMP and NESP prior to their spring Hill visits. She also reported that Missouri DOC testified before the Mississippi River Commission concerning the EMP's importance. Loss said staff from the three Corps Districts often meet with staff in Governors' D.C. offices when they are in Washington. He asked Schlagenhaft and Benjamin to provide him with contact points in their Governor's D.C. offices.

Don Powell reported that, when an HREP is under construction, MVP issues press releases to increase public awareness in the area. Powell said Wisconsin DNR also does this.

### *EMP-CC and A-Team Roles and Responsibilities*

Gretchen Benjamin reported that the states discussed the respective roles and responsibilities of the EMP-CC and the A-Team at yesterday's pre-meeting. She explained that this initially came up in seeking to clarify each group's role relative to the Status and Trends Report, but the conversation broadened to more general questions. She summarized the states' general perspective as being that the EMP-CC should rely on the A-Team to address technical and science questions related to the LTRMP, but should retain its policy and dispute resolution roles on LTRMP matters. Benjamin said the states would like the full EMP-CC to discuss these questions at a future meeting, with the goal of clarifying the groups' roles and interrelationship. Roger Perk agreed that there has been some drift within the two groups and said he thinks both would benefit from confirming what is expected from each.

Tim Schlagenhaft explained that the states' discussion yesterday was focused primarily on how to keep each group as effective and efficient as possible. He said part of this is establishing realistic timelines, communicating them, and then sticking to them on efforts that require contributions and input from various partners. He said the FY 05 scope of work (SOW) for LTRMP provides a good start in this direction by clearly identifying deliverables and timelines. But he said all partners need to contribute to this goal of increased efficiency by respecting deadlines that are established.

Linda Leake agreed that there are opportunities for increased streamlining and improved communication. She described the FY 05 SOW as a comprehensive document with detailed milestones and clear lines of responsibility. Leake said she would be happy to work with Perk to identify ways of improving communication and coordination. Benjamin expressed her appreciation for Leake's offer, but also stressed that the states' concerns are not restricted to the LTRMP. She explained that the states would like to look at these issues for the entire EMP. For example, she said the partners have had difficulty making progress on the project cooperation agreement template, the System Ecological Team, and other important HREP-related items. Benjamin said the states understand that they, too, have important responsibilities for making all elements of the EMP work efficiently and effectively. She said the states are willing to do their part.

EMP-CC members agreed to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the EMP-CC and A-Team, and related issues, at their May meeting.

### *PCA Template*

Greg Ruff reported that MVD submitted the project cooperation agreement (PCA) template to Corps Headquarters some time ago. Recently, headquarters has indicated that it will not be approving a model PCA for the EMP. Ruff said the basis for this decision is that the EMP typically only generates about two PCAs per year. This is low compared with several other programs that are also seeking to establish model PCAs. Given this, headquarters staff has concluded that the potential benefits from an EMP PCA template are relatively low and do not justify the investment of effort that would be required. Gretchen Benjamin said that, even at two projects a year, a model PCA would eventually produce net time savings. Ruff agreed, but noted that part of the problem is that model PCAs have a limited life span and eventually have

to be updated. Thus, if creating the template requires considerable upfront work and it will receive relatively little use over its projected life span, Headquarters staff cannot justify the time investment.

## **Report to Congress**

Roger Perk reported that MVD and MVR staff have responded to questions from Corps Headquarters counsel regarding the EMP Report to Congress (RTC). These questions primarily concerned the definition of project lands and related cost sharing issues. Perk said he believes the questions have been satisfactorily addressed. Regional staff are preparing a wrap-up memo for the HQ counsel and anticipate that the RTC will be finalized by the end of March.

Holly Stoerker reported that UMRBA supports amending the EMP authorization to permit NGOs to serve as nonfederal sponsors, but will not actively lobby for this change in the 2005 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Stoerker explained that the states' priority for WRDA 05 is getting NESP authorized, and that the UMRBA does not want to risk confusing or diluting its message by simultaneously pursuing changes to the EMP authorization. However, the UMRBA will make its support for the NGO change known more informally. Stoerker added that she believes the NGO amendment may already have support within the Senate Committee.

Stoerker also emphasized the states' commitment to getting the Fish and Wildlife Service the resources it needs to properly operate and maintain (O&M) the HREPs on its refuges. She said the UMRBA will emphasize the UMRS refuges' need for increased HREP O&M funding in both the testimony it offers on the FY 06 Interior budget and in a meeting it is seeking with the Service Director. In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Charlie Wooley explained that the Service's HREP O&M costs have grown and become more problematic as the projects have become larger in scale and longer in duration.

Bill Franz reported that he is still working internally to determine EPA's level of interest in a jointly led science planning process for the UMR. Franz said some within EPA are confusing this RTC-recommended effort with other data needs issues and efforts, including those related to UMR water quality and Gulf hypoxia. He explained that there is still work to do helping people understand the RTC recommendation and then determining whether EPA would be willing to commit resources. Franz said the resources would likely have to come from EPA Headquarters, rather than the Regions. Linda Leake said USGS will not be pursuing the RTC recommendation until EPA determines its position.

Stoerker urged Franz and Leake to determine their agencies' response to the RTC recommendation. Stoerker observed that, if EPA and USGS are not prepared to co-lead the science planning process, then the EMP partners will need to decide whether they want to pursue other avenues, such as a Congressional directive or linking to ongoing Gulf hypoxia work. She emphasized that all partners share accountability for seeking to implement their joint RTC recommendations. She encouraged Franz and Leake to let the partners know if they should be communicating directly with EPA and USGS leadership on this matter. Franz said he would report back to the EMP-CC members by the end of March on the status of this RTC recommendation within EPA.

## Navigation Study Institutional Arrangements

Chuck Spitzack reported that Corps staff have been working with an interagency volunteer team to draft an institutional arrangements (IA) framework to support integrated, adaptive management on the UMRB. He explained that NESP, with its ambitious scope and emphasis on adaptive, integrated management, offers a compelling reason to review our current arrangements and future needs. Spitzack briefly reviewed the concepts of adaptive and integrated management and said the new IA framework is designed to focus on the Fish and Wildlife Service's fisheries, ecological services, and refuges work and the Corps' NESP, EMP, 9-foot channel, and Illinois Waterway programs.

Under the proposed IA framework, the following groups would help support river management:

- Federal Principals Group — consists of senior, Washington-level federal agency leaders; aligns national priorities, resolves policy and program issues, and discusses and collaborates on broad river issues
- Regional Principals Group — consists of regional directors of the same federal agencies represented on the Federal Principals Group; works collaboratively with UMRBA, monitors effectiveness of institutional arrangements, and resolves policy and program issues
- UMRBA — composition unchanged; is asked to coordinate with the Regional Principals Group and perform many of the same functions, but from the states' perspective
- River Management Council (RMC) — consists of 26 members representing 19 federal and state agencies and NGOs; focuses on system-level needs related to implementing the above-referenced Corps and Service programs; this includes establishing integrated vision and goals, vetting system plans, adopting principles and practices for adaptive management, facilitating system-wide communication, evaluating effectiveness of river management, forming additional teams for specific purposes, and providing its conclusions back to member agencies
- River Management Teams (RMTs) — consists of the existing three District-based teams (RRF, RRCT, RRAT), with modifications as needed; these teams focus on subsystems and specific projects; this includes enhancing interagency coordination, fostering cooperative partnerships, vetting subsystem plans and specific projects, coordinating with the Science Panel on adaptive management, evaluating monitoring results, communicating with stakeholders and the public, establishing and directing technical groups, establishing integrated vision and goals, and providing their conclusions back to member agencies
- Science Panel — consists of up to 10 members with agency and/or academic backgrounds; provides scientific guidance and recommendations in support of adaptive management to the RMC and RMTs; this includes developing a framework for creating models, providing scientific guidance relevant to goals and objectives, developing protocols for quantifying outputs, assisting RMTs with management information needs, assisting in developing communication tools, and making recommendations regarding a data clearinghouse.

Spitzack said the draft framework envisions the EMP-CC transitioning to become the RMC. He noted that this would involve expanding both the committee's membership and its scope, while maintaining its ability to serve the EMP's needs.

According to Spitzack, Corps staff are currently drafting a full description of the proposed IA framework. Upon completion, he said volunteer team members will have an opportunity to comment on this document, which will then be revised and circulated more broadly to agencies and stakeholder groups for formal comment. Additional stakeholder meetings and agency review are currently scheduled for the May/June timeframe, with implementation slated for the beginning of FY 06. Spitzack acknowledged that this is an aggressive timeline and said it would be adjusted if needed. However, he also emphasized that, if the NESP authorization is delayed, he would still recommend continuing to implement the IA framework as expeditiously as possible. He explained that, even without NESP, there are still significant integration needs on the UMRS that the new framework would help address.

In response to a question from Pam Thiel, Spitzack said the Corps is just starting its outreach efforts concerning the proposed framework. Those efforts will include coordinating directly with all organizations and agencies identified as potential members of the RMC. Charlie Wooley questioned whether the RMC would really be a *management* council, or more of a coordination body. If the latter is intended, he suggested changing the group's name to better reflect its purpose.

Gretchen Benjamin stressed the need to make certain that the EMP-CC's current functions are not lost under a new RMC. She cautioned that the RMC's broader membership may make it a challenge for the group to perform all of the EMP-CC's functions. She added that this could also be the case for other aspects of the RMC's work that do not equally engage all of its members. Gary Loss said the Corps shares Benjamin's concerns and will strive to ensure that the EMP's needs are fully met.

Janet Sternburg observed that the 19 agencies and organizations envisioned for the RMC may be too broad. Specifically, she noted that some of the participants listed have only very limited interest in the majority of the RMC's proposed focus areas. Spitzack agreed that some agencies and organizations will be more fully engaged than others. However, he said it makes sense to cast a fairly broad net and allow the agencies and organizations to determine how active they will be. He suggested that some participants may ultimately function more like POCs, providing links to their agencies when needed, rather than as active RMC members.

Benjamin said she is not yet convinced that the IA framework should be implemented regardless of the outcome with NESP. While she sees some value in standardizing and connecting the RMTs on a system scale, Benjamin said she is not certain that these benefits would warrant, or even require, changes on the scale envisioned in the framework. If there is no NESP, Benjamin said she imagines that the desired IA framework would look different.

In response to a question from Holly Stoerker, Spitzack said the Corps would like comments from the EMP-CC on the draft framework. Stoerker noted that the EMP-CC does not typically comment as a group, and Spitzack said he would welcome joint comments or comments from individual EMP-CC members. Benjamin asked whether the EMP-CC should consider



developing IA joint comments. Noting that the EMP is facing some big changes, Sternburg said she would favor such an effort.

Barb Naramore asked the federal agency members whether they would be interested in developing joint EMP-CC comments with their state partners. Charlie Wooley said the Service would like to explore this option. Charles Barton said the Corps would also like to participate in joint comments. In response to a question from Stoerker, Barton said he does not see a problem with the Corps participating in EMP-CC comments on a proposal that was developed by Corps staff. Benjamin said the EMP-CC comments would focus on points of commonality among the partners, leaving each agency free to submit its own individual comments as well. Sternburg said the EMP-CC is clearly the group that should be speaking to the IA proposal's impacts on the EMP. Scot Johnson and Linda Leake said their agencies would also be interested in exploring the potential for joint EMP-CC comments on the IA framework.

Naramore said she imagines any joint EMP-CC comments would likely differ from those submitted by individual agencies. In particular, she said the EMP-CC's comments would be confined to issues related to the EMP, while an individual agency's comments would presumably be considerably broader. Wooley agreed, noting that he has issues as an EMP-CC member that he would like to see addressed, but that the Fish and Wildlife Service as a whole has other issues that reach beyond the EMP-related impacts. Bill Franz said he views development of joint EMP-CC comments as an opportunity. Naramore and Stoerker agreed that UMRBA staff would facilitate further discussion of possible joint comments after release of the IA framework document. If there appears to be sufficient commonality and interest among the EMP-CC partners, UMRBA staff will help draft joint comments, which would be limited to issues affecting the EMP.

## **Long Term Resource Monitoring Program**

### *FY 05 Update*

Linda Leake reported that the LTRMP's FY 05 scope of work (SOW) was completed on February 18, 2005. The SOW for the restructured program identifies all specific products due under both the minimum sustainable program (MSP) and additional program elements (APE). In addition, the SOW identifies the responsible individuals and completion deadlines. Leake said she is very pleased that the FY 05 SOW is complete and thanked all of the partners for their contributions to the effort. She also reported that USGS is developing a milestone spreadsheet to track progress under the SOW. The spreadsheet will be posted on UMESC's web site, and Leake will update the status of all items due in the previous quarter at each EMP-CC meeting.

Leake reported that, for the first quarter of FY 05, all LTRMP products due were completed and delivered on time to the Corps. Moreover, all second quarter products are currently on schedule, and USGS does not currently anticipate any delays. Leake noted that UMESC submitted two proposals for the USGS's state partnership program, one for monitoring vegetation response to pool drawdowns and another for web tool development. Both of these had also been under consideration for APE funding. Leake said the vegetation monitoring project was approved and will receive approximately \$40,000 in funding. This will cover a

portion of the work envisioned under APE and is an important success in the partners' efforts to bring outside money into the program.

Leake briefly summarized FY 05 program highlights. She said the 10-year component reports for macroinvertebrates and vegetation were completed in December and January, respectively. The water quality and fisheries reports remain on schedule for completion in April and June, respectively. Leake noted that, in an effort to save mailing costs, the component reports, and other program publications, are now being distributed at EMP-CC meetings rather than being mailed to EMP partners. Copies of the macroinvertebrate and vegetation reports were made available to partners at today's meeting. Highlighting findings from those two component reports, Jennie Sauer said a significant trend in fingernail clam abundance was detected. Vegetation monitoring near the Stoddard HREP project revealed a three-fold increase in submersed aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the area. Leake also described several manuscripts and internet products in process or completed so far in FY 05.

Leake reviewed the FY 05 SOW, describing its MSP and APE components. She also noted that the FY 05 scope includes a glide path designed to ease the transition to the new staffing patterns under the restructured program. The MSP for FY 05 consists of:

- Monitoring — water quality for all reaches, SRS and fixed site; fisheries for all reaches, SRS and fixed site, with six gears for two periods; and aquatic vegetation for Pools 4, 8, and 13, using SRS for 450 points
- Analysis and reporting — annual component updates via the web, summary report, multi-year reports, and Status and Trends Report
- Statistical evaluation — consultation, review of statistical methods, and methods for evaluating power-to-detect trends
- Data management
- Land cover/land use with GIS support — with first priority going to consultation and any unused time going to the agreed upon priority product
- Bathymetry support — consultation

Work funded with glide path money will include SAV distribution and abundance work on the Illinois River and UMESC support for the vegetation component, Status and Trends Report, and statistical evaluation and modeling.

Leake described the process used to develop the FY 05 APE list, noting that time constraints required fast tracking the review and decision making. Thirty-one original proposals determined to meet the Corps' basic APE guidelines were reviewed by the USGS, Corps, and A-Team. Ultimately, 15 projects were selected to receive FY 05 APE funding. She noted that there was approximately \$200,000 more available for APE projects than originally estimated, due to the lower savings and slippage rate for FY 05. Leake said the field stations' and UMESC's capacity for APE work is being fully utilized, noting that one field station declined to undertake one of its approved APE proposals due to lack of staff capacity. While a final decision has not yet been made, this freed up money will likely be used to fund water quality monitoring associated with pool drawdowns.

While the FY 05 APE process was a difficult one, Leake said she has already been talking with Roger Perk and John Sullivan on possible improvements for FY 06. Together, they have developed a proposed schedule that should allow more time for development and consideration of APE proposals and should also benefit all involved by establishing clear timeframes. That schedule includes rule set development in February, a call for proposals in March, proposals due and A-Team review/recommendations in April, USGS and Corps review in May, announcement of selected projects in June, study plan reviews in July, final study plans on September 1, and final project selection by USGS and the Corps shortly thereafter. Janet Sternburg and Gretchen Benjamin both expressed support for the FY 06 APE process as outlined. Benjamin said it is exactly the kind of approach the states were talking about earlier in terms of providing adequate time and clear deadlines for interagency coordination efforts under the EMP.

Sullivan said it appears the A-Team would cease to exist under the proposed IA framework and asked who would perform the A-Team's functions on things like APE review. Perk said he does not believe the A-Team will be eliminated. While some adjustments in various EMP-related responsibilities may be necessary, Perk said he sees no fundamental changes to the A-Team on the horizon. Leake said she values the A-Team, and Sullivan's leadership, very highly and would not want to lose the group.

#### *Status and Trends Report*

Bob Gaugush reported that development of the Status and Trends Report is on schedule, with both the report outline and a list of indicators having been circulated to program partners for comment. Gaugush urged that a scientific report like this limit itself to the consideration of indicators, not both indicators and endpoints, because endpoints imply a decision about where the system should be. The selection of endpoints is a management and policy responsibility, not a question of science, and is thus not within the sphere of USGS, according to Gaugush.

Gaugush noted that an early decision to confine the Status and Trends Report to LTRMP data and Corps hydrology data limits the indicators that can be used. However, he emphasized that this decision was made for important practical reasons and will still allow a broad range of indicators to be considered. He reviewed the preliminary list of indicators. Regarding the report's format, Gaugush said he favors an approach used for a similar Great Lakes report. A gage is used to present basic information and then standard text and graphic formats are used to provide more detail.

Gaugush said a meeting is scheduled for early March at which writing assignments, interim milestones, and budget allocations will be set. He said these will be posted on the UMESC web site shortly thereafter, with an announcement going to program partners. The draft Status and Trends Report is scheduled for completion by September 30, 2005.

Gretchen Benjamin expressed appreciation for Gaugush's efforts, and the work of others on the report. She said she does not believe it is the role of the EMP-CC to endorse the proposed indicators list, urging instead that the A-Team be the partners' interface with the report team. In response to a question from Leake, the state EMP-CC members also affirmed that Gaugush should work with the field station team leaders directly on writing assignments for the report.

John Sullivan asked whether the A-Team should endorse the proposed indicators list, if the EMP-CC does not believe that it should be performing this function. In response to a question from Benjamin, Gaugush said that most of the A-Team members' individual comments on the list had been adopted, but that some could not be accommodated. Janet Sternburg said she does not think that the full A-Team needs to take action on the indicators list, given that individual members have had an opportunity to comment. Sullivan concurred, saying that further comment would be more productive after the authors have done some substantive work with the indicators. Roger Perk and Benjamin expressed their agreement with this approach. Benjamin stressed the importance of keeping to the interim milestones that will be developed in March, in order to complete the draft report by the end of the fiscal year. Gaugush said the report milestones, writing assignments, and budget allocations will be posted on the A-Team web page by March 15.

### *A-Team Report*

John Sullivan thanked Linda Leake for all of the work she and her staff have done with the A-Team in recent months. He agreed with the state EMP-CC members that it would be helpful to clarify roles and expectations for both the EMP-CC and A-Team. He also seconded the observation that all partners should strive to improve communications and said this is not the responsibility of any one agency.

Sullivan said he thinks the outline for the FY 06 APE selection process looks very good. He also stressed the importance of ensuring that the A-Team has the opportunity to review all potential projects — i.e., new projects should not be added to the list after the A-Team review. Sullivan also praised the Status and Trends Report outline and proposed indicators list. While the A-Team as a group has not yet endorsed the indicators, Sullivan expressed confidence that the list provides a good basis for moving forward with the next steps in developing the report.

Gretchen Benjamin reported that Sullivan will be stepping off of the A-Team due to other job responsibilities. Benjamin said there will be a six month transition period, but that the April A-Team meeting will be Sullivan's last meeting as chair. Jeff Janvrin will serve as Wisconsin's new A-Team representative, and a new chair will be named at the group's April meeting. Barb Naramore thanked Sullivan for his leadership and extraordinary efforts on the A-Team. Roger Perk seconded this sentiment.

### **EMP Strategic Planning**

Roger Perk reported that he received a variety of comments on the five-year strategic plan outline he presented at the November 2004 EMP-CC meeting. Several of these comments addressed big picture questions, including why the Corps believes an EMP strategic plan is needed at this time and the appropriate scope and timeframe for any such plan. Perk explained that, since 1997, Congress has authorized 21 new watershed restoration programs for the Corps. These programs are all competing for appropriations with established programs, including the EMP. While the Administration believes the EMP is doing a good job, Perk cautioned that the program must not rest on its laurels. He emphasized that OMB and the Corps are increasingly looking for metrics that can help identify the most effective, efficient programs. Perk said the EMP needs to be able to demonstrate and document its success if it is

to continue competing successfully. He also cited uncertainties surrounding the NESP authorization and its potential impacts on the EMP as reasons for taking a proactive, strategic approach to planning for the EMP's future.

Perk noted that an EMP strategic planning effort could take a variety of forms, including a written plan as outlined in November or a series of targeted, issue-based discussions and papers. Scot Johnson identified potential focus areas, including what we have learned through the Navigation Feasibility Study, tools the EMP has not used in the past, and applying adaptive management to the program.

Holly Stoerker noted that an EMP strategic plan could either focus on the management of the EMP during a time of transition or on specific issues and needs more internal to the EMP and not worry about potential impacts from a NESP authorization. Charlie Wooley said the Fish and Wildlife Service views EMP strategic planning as an important opportunity to better link the HREP and LTRMP components and expressed the Service's strong support for such an effort. He suggested that a series of issue-based discussions could be an effective way of addressing this and other important questions facing the EMP.

Linda Leake expressed general agreement with the preceding discussion. However, she said USGS would not favor a broad strategic planning endeavor at this time. Instead, she recommended taking the issue-focused approach described by Perk and Wooley. Janet Sternburg suggested program metrics as an issue for consideration through this process.

Sternburg and Benjamin expressed reluctance to initiate the issue discussions immediately, noting that agency staff involved in the EMP are currently overwhelmed with demands on their time. Gary Loss acknowledged the demands on staff in all agencies, but also stressed the increasingly competitive budget process. He observed that many other good projects and programs suffered in the Administration's FY 06 budget request because of their inability to demonstrate compelling results. Loss cautioned that the EMP needs to be ready to address similar questions. To help the partners better understand the Administration's considerations in prioritizing Corps projects, Perk said he would distribute the performance indicators and criteria that the Corps and OMB used in developing the FY 06 budget request.

After brief further discussion, it was agreed that, for the May meeting, each EMP-CC member would identify the top issue(s) for their state or agency that might be addressed through a strategic planning process. This should be done with recognition that the process might consist of a series of focused discussions or might involve development of a written plan. Further consideration of scope, timeframe, format, etc. was deferred until after the partners discuss their priority issues in May.

### **Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects**

Roger Perk reported that the letters of invitation for the System Ecological Team (SET) are at MVD awaiting General Crear's signature. Five of the six candidates previously discussed have indicated their willingness and ability to serve on the SET. John Sullivan, the sixth candidate, has regrettably declined due to other job responsibilities. Perk said that, for now, the Corps will keep the SET at five members. If, after the group is up and running, it is determined the some additional expertise is required, the Corps will consult with program partners about

recruiting another member. The Corps anticipates that the SET will hold its first organizing meeting in late March.

Perk also reported that each District Ecological Team (DET) has been asked to prepare fact sheets for its priority new HREPs. The DETs will employ the new fact sheet format previously presented to the EMP-CC. The SET will consider the DETs' fact sheets at its first working meeting, which is targeted for later this spring.

After consulting with EMP partners, the Corps has scheduled the 2005 HREP workshop for August 17-19 in the Quad Cities. The workshop will follow the UMRBA and EMP-CC quarterly meetings in the same location, which will hopefully provide efficiencies for some participants. Perk explained that the schedule is as follows:

- August 16 — UMRBA meeting and EMP-CC partner agency pre-meetings
- August 17 a.m. — EMP-CC meeting
- August 17 p.m. through August 19 a.m. — HREP workshop

The workshop will focus on technical and operational issues and on obtaining input to the HREP design manual. Perk said the target participants are the technical staff in all of the agencies who work on HREPs. EMP-CC members and others will, of course, be welcome to attend. In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Perk said Corps staff are currently working to identify more specific topics and presenters.

Perk briefly summarized the EMP-CC's November 2004 discussion regarding the Corps' proposal for an HREP design manual. He noted that several EMP-CC members recommended a problem/solution format and urged consideration of restoration efforts in other regions. In response to these comments, Corps staff developed a revised design manual outline, which was included in the agenda packet for today's meeting. Charlie Wooley again urged that, as the manual is developed, the Corps draw lessons from its work elsewhere in the country. Wooley specifically cited the lower Missouri River, noting that there is a lot of important work being done there.

It was agreed that EMP-CC members would submit comments on the HREP design manual outline to Perk by March 18. Perk said the Corps will have a full draft of the manual available for discussion at the August HREP workshop, with the goal of producing a final version three to six months thereafter. EMP-CC members will receive copies of the full draft.

Perk explained that the HREP database under development builds on the old format developed during the 1997 Report to Congress. But the new database includes more detailed project information, is GIS-based, includes project performance data and evaluations, and is designed to support a range of user queries. Available query criteria will include pool, watershed, Corps District, legislative district, county, and state. All program partners will be able to access the database. Perk reported that the database is approximately 25 percent complete in terms of data input. A beta test version is scheduled for March 18.

## **Other Business**

John Sullivan expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming HREP workshop. He encouraged the partners to consider a similar workshop on how to use LTRMP data for management decisions, including the data's use in HREP planning and design. Charlie Wooley asked Roger Perk to consider Sullivan's suggestion and report back to the EMP-CC at its May meeting.

Barb Naramore announced that the upcoming quarterly meeting schedule includes EMP-CC meetings on May 26, 2005 in the Twin Cities; August 17, 2005 in the Quad Cities [note change from previously announced date]; and November 17, 2005 in the Twin Cities [note change from previously announced location].

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

**EMP-CC Attendance List  
February 24, 2005**

Charles Barton	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Charlie Wooley	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Linda Leake	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Rick Mollahan	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Mike McGhee	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Tim Schlagenhaft	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Janet Sternburg	Missouri Department of Conservation
Gretchen Benjamin	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Al Fenedick	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Gregg Ruff	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Mike Thompson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Ken Barr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Matt Zager	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Don Powell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Tom Novak	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Tim Yager	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Don Hultman	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuge
Sharonne Baylor	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuge
Rick Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Gary Wege	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pam Thiel	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Tom Kelly	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jeff Houser	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Carol Lowenberg	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Bob Gaugush	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Mike Sullivan	Natural Resources Conservation Service
John Pitlo	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Scot Johnson	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Mike Wells	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
John Sullivan	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Terry Dukerschein	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Barry Drazkowski	St. Mary's University
Dan McGuinness	Audubon
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association