

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

**February 22, 2006
Quarterly Meeting**

**Renaissance Airport Hotel
St. Louis, Missouri**

Charles Barton of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. on February 22, 2006. Other EMP-CC representatives present were Charlie Wooley (USFWS), Mike Jawson (USGS), Rick Mollahan (IL DNR), Martin Konrad (IA DNR), Tim Schlagenhaft (MN DNR), Janet Sternburg (MO DOC), Gretchen Benjamin (WI DNR), and Al Fenedick (USEPA). A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Announcements

Charles Barton announced that Marvin Hubbell has been named as the Corps' new EMP Program Manager. In addition, Martin Konrad and Mike Jawson are the new EMP-CC representatives for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey, respectively.

Minutes of the November 16, 2005 Meeting

Gretchen Benjamin noted that "bathymetry" was misspelled in one location on p. 5 of the draft minutes. Benjamin moved and Janet Sternburg seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the November 16, 2005 meeting, with the spelling correction identified by Benjamin. The motion carried unanimously.

Program Management

FY 06 Implementation Update

Marvin Hubbell apologized for not having had the quarterly spreadsheet available for inclusion in the agenda packet. He distributed copies to the EMP-CC members and other meeting participants. According to Hubbell, the EMP's scheduled expenditures for FY 06 total \$19.835 million. This reflects the \$20.0 million appropriation, less a one percent recision, plus \$35,000 in carryover funds from FY 05. There was no savings and slippage assessment in FY 06.

Through the first quarter of FY 06, obligations totaled \$2.9 million and expenditures were \$2.3 million. Hubbell characterized these as typical rates for this point in the fiscal year. He explained that both obligations and expenditures usually pick up in the second and third quarters, with the seasonal increase in HREP construction activity and transfers to USGS and the states for the LTRMP.

Hubbell reported that Corps staff briefed Assistant Secretary Woodley (ASA CW) regarding the 2004 Report to Congress on December 21, 2005. Secretary Woodley was enthused about the program, describing the EMP as a success story. The Secretary has forwarded the report to the Office of Management and Budget and the Congress.

Hubbell highlighted three major changes in the FY 06 energy and water appropriations bill that are affecting implementation of the EMP:

1. prohibition on initiating new projects — the Corps is interpreting this as applying to projects on which the Corps has not previously expended any funds; projects already in the planning pipeline are being permitted to continue;
2. prohibition on continuing contracts — the Corps is required to fully fund any contracts it lets in FY 06 and to renegotiate existing contracts to eliminate continuation clauses and fully fund any remaining work; and
3. elimination of the savings and slippage assessment.

Due to the prohibition on continuing contracts, the Rock Island and St. Louis Districts have unmet HREP needs estimated at \$841,000 and \$650,000, respectively, in FY 06, for a total of \$1.49 million. According to Hubbell, these costs are related to the Pool 11 Islands, Calhoun Point, and Lake Odessa projects. Hubbell said the total unmet need will be known more precisely in May, after the Corps completes its negotiations with the relevant contractors. In the interim, given the two Districts' need for additional funds, the Corps has allocated \$5.254 million to the LTRMP, rather than the \$6.059 million that would have been allocated this year under the standard HREP/LTRMP ratio. According to Hubbell, this level of LTRMP funding is still sufficient to fund the minimum sustainable program (MSP), some additional MSP items (MSP+), and three tiers of additional program elements (APE) projects, while freeing up \$805,000 for the unmet HREP needs. According to Linda Leake, all field station budgets are being funded as submitted, even without the additional \$805,000.

Janet Sternburg expressed concern with the prospect of reducing the LTRMP allocation to augment HREP funding. She asked whether the estimated unmet HREP needs represent current contractual commitments. Hubbell said the Pool 11 Island and Calhoun Point contracts have been let. Lake Odessa would be a new contract, and Corps staff are attempting to identify a reduced first increment of work that would be reasonable. Hubbell noted that Corps program staff are also considering various alternatives for structuring future contracts, on the assumption that the contracting restrictions will be extended. Roger Perk observed that, in the past, the HREP program has often transferred funds to the LTRMP. The Congressional contracting restrictions represent a significant change for the HREPs, with essentially no time to make the necessary adjustments. He also emphasized that, even with the \$805,000 held back, the LTRMP is still above its target level of funding under the restructuring, due to the elimination of savings and slippage for FY 06.

Tim Schlagenhaft sought clarification on the timing of decisions, noting that he would like an opportunity to explore the implications with Minnesota's field station. Hubbell said there are actually two decision points:

1. The Corps has already decided not to obligate the \$805,000 to the LTRMP.

2. In May, the Corps will know if the actual unmet need for the two Districts is greater or less than the \$1.49 million estimate. At that point, the Corps will make further decisions based on this information. Corps staff will consult with program partners in making those decisions.

Gretchen Benjamin said she was not particularly troubled by the decision not to obligate the \$805,000 to the LTRMP, given the level of funding that remains for MSP and APEs in FY 06 and the fact that the LTRMP has received transfers from the habitat component in past years. However, she expressed concern that we have no way to add any monitoring back into the restructured LTRMP. The assumption is that any additional funding is put toward APEs. Benjamin said the partners need to look for ways to enhance monitoring, stressing that the level of monitoring under the MSP is not sufficient.

In response to a question from Mike Jawson, Rich Worthington said that the Congressional contracting restrictions are likely to extend beyond FY 06. According to Worthington, the Corps' contracting efficiency will be negatively affected if contracts must be fully funded. For example, it might be necessary to carry forward funds from year to year until there is sufficient money to fully fund a project. He characterized this as a significant change in the way the Corps manages its projects and programs, stressing that the implications will take some time to address. Charles Barton said relaxing restrictions on carrying forward money will help in making the necessary adjustments. Worthington noted that prior to these new contracting restrictions, fiscal performance was judged based on total expenditure and obligation rates. Now the emphasis will be on how closely managers' actual expenditures and obligations track their targets. Hubbell said that, as a result, program staff will be reviewing the EMP's progress relative to projections on a monthly basis.

In response to a question from Sternburg, Perk said indefinite delivery contracts may be one means by which the EMP can adapt to the new contracting environment. Hubbell said the Corps will confer with its partners as program staff make necessary adjustments and start to plan for FY 07.

District HREP Reports

Don Powell reported that the St. Paul District can operate within its FY 06 allocation of \$3.91 million. More than half of this amount is already obligated, due largely to the Spring Lake project. Spring Lake will account for approximately one-third of MVP's program this year. Powell said the District has awarded the Pool Slough contract at \$170,000. Iowa will be cost sharing on this project, which is scheduled for completion by December 2006. MVP also plans to award the contract for Long Meadow Lake on the Minnesota Refuge. This approximately \$400,000 HREP would be constructed at 100 percent federal expense. According to Powell, the District will also probably award Pool 8 Islands, Phase III, Stage 1 this year. Costs for that increment are estimated at \$500,000. He explained that breaking the project phases into small stages is one strategy the District is using in response to the new contracting restrictions. He noted that this approach increases total costs by necessitating multiple mobilizations/demobilizations and adding contract administration costs. MVP may also initiate Stage 2A of Pool 8 Phase III this year. Powell added that MVP will not start planning any new projects this year, but will continue planning and design work on projects that have been in planning for the past 2-3 years.

Marvin Hubbell reported that Rice Lake is next in line to start construction in the Rock Island District. Work will likely begin in FY 07. DPR work will continue on Huron Island and Beaver Island. Lake Odessa is currently in design, and a request for proposals was issued in March. Hubbell anticipates contract award in May or June, with summer construction. With respect to HREP evaluation, Hubbell said MVR will be testing some changes to bioresponse monitoring this year.

Brian Markert reported that planning for Ted Shanks and Wilkerson Island would continue this year, but at a reduced level in light of the District's budget constraints. Batchtown Phase III, which is in the design phase, is being restructured to adapt to the new budget and contracting realities. Phase III had been estimated at \$5 million. Calhoun Point Phase II will be in construction this year. Markert also reported that MVS is nearing completion of its three-year Swan Lake HREP evaluation. Other evaluation work is continuing as well.

Acknowledgments

Marvin Hubbell expressed appreciation to Roger Perk for his many contributions over the years as EMP program manager. Hubbell also voiced his thanks for all of Perk's assistance to him personally. Finally, Hubbell thanked Karen Hagerty for her assistance as acting LTRMP coordinator. EMP-CC members echoed Hubbell's appreciation of Perk's valuable contributions.

President's FY 07 Budget Request

Marvin Hubbell reported that the President's FY 07 request for the EMP is \$26.8 million. The EMP is identified as one of six national construction priorities in the Corps' budget. The President requested at least 80 percent of authorized funding for each of these priorities. Hubbell said it is a sign of the overall fiscal constraints that even national priority projects are slated for as little as 80 percent funding under the President's budget. Assuming an appropriation of \$26.8 million, no savings and slippage, and a one percent recision, the EMP allocation would tentatively be as follows:

- Administrative costs — \$525,000
- LTRMP — \$8.166 million
- HREPs — \$17.839 million (MVP \$5.4 M; MVR \$7.1 M; and MVS \$5.4 M)

Hubbell also reported that Corps staff have used the HREP database to develop program fact sheets for each Congressional district. Once the format is approved, these fact sheets will be available to program partners and stakeholders.

Public Outreach

EMP 20th Anniversary

Marvin Hubbell noted that 2006 marks the 20th anniversary of the EMP's authorization. He said the Corps would like input from the partner agencies regarding options for celebrating this milestone. As one possible approach, he said a series of relatively modest activities and events could be planned that would, cumulatively, bring significant attention to the EMP and its

accomplishments. This could be done in combination with integrating the anniversary theme into events that are already planned, such as the International Large Rivers Conference. Hubbell said that some or all of the \$25,000 in the EMP's FY 06 public outreach budget could be put toward anniversary-related activities. He suggested forming a small planning group to help guide the process, if in fact the partners support the celebration idea.

Gretchen Benjamin endorsed the idea of a 20th anniversary focus, describing it as a great opportunity to highlight the EMP's accomplishments as well as the work remaining to be done. She said Wisconsin DNR staff would definitely be willing to participate in developing and executing a celebration plan. Janet Sternburg and Charlie Wooley also voiced support. Wooley noted that the Fish and Wildlife Service recently did something similar with its duck stamp program and found it to be very successful.

Holly Stoerker observed that the states and the UMRBA might be particularly well-positioned to execute certain aspects of a celebration plan that would not be as appropriate for the federal partners. This would include, perhaps, thanking members of Congress and the Administration for their support of the program. She also noted that the UMRBA is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2006 and will be showcasing various activities at its quarterly meetings. The tentative plan is to focus the August meeting on the EMP. She said this might be a good opportunity to coordinate the EMP and UMRBA celebrations.

Benjamin stressed the importance of including a public focus in the overall celebration, rather than limiting it to program insiders and decision makers. Martin Konrad agreed, noting that NGOs and river cities are important players.

Hubbell asked for an indication of who would be willing to serve on an anniversary planning committee. Representatives of the Corps, Service, USGS, Missouri, Wisconsin, and the UMRBA expressed their willingness to have staff on the committee, with the objective of being ready for events during the upcoming warm weather months.

Public Involvement and Program Advocacy

Don Powell reported that the St. Paul District issued a press release when it awarded the Pool Slough contract. MVP also provided an EMP display for a special multi-agency public outreach event in January at the Mall of America in the Twin Cities. Powell thanked Fish and Wildlife Service staff for providing informational signs for display at HREP construction sites. He noted that the Service also frequently develops more permanent informational kiosks at completed projects. Gretchen Benjamin reported that Wisconsin DNR will be helping to host a barge tour for 25 international/national participants in the International Large Rivers Conference, which is scheduled for June 2006 in La Crosse.

Long Term Resource Monitoring Program

FY 06 Scope of Work

Mike Jawson thanked members of the USGS and Corps staff for their considerable efforts in completing the FY 06 LTRMP scope of work (SOW). He noted that the \$5.41 million SOW includes \$3.708 million for the MSP, \$634,000 for MSP+ items, and \$1.067 million for APEs.

This SOW is being funded by the \$5.254 million FY 06 LTRMP allocation, plus approximately \$156,000 in carryover from a couple of the field stations. The MSP elements include fisheries, water quality, and aquatic vegetation monitoring; analysis and reporting; statistical evaluation; data management; GIS support; and bathymetry support. The MSP+ items include data visualization tools, additional bathymetry, the Status and Trends Report, glide path support, APE program management; and LTRMP equipment refreshment. The FY 06 APEs include 15 discrete projects.

LTRMP Product Status Update

Mike Jawson summarized the LTRMP's first quarter product highlights for FY 06, including acceptance of a manuscript for publication, installation of the HNA Query Tool at the field stations, completion of a report assessing the possibility of a web-based Query Tool, web posting of 2005 vegetation data, and presentations at four meetings.

Jawson said USGS and the Corps have agreed that ensuring the quality and utility of the pending Status and Trends Report is more important than adhering to a strict deadline. Analysis, synthesis, and information dissemination will be key functions of the report. According to Jawson, the current schedule calls for a draft report to be available for A-Team and EMP-CC review on March 1, with comments due on April 1 and the draft to be submitted for editorial review on May 1. The remainder of the schedule through publication remains to be determined.

In response to a question from Chuck Theiling, Jawson confirmed that the completed Status and Trends Report will not be available during this summer's 20th anniversary events. However, he went on to explain that key information, conclusions, and other highlights may be released prior to the full report's publication. As an example of such a finding, Jawson said that, on some sections of the river, 70 percent of the fish biomass is comprised of exotic species.

MSP in FY 07

Currently, EMAP funding from U.S. EPA helps support some staff capacity that is also used to execute the MSP. The future for EMAP in FY 07 and beyond is uncertain. However, Jawson stressed that the LTRMP will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with EMAP.

Each LTRMP partner agency has been asked to develop a five-year plan for equipment refreshment, with the plans covering FY 07 to 11. The annual refreshment target is one percent of MSP funding. Jawson explained that equipment refreshment in FY 06 exceeded this one percent figure because there were carryover funds available.

In May, the Corps will have a firm estimate of its unmet HREP needs, at which point it will be known whether any of the \$805,000 in holdback funds will be made available to the LTRMP. However, Jawson explained that, by May, it will be too late in the fiscal year to use any additional funds to execute LTRMP projects. Instead, USGS is working with the states to develop a flexible list of equipment purchases that would enhance program performance in future years. Examples might include survival suits and total nitrogen and phosphorus analyzers. Jawson encouraged all partners to submit ideas for additional items.

FY 06 APE Update/FY 07 APE Process

Jawson reported that agency staff submitted more than 50 APE proposals for FY 06. Ultimately, 15 APE projects were selected for funding. Participants expressed two principal frustrations with the process for FY 06:

1. After the initial call for proposals, there was a second call specifically soliciting additional proposals focusing on Corps priorities.
2. There was no comprehensive guidance on priority focus areas or themes for APE projects.

USGS is currently working with the Corps, A-Team, and field stations to identify themes for FY 07, with the goal of better targeting project proposals to priority information needs. According to Jawson, the timeline for FY 07 APE project development and selection includes the following:

- March = call for proposals
- April = proposals due; A-Team reviews and makes recommendations
- May = USGS and COE review A-Team recommendations and update EMP-CC
- June = proposals selected and study plan reviewers solicited
- July = study plan reviews due
- August = USGS completes reviews and coordinates with principal investigators
- September = final study plans due; USGS makes recommendation to COE
- FY 07 budget received = final selection of APEs

Ken Lubinski observed that delays in the appropriations process frequently mean the actual budget is not known until well into the fiscal year. This leaves less than 12 months to complete APE projects, potentially undermining the projects, which would already be quite constrained even with a full 12 months. Jawson acknowledged this difficulty, along with the related constraint imposed by the requirement for one-year products for all APEs. He said this makes in-depth work difficult and urged partners to think creatively about useful interim products that could build logically as part of a longer term effort. Marvin Hubbell noted that changes in the way the Corps views carryover money under its revised budgeting guidance may offer new options for addressing these challenges.

Martin Konrad observed that the MSP and APEs appear to compete for funding. He asked whether the partners were satisfied with the MSP. Hubbell acknowledged that there are different levels of satisfaction among the partnership. He explained that the MSP was devised to provide a level of stability for the monitoring effort over a period of five years. While many people would have preferred a larger MSP, it was set at the maximum possible size given assumptions about inflation — i.e., at the end of the five years, there will be no APE money.

Konrad said that \$1 million seems high for APEs in FY 06 and asked whether more monitoring could be done. Hubbell said expanding monitoring is problematic because there is no guarantee that increased funding in one year will be sustained the following year. Jawson noted that the restructured program also reflects a fundamental philosophical position regarding the need for balance between data collection and evaluation. He said merely collecting more data without the capacity to analyze it is not productive. The APEs provide the opportunity for analysis and evaluation. Roger Perk concurred, recalling that the partner agencies made a conscious decision

that the LTRMP needed to do analysis and research. Prior to the LTRMP restructuring and the introduction of the MSP and APEs, monitoring had squeezed research and analysis out of the program almost entirely.

A-Team Report

Rob Maher distributed a written A-Team report. In their January conference call, A-Team members endorsed the idea of establishing themes to guide APE proposal development for FY 07. Maher said early indications are that there is already some commonality among the states regarding thematic priorities.

Regarding the earlier discussion about the MSP, Maher explained that none of the A-Team members are happy with the MSP from a biological perspective. The MSP under the restructured program reflects a budget-driven approach, rather than members' judgment about what would be truly adequate. From a biological perspective, Maher said the A-Team views the FY 02 sampling program as having been adequate. According to Maher, the A-Team will devote a portion of its April meeting to developing a contingency sampling plan should additional monitoring money be available in FY 07. He acknowledged the difficulty of enhancing monitoring given budget uncertainties and the LTRMP's other obligations.

Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects

Marvin Hubbell reported that the Corps accepted partner comments on the HREP Design Handbook through January. MVR staff are now working on revisions to incorporate those comments. Roger Perk said any final comments are needed immediately. The target is to release the handbook in April or May 2006.

Hubbell explained that work on the HREP database was delayed because a key staffer was diverted to hurricane duty. That person has now returned and is working to convert the HREP data from Access to a GIS environment. In response to a question from Mike Jawson, Hubbell said the goal remains to make the database accessible to program partners via the Internet. However, that goal has not yet been achieved. He also noted that, as evaluation data become available for various projects, that information will be added to the database. Because the type and level of evaluation varies widely among projects, the database will not be able to furnish the same type of evaluation information for all HREPs.

Hubbell reported that the System Ecological Team's (SET's) evaluation and sequencing document was revised subsequent to the November 2005 EMP-CC meeting at which it was presented. Of note, the project scoring approach was eliminated in favor of a criteria checklist. Hubbell stressed that the Corps views the revised document as a working draft. The SET will test the current version this spring, using HREP proposals from all three districts. Hubbell said the evaluation and sequencing document will then be revised further as necessary based on that experience. Tim Schlagenhaft expressed confusion regarding the process and the relationship between the SET and the Science Panel. He noted that the Pool 5 planning team had not been informed of the shift to a checklist approach and thus has not adjusted its work accordingly. Hubbell acknowledged that all of the necessary communications have not yet taken place. But he said the Corps will ensure that the district ecological teams and pool planning teams are kept in the loop as the SET refines its approach.

EMP/NESP Merger

Merger Issue Papers

Barb Naramore reported that the UMRBA is continuing to develop a series of issue papers to help guide strategic planning for merging the EMP and NESP legislative authorities. At yesterday's EMP-CC and NECC/ECC joint meeting, new issue papers were presented on the following topics:

- Cost sharing for ecosystem restoration — paper concludes that NESP's cost sharing provisions should be preferred because they support a broader range of projects and would help address some of the limitations partners have encountered with the EMP.
- Funding framework and total cost — paper identifies three options with regard to funding frameworks [i.e., 1) retain the EMP's annual authorization and NESP's total cost authorization, 2) shift the EMP to a total cost authorization, or 3) modify the NESP legislation to authorize annual funding for the first increment of ecosystem restoration measures]; with regard to total cost, the paper also identifies three options [i.e., 1) maintain authorization for the combined cost of the current EMP and proposed NESP, 2) add funding to NESP for costs related to long term monitoring, or 3) do not seek to retain any portion of the EMP's current funding authority].
- Partnership language and funding transfers — the EMP includes specific language on these issues and the proposed NESP legislation does not include parallel provisions; the UMRBA paper identifies three options, the first two of which are not mutually exclusive [i.e., 1) amend NESP to require consultation, similar to the EMP; 2) amend NESP to authorize funding transfers via interagency agreements and/or cooperative agreements; or 3) do not modify the NESP legislation and rely instead on generally applicable laws and regulations to govern partnerships and funding transfers under NESP].

Gretchen Benjamin expressed her full support for the conclusion of the cost sharing paper. Regarding the partnership and funding transfer issue, Benjamin said Wisconsin would strongly prefer to see legislative language for NESP addressing both of these elements. She noted that the EMP partnership is extremely important to Wisconsin agencies and members of the public and emphasized their expectation that NESP will be implemented using a similar partnership approach. She also observed that the funding transfer authority can greatly facilitate implementation and program efficiency. Concerning the funding framework, Benjamin expressed a preference for shifting the EMP to a total cost authorization if possible. On the subject of total cost, she said retaining funding authorization for long term monitoring is Wisconsin's top priority and said elimination of the entire EMP funding authority would be extremely disappointing.

Martin Konrad expressed concern at the prospect of the managing agency being responsible for O&M under NESP. He said it is unlikely that Iowa would be able to assume this responsibility. Charlie Wooley noted that, over the past several years, the Service has voiced concern with its cumulative O&M burden under the EMP and, prospectively, under NESP. Wooley said this will be an increasing problem for his agency. Konrad explained that responsibility in perpetuity, if there is an indefinite project life expectancy, is a particular problem. If there is the opportunity for new federal work to refresh a project, then assuming O&M responsibility might be less of an issue.

Roger Perk cautioned that partner unwillingness to assume O&M would be a show stopper for the Corps of Engineers. He said the Corps cannot and will not O&M ecosystem restoration projects, except where it is the managing entity. Holly Stoerker recalled that, during the evaluation of the NESP ecosystem restoration alternatives, the states specifically asked to have the O&M costs estimated because they recognized O&M as an important issue. Naramore noted that each of the states' resource/conservation agencies provided a letter stating its support for the Feasibility Study's proposed approach to cost sharing. In those letters, the states expressed a conceptual willingness to share some first costs under specific circumstances and to assume O&M for projects on lands they manage. While those letters did not, of course, make specific fiscal commitments, they were an important expression of the states' general willingness to participate as cost share partners in NESP.

Janet Sternburg observed that, under the EMP, cost sharing requirements have tended to drive projects to refuge lands. Under NESP, Sternburg anticipates that cost sharing requirements will influence project design, with an effort to make projects less O&M intensive. As an example, she noted that the big wetlands management units, with their pumps and other equipment, are very expensive to maintain. Sternburg expects to see fewer such projects under NESP.

Sternburg suggested that adding NESP language to authorize funding transfers would help the Corps work with the states and other partner agencies to ensure that the necessary work can be accomplished. For example, she said state staff could conduct field surveys and similar work. However, going through a competitive bidding process is too cumbersome for such relatively small increments of work, according to Sternburg. Thus, any language that would help streamline transfers would certainly enhance program implementation.

Wooley said the Service is interested in revisiting the question of 100 percent federal funding for HREPs that benefit threatened and endangered (T&E) species. He noted that there are several potential projects on the river system that would provide significant T&E benefits. Sternburg added that, if NESP is not authorized, T&E benefits are the only hook for important projects on the Middle Mississippi, where there is little federal land.

Ken Lubinski asked what the partners envision as far as a transition process for integrating the two programs. Stoerker said the partners are currently in the midst of trying to address practical aspects of the transition, such as how the Science Panel and the SET relate, whether a particular project should be pursued under the EMP or NESP, etc. However, there is another set of legislative questions that will have to be addressed with Congress. According to Stoerker, it is those questions that the issue papers are designed to address. By stimulating discussion among the partnership, the papers are intended to inform the states' thinking on these issues. That thinking will then form the basis of positions that the UMRBA may advocate to Congress.

Also in answer to Lubinski's question, Hubbell said that, from an operational standpoint, the Corps is looking for opportunities for the two programs to support and learn from each other. Whatever ultimately happens with program authorization and funding, Hubbell said we will have improved our overall capability on the UMRS by seeking to integrate the EMP and NESP.

In answer to a question from Tim Schlagenhaft, Perk said the NESP ramp-up figures presented at yesterday's joint meeting do not reflect any assumptions about the EMP as a separate or integrated

authority. Naramore recalled that Chuck Spitzack described the ramp-up numbers as simply being a capability analysis — i.e., what the Corps could execute under NESP.

Sternburg asked whether the issue papers would be modified based on input received. Stoerker said there are no immediate plans to revise the papers, explaining that they are intended to stimulate discussion. At this point, there is no particular need to try to perfect them. She went on to explain that, as the states determine what position, if any, they want to take on a particular issue, then staff will likely use the relevant issue paper as a starting place in formulating a more targeted explanation of the states' position. Sternburg asked about the UMRBA's timeframe in addressing the issues. Stoerker said the remaining four issues will be addressed at the May meetings. The August meeting will likely be the one at which the UMRBA then considers draft recommendations concerning the issues. However, she emphasized that it is not yet clear how this approach might mesh with the Congressional schedule. It is possible that the UMRBA may need to take some positions sooner, or that there will be no action on WRDA until after the 110th Congress convenes in January 2007.

Applying Ecosystem Goals and Objectives to the EMP

Marvin Hubbell suggested deferring discussion of the ecosystem goals and objectives, given that Chuck Spitzack and other NESP staff were unable to be present. He observed that a good case has been made on the value of goals and objectives for the UMRS. However, he also noted that the Science Panel's goals and objectives have been somewhat differently described at various points. Hubbell said he initially understood them to be intended to apply systemically, without regard to particular programs. But, at this morning's joint session of the EMP-CC and NECC/ECC, Hubbell said Spitzack seemed to be focusing primarily on the goals and objectives' applicability to NESP.

Roger Perk advocated continuing the discussion, with particular consideration of implications for the EMP — i.e., are there impediments or elements in the Science Panel's draft goals and objectives that would require modifying the EMP's focus? Perk said his own opinion is that there is nothing in the goals and objectives that is inconsistent with the EMP's current focus.

Tim Schlagenhaft said there are definitely elements of the goals and objectives that cannot be addressed through the EMP. If NESP is not authorized and those aspects of the goals and objectives are important, then Schlagenhaft said the partnership should consider whether the EMP needs to be modified so that it can address those elements.

John Barko emphasized the Science Panel's perspective that these are ecological goals and objectives for the system, not goals and objectives for any particular program. He also observed that the specific objectives are virtually guaranteed to change during the course of implementation. Given this, primary consideration at this point should be given to whether the higher level goals are acceptable.

Gretchen Benjamin noted that the water quality objectives fall largely within the purview of state water programs. She stressed the need to think carefully about the various objectives and who is empowered to implement them. Holly Stoerker agreed, observing that the state water quality programs have not been involved in development of these goals and objectives.

Janet Sternburg expressed her expectation that NESP will address many of the goals and objectives, other programs will fit in where they can, and some aspects will remain unaddressed. She said the River Council will be an important mechanism for broadening collaboration on the goals and objectives. While her initial inclination was to seek elimination of some of the more far-reaching goals and objectives, Sternburg said she is now comfortable with them as an articulation of what is needed for the system. Various programs will simply fit in where they are able and needed. Barko said Sternburg has captured the Science Panel's intent quite well. The Panel members discussed their options extensively and ultimately concluded that they should articulate the full spectrum of ecological needs, rather than attempting to fit the goals and objectives within a particular program box.

Perk observed there is a mix of things happening right now. The project design teams (PDTs) need immediate focus. Rather than initially trying to address the full range of objectives, Perk said it would be reasonable for these groups first to focus on those objectives that can be addressed through the EMP and NESP. Work on some of the broader objectives, such as those related to water quality, could be deferred until there is a functioning River Council.

Al Fenedick observed that EPA will only actively engage in those aspects of the goals and objectives that relate to its authorities. He also stressed the need for the Corps to clarify the process for endorsing the vision, goals, and objectives and to clarify what it means for an agency or a group to make that endorsement — i.e., what expectations ensue, etc.

Bob Clevenstine urged the EMP-CC members not to get overly focused on implementation issues related to the goals and objectives. At this point, the focus is simply on ratifying a working set of goals and objectives. Mike Jawson expressed his expectation that the goals and objectives will have the flexibility to change as the partnership gains experience. He cautioned partners not to get too worried about perfecting the document, warning that this could come at the expense of getting started and learning from experience.

Chuck Theiling agreed, but stressed that the goals and objectives cannot be too malleable either. He stressed the need for continuity and predictability. Theiling also reminded the partners that no project is expected to meet all 46 objectives. Some projects will be quite narrowly targeted, while others will be broader in scope. The decision support system will be the key tool to making the goals and objectives, measures, indicators, etc. manageable when working on a particular project.

Other Business

Highlights for Staff Report to UMRBA

Holly Stoerker said the staff report to the UMRBA members would highlight the following:

- the President's FY 07 budget request for the EMP,
- the EMP-CC's discussion of the EMP/NESP merger issue papers, and
- the possible coordination of EMP 20th anniversary and UMRBA 25th anniversary activities at the August meetings.

Future Meetings

Barb Naramore announced that future meetings of the EMP-CC will be held as part of the NECC/ECC, EMP-CC, UMRBA meeting series on May 16-18, 2006 in Rock Island; Illinois; August 22-24, 2006 in La Crosse, Wisconsin; and November 14-16, 2006 in St. Paul, Minnesota. EMP-CC members offered a variety of perspectives regarding the value of planning additional joint meetings for the EMP-CC and NECC/ECC. At Naramore's suggestion, it was agreed to defer decisions on the joint meetings, allowing UMRBA and Corps staff to confer and make that determination closer to the actual meeting dates.

John Barko said the Science Panel would welcome partners' thoughts on ecological goods and services. He suggested that this would be a good agenda topic for a joint meeting in May.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

EMP-CC Attendance List
February 22, 2006

EMP-CC Members

Charles Barton	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Charlie Wooley	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Mike Jawson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Al Fenedick	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Rick Mollahan	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Martin Konrad	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

Others in Attendance

Rich Worthington	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, HQ
Susan Smith	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
John Barko	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, R&D, Vicksburg
Mike Thompson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kathy Kornberger	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
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
Chuck Theiling	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Terry Birkenstock	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Don Powell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Rebecca Soileau	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Kevin Bluhm	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Larry Shepard	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
Bob Clevenstine	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island Field Office
Dick Steinbach	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Joyce Collins	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Karen Westphall	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Linda Leake	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Rob Maher	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Mike Steuck	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Mike Sullivan	U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS
Catherine McCalvin	The Nature Conservancy
Todd Strole	The Nature Conservancy
Ken Lubinski	U.S. Geological Survey/The Nature Conservancy
Mark Beorkrem	Mississippi River Basin Alliance
T. Kevin O'Donnell	University of Missouri
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association