

**Minutes of the
Upper Mississippi River System
Navigation Environmental Coordination Committee —
Economics Coordinating Committee**

**February 19, 2009
Quarterly Meeting**

**Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel
St. Louis, Missouri**

Ken Barr of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. on February 19, 2009. A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Announcements

Ken Barr announced that Elizabeth Ivy has replaced Terry Smith as MVD's Program Manager on the Rock Island District Support Team. Ivy will thus serve as the Divisions key coordination contact for regional programs managed out of Rock Island, including NESP and EMP. Barr also reported that Rich Worthington has retired from Corps Headquarters.

Barr announced that UMRBA will begin providing support services to NECC, under a contract with the Corps, starting with this quarterly meeting series. Barb Naramore encouraged members to contact her or Kirsten Mickelsen with any questions or suggestions for ways in which UMRBA can better serve partners' needs.

Minutes from the November 19, 2008 Meeting

Gretchen Benjamin requested that the following correction be made to the draft minutes of the November 19, 2008 meeting:

- In the Partner Reports section on page A-9, Benjamin's comment should read "During the last week in October, a donor provided funds to talk about Mississippi River issues on a system wide scale. Will work on vision and how to move forward within the 10 states in the next 10 years. TNC had about 45 employees at the conference. General Walsh came to speak to the group about Corps priorities for the Mississippi River."

Janet Sternburg requested that the third-to-last sentence in the first full paragraph on page A-7 be modified to read, "Some of the group expressed concern...." Sternburg also questioned the reference on p. A-6 to the presence of northern snakehead in the UMRB. Ken Barr said he would ask Mark Cornish to look into this question.

Funding Status

Chuck Spitzack reported that NESP is on track to spend two-thirds of the \$3 million appropriated under the FY 09 Continuing Resolution Authority (CRA), which expires on March 6. Spitzack said the impacts of the stimulus package and anticipated FY 09 omnibus bill on NESP's budget for the balance of FY 09 are unclear. However, the stimulus measure's prohibition on new starts will preclude the use of stimulus funding to initiate construction under NESP. [Note: The omnibus bill was subsequently enacted on March 11 and contains \$8.604 million for NESP.] Spitzack said that the budget outlook for

NESP in FY 10 is also uncertain. He noted that the President is expected to release a detailed budget request in mid-April.

Visions, Goals, and Guiding Principles

Chuck Spitzack reported that consideration of human uses is addressed as a guiding principle in the final draft Visions, Goals, and Guiding Principles for Management of the UMRS, rather than as a goal. Spitzack explained that the Corps has started to use the vision, goals, and principles to focus its outreach efforts. While noting that they can be revisited in the future, Spitzack said he would like to conclude work on the statement for the time being. Gretchen Benjamin expressed enthusiasm for the statement, saying that the vision, goals, and principles hit the mark from her perspective. Benjamin moved and Janet Sternburg seconded a motion to endorse the final draft as presented in the agenda packet. The motion passed unanimously.

UMRS Outreach Team

Chuck Spitzack said that the UMRS Outreach Team consists of representatives from the three UMR districts and MVD, as well as the Memphis and Vicksburg districts. Spitzack said that the Team has developed a conceptual plan for system-level, cross-programmatic outreach on the UMRS and has conducted internal sensing sessions. The Team has also identified the following next steps: engage partners, identify outreach themes, and link current outreach activities.

Pat McGinnis reported that the UMRS Outreach Team recommends a consistent message be developed that is program neutral and gives local communities and visitors a sense of the ecological, economic, and recreational value of the Mississippi River. McGinnis said that outreach can build from current communications messages and programs, such as NESP, which can be used to highlight the watershed's commitment to enhancing the river's health and well-being of the local communities. He stressed the importance of engaging the public in a conversation about water and the entire system's function and value, rather than simply reaching out with project-specific messages and information. McGinnis suggested that existing refuges, regional offices, and other visitor and recreation centers be used to reach the public. As an example, he said facilities at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers can serve as an outreach "hub" for that portion of the river. McGinnis highlighted the following sites as potential outreach partners in the confluence area:

- The National Great Rivers Museum — includes the adjacent Melvin Price Locks and Dam, a multipurpose classroom, a theater, galleries, interactive displays, and a bookstore. In FY 08, the museum had 77,429 visitors.
- Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary.
- MVS's River Project Office — includes a class C visitor center and an environmental learning center.

McGinnis also noted the various natural and cultural heritage events and programs taking place on the UMRS that promote system comprehension and water awareness. He emphasized the importance of reaching out to tourism-based organizations as an opportunity to raise awareness and appreciation for the river's scenic, recreational, cultural, and ecological values in a very tangible way.

McGinnis said that the Team and its partners will begin to develop a strategic plan to communicate with the public about who we are, what we want to do, and where we want to be in the future. He said that the pace of work on outreach for the balance of FY 09 will be determined, in part, by the level of NESP funding in the omnibus measure. McGinnis encouraged NECC members to make public outreach a

priority. Spitzack reported that the Corps' internal sensing sessions are wrapping up, and said the Corps is now seeking feedback on how best to reach out to the partnership.

Martin Konrad asked if now is the best time to discuss the potential name change for NESP before communicating these broad messages to the public. McGinnis said programs and their fortunes are subject to change, and thus recommended focusing messages on the river instead of specific programs. Spitzack said that the question of NESP's name has not yet been resolved. For now, the Corps is simply downplaying use of the name while the naming question is considered. Bernie Hoyer referred to the Dubuque Museum's use of "America's River," and asked about the name's origins and if it is generally accepted. McGinnis said he has reservations with the label, including the fact that it might be viewed as an attempt to diminish the importance of other rivers and that it does not make a connection between the river and its watershed. He did note, however, that the tourism industry generally recognizes the Mississippi River as an iconic destination in the central part of the country, along with the Great Lakes.

Mike Jawson asked for clarification on whether the outreach would be centered at L&D 26 or would be equally spread out along the Mississippi River. Spitzack explained that L&D 26 was used to illustrate potential, but the goal is to develop an outreach strategy for the entire system. Christine Favilla highlighted the importance of including the Illinois River in outreach messages. Spitzack acknowledged Favilla's comment, and also said the effort will be coordinated with the LMR districts as well.

McGinnis asked what locations on the UMR would offer the best opportunities for outreach. Janet Sternburg suggested coordinating outreach efforts on a Corps district level, noting that this would reduce travel burdens and engage people at a geographic level that is familiar to many of them. Vince Shay suggested using the McKnight Foundation's restoration collaborative as a venue to engage multiple NGO partners. McGinnis agreed with Shay's suggestion, and said the UMRS Outreach Team can aid in finding synergies between NGOs and agencies.

Paul Rhode said the key to NESP's future is Congressional funding. As such, he stressed the need for consistent branding and a solid program identity. He noted that members of Congress and their staff people are already familiar with the "NESP" name, and cautioned that name changes could detract from efforts to build energy and support for the program.

Barb Naramore said that if the outreach plan calls for a river-focused, multi-program effort, then it should be implemented primarily at the district level in order to reach the full spectrum of stakeholders and engage the relevant programs and agencies. She observed that many key participants, including local communities, simply are not represented on system-level groups like NECC. McGinnis said that outreach efforts are ongoing in the field, but the challenge lies in making the various messages cohesive along the UMR. Bryan Hopkins said there is a successful, program-neutral web site for recreational paddlers on the Missouri River that is widely used by both local citizens and visitors. He encouraged the Outreach Team to consider developing a similar website for the Mississippi River.

Tim Schlagenhaft asked what the Outreach Team's next step will be. Spitzack said the Team has distributed a draft conceptual plan to Corps managers. Once that review is completed, the conceptual plan will be shared with partner agencies and stakeholders and, following their review, the public.

Advisory Panel Status

Elizabeth Ivy reviewed the NESP authorizing language in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which directs Secretary of the Army to convene an Advisory Panel for the purpose of 1) providing independent guidance on development of the required implementation reports and

2) consulting on the ranking system for restoration projects. She explained that subsequent implementation guidance from ASA(CW) called on the Corps to make recommendations regarding establishment of the Advisory Panel (AP), including the AP's roles and responsibilities, how it will function in coordination with the ASA(CW), and how it will be funded. Ivy further explained that "independent guidance" in the development of implementation reports is being interpreted as meaning independent from USACE, but does not mean that the AP members cannot be involved in the planning, evaluation, and implementation of the ecosystem restoration plan.

Ivy reported that General Walsh submitted his AP recommendations to the MVD Regional Integration Team (RIT) at Corps Headquarters on February 11, 2009. After review by RIT MVD, Ivy said she anticipates that the proposal will be submitted to ASA(CW) in about one to two months. Highlights of the General's recommendations include the following:

- The Secretary of the Army retains the authority to appoint and convene the AP.
- The MVD Commander chairs the AP, and serves as the Secretary of the Army's representative.
- Federal agency members should be at the regional director level or higher, and the state agency members should be at the department director level or higher.
- The AP would convene annually, at least for the first few years, and would be required to meet at least once every four years in conjunction with the NESP Report to Congress (RTC) cycle.
- Every four years, the AP would consider hosting a river forum to facilitate discussions between national and regional leaders, river managers, river technical specialists, and the public on integrated, sustainable management of the UMRS, which could coincide with the cyclically-required RTC.
- The AP may form working group(s) to accomplish specified responsibilities or coordination necessary for successful implementation of the program.

Ivy explained the General's intent behind elevating the level of representation on the AP relative to the partners' August 2008 proposal, citing the desire to have AP members who can make decisions and commit resources during the panel's deliberations. Ivy also noted that travel, staffing, and other costs of participation are expected to be absorbed by each of the members' respective offices. She emphasized that the proposal is subject to change as it undergoes higher level review. Upon approval by the ASA(CW), the AP directive would be given to the NESP Program Manager for implementation.

Janet Sternburg reiterated the concerns she has expressed previously regarding seeking higher level participants for the AP. She explained that it will be difficult to get state agency directors to such meetings, particularly if they are held as frequently as four times per year, as one section of General Walsh's proposal suggests. Moreover, Sternburg observed that agency directors and their federal equivalents would have to be very heavily staffed in order to participate effectively at the panel's meetings, increasing the total burden of AP participation, relative to the working level group recommended by the NESP partners. Sternburg stressed the importance of notifying the states when the ASA(CW) sends invitations to the Governors

Tim Schlagenhaft observed that the General's revisions to the partnership's AP proposal could introduce significant delay in standing up the panel. In the interim, Schlagenhaft said work is needed on important technical issues, such as the project prioritization and ranking system. Ken Barr acknowledged the need to make progress on such issues, and suggested including project prioritization and ranking as an agenda topic in May.

Joyce Collins asked if a process has been selected for identifying landowner representatives, as well as their term limits. She noted the inherent difficulty of identifying one landowner given the large area and diverse interests among landowners within the UMRS. Barr said the Corps proposes the use of a modified version of a process used on the Missouri River to solicit NGO interest. Barr said that government organizations identified in the authorization will be permanent members of the AP. Half of the non-government members will be initially appointed for four years, and the other half for six years. Subsequently, four-year term appointments will be made for all non-governmental groups. In response to a question from Brad Walker, Ivy said that the Interagency Levee Task Force (ILTF) might serve as a good example of an elevated group with a similar structure and operation as the proposed AP.

Jim Fischer stressed that an elevated AP such as that recommended by General Walsh would definitely need to be supported by a strong, interagency working group in order to address NESP's coordination and implementation needs. Christine Favilla noted that the revised AP proposal does not include several of the functions envisioned in the partnership's proposal and asked who would be responsible for performing these functions. Spitzack said such functions would be most appropriately tasked to a working group. He noted that General Walsh rejected the idea of establishing a working group prior to the AP's first meeting, electing instead to wait until the AP convenes and determines what, if any, working groups it wishes to have.

David Conrad said he sees something of a mis-match between the jobs high-level agency leaders perform and the functions detailed in General Walsh's AP proposal. He said it will be important for the AP to delegate authority if NESP is to function effectively. Bill Franz acknowledged the difficulty associated with getting higher-level directors at the meetings, and said that representation will likely be delegated. He said it is unlikely an EPA Regional Administrator would participate in even one AP meeting per year. He also questioned the relevance of the ILTF as a model, noting that most agencies have delegated their participation down and the group does not seem to be making decisions.

Ivy clarified that the reference to AP meetings more than once per year was an unintended holdover from the partnership's proposal. She said MVD does not anticipate that the AP would meet more than once annually. She stressed that the higher level representation would help get recognition and funding for NESP. Franz observed that the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG) is comprised of federal agency regional directors, but that it does not accomplish much in terms of bringing resources or attention to the region.

Brad Walker said that NGOs were looking forward to participating in the AP, as it was outlined in the partnership's proposal. However, he said the prospect of meeting annually, or less often, significantly limits the opportunity for involvement. Barr said that NGO involvement would also be anticipated in any technical working groups. Spitzack added that a high level of representation has always been sought in some fashion, but that this is just a more formalized approach than previously envisioned.

Tim Schlagenhaft asked if there could be an opportunity to meet with General Walsh to discuss the need for including a technical working group element in his recommendation. Spitzack said that Corps staff will relay the partners' feedback to General Walsh.

Jon Duyvejonck said that it might cause confusion if the AP met as a part of the quarterly meeting series since the same topics would be discussed at the other meetings. Conrad recognized the value that higher level decision makers could provide on the AP, but suggested thinking carefully about what specific roles they could effectively play.

Implementation Report to Congress

Chuck Spitzack reported that the Corps has contracted with Dan McGuinness and Associates and URS to develop the Implementation Report to Congress (IRTC) that is due in June 2009 from NESP's ecosystem restoration component. Dan McGuinness said he hopes the IRTC will portray the UMR as a nationally significant resource, both economically and environmentally; demonstrate the need for and value of investing resources in the UMR; and highlight the on-the-ground work to restore natural features and functions of a large floodplain ecosystem. He also expressed hope that the process of developing the report would help build NESP's constituencies. McGuinness said he envisions the report will be similar in style to the 2004 EMP RTC, with full color, graphics, charts, and tables. Multiple distribution media and formats are possible.

To the extent possible, McGuinness said the report will be program neutral and focus on the overall need for appropriations to support programs on the UMR. McGuinness suggested that the report may be an opportune place to introduce a new name for NESP. He also encouraged NECC partners and stakeholders to contact him with input regarding the report.

McGuinness presented a draft outline for the report, as follows:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction — An overview of the report's purpose, a short description of each chapter, and links to key support material on the web or elsewhere.
- Program Description — How NESP is being designed and implemented to 1) manage the river for both navigation and ecosystem values and objectives; 2) improve system ecological health by mimicking and restoring natural features and functions of a large floodplain river; and 3) use a multi-scale approach to planning and project selection and implementation.
- Summary of Progress — A summary of active restoration projects, and, if available, a summary of newly identified and ranked restoration projects.
- Implementation Challenges and Opportunities — Discussion of any outstanding issues related to EMP/NESP relationship, relationship to LTRMP, comparable progress as defined in WRDA 2007, funding, and any other implementation issues drawn from stakeholder meetings and comments.
- Conclusions and Recommendations
- Attachments/Appendices

McGuinness asked NECC members and others to provide him with any information for potential use in the report by February 27, 2009. He outlined the following schedule for the remainder of the report process:

- March 6 — draft report to USACE staff
- April 1 — draft report for stakeholder review
- May 20 — present revised report to NECC
- June 15 — final report to USACE
- June 30 — statutory deadline for submitting ITRC to Congress

Due to the difficulty of emailing large files, Gretchen Benjamin suggested using a knowledge tree or other online way of providing NECC members and stakeholders with access to review drafts. Ken Barr said Corps staff would look into options for providing access, and suggested that the Corps' existing FTP site might be the most expedient alternative. David Conrad requested that a site be developed as soon as possible for easy access to the draft report and other relevant documents. [Subsequent to the meeting, the Corps posted the review draft on MVR's FTP site, at <ftp://ftp.usace.army.mil/pub/mvr/>.]

Benjamin asked how gaps, such as the lack of fully developed restoration objectives for some reaches, will be addressed in the report. McGuinness acknowledged that there will be some information gaps, which will present a challenge in developing the report. In such instances, McGuinness said it may simply not be possible to present information at a comparable level of detail, and this will be explained in the report. Jon Duyvejonck said he hopes the report will serve as a blueprint for implementation. He acknowledged that it will be difficult to maintain a positive tone while explaining the need to move forward and prepare for EMP/NESP integration. McGuinness said that the report can describe the UMRS's restoration needs relatively readily, and agreed that the bigger challenge will come in talking about what this means in terms of programs and appropriations. Barr added that an EMP/NESP transition plan will not be available by the time the IRTC is submitted, so the report will identify some of the transition issues and questions without making a definitive recommendation. In response to a question from Brad Walker, Barr said the IRTC will focus exclusively on ecosystem restoration, per the NESP authorizing language.

Bernie Schonhoff asked if insights from recent studies and reports, including research done by Jack Killgore, will be included in the report. Barr said research and other insights gained will be important to incorporate into the adaptive management discussion within the report.

Report Out on the Navigation Coordination Group

Chuck Spitzack reported that an initial Navigation Coordination Group meeting was held on February 17, 2009. He summarized the meeting topics, which included the status of NESP navigation projects; implementation funding scenarios; 1,200-foot lock design and construction methods, quality management, and impacts during construction; future communication with the navigation industry; and potential Navigation Coordination Team charter, structure, and operation.

Spitzack announced that the draft First Increment Plan will be released soon, and reviewed highlights from the navigation improvements portion of the draft. He said that the Plan's purpose is to identify an efficient capital investment strategy, as well as the implications of alternative funding scenarios. Spitzack compared four funding scenarios, with their different timing implications for work on the new locks, switch boats, and mitigation efforts. Spitzack highlighted the following as critical elements for NESP's future success:

- effective partnership,
- reliable and ample funding consistent with the capital investment strategy,
- provisions for efficient and effective contracting, and
- a fluid planning process for ecosystem restoration projects.

Spitzack explained that the navigation and ecosystem components have different needs when it comes to efficient and effective funding streams. Specifically, each lock project will require large, comprehensive design and construction contracts over a relatively short period of time, to minimize duration of the project, thus maximizing contractor efficiency and reducing disruption to the navigation system. Conversely, the ecosystem projects will be more effective and efficient under a relatively steady level of restoration funding, permitting individual projects to proceed while balancing this with

effective feedback loops through the adaptive management process. He stressed that these different needs are not inconsistent with the “comparable progress” language in the NESP authorization, which he said should not be interpreted as requiring equal annual funding for the two components.

Spitzack said the Navigation Coordination Group will meet next in conjunction with the August quarterly meetings. A conference call will be held in the interim, if needed. Likely topics for the August meeting include engagement with the navigation community, strategic planning for NESP, and coordination of design and construction efforts.

Refining NECC for Near Term Implementation

Ken Barr said that until the Advisory Panel is established, NECC will continue to serve as a forum for coordination within the partnership on matters related to NESP’s restoration component. Barr reviewed NECC’s history since its first meeting in 1992. NECC’s original focus was evaluating navigation effects and supporting consultation under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. In 2000, with the refocusing of the Navigation Feasibility Study on the development of a dual purpose plan, the scope of NECC was expanded to include development a 50-year restoration plan for the ecosystem. Since 2004, Barr said NECC has been focused on cleaning up loose ends from the feasibility study and beginning implementation and design for the ecosystem restoration component within the adaptive management framework. He noted that the fleeting plan is the only outstanding item from the feasibility phase. During the post-feasibility phase, NESP has remained funded under the Corps’ General Investigations account to conduct preconstruction engineering and design (PED) work. During this PED phase, NECC has focused on refining goals, objectives, and institutional arrangements, as well as providing input as the Corps has initiated planning on a limited number of restoration projects.

Barr highlighted the following near term areas of focus for NESP:

- support development of the investment strategy,
- formalize relationships with the river teams in support of reach planning,
- help guide a future AP in the development of a technical work group for the system, and
- provide input into the 2009 IRTC.

Mike Jawson said he would also like the NECC to focus on developing possible transition scenarios for EMP and NESP, given the uncertainty associated with both funding and the potential integration of the two programs.

Barr suggested that, for the time being, NECC continue to hold quarterly meetings, with its current membership, but also with active participation of NGOs that are not formal NECC members and with support services from UMRBA, similar to what the Association has provided for EMP-CC in the past. NECC members and other stakeholders expressed general agreement with this interim approach, pending resolution of the AP matter.

Jeff Stamper asked whether eco-tourism perspectives should be represented at NECC meetings. Janet Sternburg agreed and said that, while it may be difficult for recreation-oriented groups to participate directly on NECC, it would be beneficial to build strong communications with those groups. Barr emphasized that, as the Economics Coordinating Group is dissolved and a new Navigation Coordination Group is formed that will generally be meeting separately, it will be important for NECC to maintain a close relationship with industry, agriculture, and landowner groups. Tim Schlagenhaft recognized the importance of having agricultural interests represented at NECC meetings, especially in discussions regarding floodplain restoration and water quality issues, and suggested these topics be consistently included in the meeting agendas. Barr noted that system-level

working groups, such as the one proposed to focus on floodplain restoration, will likely be key opportunities to connect directly with agriculture interests.

Barr also suggested having the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service co-chair the NECC meetings, saying that this would facilitate Coordination Act work and resolution of land management issues. He asked NECC members to consider the question of having a Service co-chair.

Sternburg said the NECC's pre-meeting conference calls have been helpful in formulating agendas and facilitating discussions between meetings. She encouraged the Corps to continue having those calls.

Under a contract with the Corps, UMRBA has started providing support services to NECC, beginning with this meeting. Barb Naramore encouraged NECC partners and stakeholders to contact her or Kirsten Mickelsen with any questions or suggestions for ways in which UMRBA can better meet their needs.

Science Panel's Natural Hydrograph Working Meeting

Barry Johnson explained that the Science Panel is charged with providing scientific guidance for ecosystem management and restoration work on the UMRS, within an adaptive management framework. Johnson noted that one of the five UMRS ecosystem goals is to develop a more natural hydrograph. The Panel has been examining an adaptive management approach to water level management, as a means of restoring natural hydrological processes. In part, of course, the Panel is interested developing some of the specifics regarding how water level management might be pursued to restore the hydrograph. But, according to Johnson, the Panel also views this as an opportunity to explore issues more generally related to the application of adaptive management principles to restoration work on the UMRS.

Johnson said Science Panel's effort will build on other work, including the Water Level Management Task Force's draft adaptive management plan, requests to operationalize summer drawdowns, plans for drawdowns at Pools 6 and 18, and evaluations of previous summer drawdowns. The Panel will document what is known, develop a conceptual model, identify important questions and uncertainties, consider experimental designs, and address monitoring needs. Johnson said that the conceptual model will include hydrology/water quality, vegetation, fish, invertebrate, and bird components, and will explore the relationship among various components and processes. The model will facilitate the exploration of hypotheses and development of predictions over various temporal scales. Various indicators will be identified to measure the effects of interventions. Johnson noted that different desired responses may well require a different frequency of intervention. Similarly, different indicators and monitoring approaches will be needed to capture different elements of the response to the management intervention.

Johnson briefly reviewed the ecological effects of maintaining high water levels to support navigation and known impacts of lowering levels during the growing season. He explained that the Panel's report will propose an experimental approach to exploring important remaining questions, including the potential effects of drawdowns on a variety of ecological components, issues related to the frequency and timing of drawdowns, and differing effects along the UMR from north to south. The experimental design will likely include intervention in 2-4 pools, with other pools selected as controls, and with pools selected to include both northern and southern ends of the system. Monitoring questions will include which indicators to monitor, how often, and when. Johnson said that the Panel's report will not be a scope of work and is not a reason to halt other water level management activities. He emphasized that there may well be very sound reasons for also pursuing management interventions that are not part of

the adaptive learning opportunity. He also stressed the Panel's intent that this effort will serve as an example of an approach that can be applied to other questions and issues.

In response to a question from Bryan Hopkins, Johnson said that water quality considerations will be addressed, specifically nutrients and turbidity. Bernie Schonhoff asked if herptiles would be monitored. Johnson said that herptiles have not been a monitoring priority for UMR, but suggested that others might want to do this monitoring. Alternatively, Johnson said it could perhaps be a longer term, low level monitoring effort for NESP. Joyce Collins advised against selecting Pool 26 for a water level management experiment, citing its high level of recreational use. She said Pools 24 or 25 would be better options on the lower portion of the UMR. Jim Fischer asked if this research can be applied at the geomorphic reach scale. Johnson explained that the Panel's north/south approach will provide some insights regarding application on different geomorphic reaches. In that regard, he also suggested that consideration could be given to including Illinois River pools in the design. Johnson observed that a similar approach could be taken to evaluating floodplain connectivity issues.

Fischer asked whether the Science Panel intends to develop recommendations for applying adaptive management to each of the UMRS ecosystem goals. Johnson said that the Science Panel is not that far yet in its thinking. The water level management report is the Panel's attempt to look at one ecosystem goal and a technique that might support that goal. Johnson acknowledged that there are many techniques where additional knowledge would be helpful.

Reach Planning Notebook

Ken Barr reported that a draft Reach Planning Notebook was shared with the NECC/ECC distribution list on February 4, 2009. The Corps has since received the Science Panel's comments on the draft Notebook. Barr also reported that the floodplain reach objective-setting process is currently ongoing in each of the four major floodplain reaches. The results of these processes will then be forwarded to the four River Teams (i.e., RRF, RRCT, RRAT, and Illinois River Team). Barr proposed that NECC's May quarterly meeting be used as an opportunity to focus on the results of this first round objective setting work, with particular attention to whether the partnership has what it needs to apply the objectives in the next round of reach planning.

Barr noted that reach planning needs to be accomplished in the context of the First Increment Plan investment strategy for ecosystem restoration. In NESP's first four years of construction general funding, Barr said the draft First Increment Plan calls for \$450 million in restoration spending on approximately 60 management actions.

Barr presented the Science Panel's comments on the Notebook as follows:

- The report quite effectively informs Planning Teams and others tasked with objective-setting responsibilities. In addition, the Notebook will be of great value as a reference document for use by NESP management, project managers, and project delivery team members, as well as the scientific community of the UMRS as a whole.
- The Notebook is consistent with earlier recommendations that a river reach and system-wide approach should be adopted to ensure the success of environmental restoration actions over a broad range of scales. Attention to restoration and management requirements of the UMRS, in addition to individual locations (project sites), will benefit from continuous scientific input within an adaptive management framework.

- The Science Panel endorses the Notebook’s recommendation that environmental restoration objectives should be directed towards the attainment of “natural river processes,” whenever possible, and suggests that the Planning Teams formally adopt this recommendation.
- The Science Panel endorses the definitions provided on pp. 14-17 of the draft Notebook as working constructs.
- The Science Panel supports the Notebook’s recommendation encouraging the objective-setting teams to identify the unique and important ecological characteristics of each geomorphic reach. Attention to these characteristics during the objective-setting process will be of great value to those tasked with formulating and sequencing projects to meet environmental objectives.
- The Science Panel suggests that the Notebook be used in the future as an essential guide to objective-setting on the UMRS.

David Conrad noted that Section 2031 of WRDA 2007 established a new national water development policy, and includes the protection and restoration of natural systems as part of that policy. He suggested that the Notebook emphasize projects’ contributions to the restoration of natural river processes on the UMRS.

Karen Hagerty suggested that NECC and EMP-CC meet jointly in May to discuss reach objective-setting, since this is a program-neutral effort. On behalf of Dan Wilcox, Jeff DeZellar emphasized the importance of developing systemic goals and objectives, rather than continuing to use tool-based approaches.

Project Highlights

Side Channel Restoration

Brian Johnson reported that MVS has three NESP sidechannel restoration projects in the planning phase: Herculaneum Wing Dike Alteration, Buffalo Chute Sidechannel Restoration, and Schenimann Chute Sidechannel Restoration. Johnson said that all three projects have at least three years of pre-project monitoring, and are currently completing project implementation reports (PIRs). All three PIRs have undergone some level of internal review, but have not yet been released. According to Johnson, each of the projects will be ready for construction in FY 10, though the actual ability to proceed to construction will, of course, be contingent upon NESP receiving sufficient appropriations through the Corps’ construction general account.

Johnson described the Herculaneum Wing Dike Alteration construction, which would include creating a series of new dikes, notching existing dikes, and creating side channels within the existing channel. All work would be below the ordinary high water mark, and project objectives include enhancing channel geomorphic diversity, modifying channels to provide enhance fish habitat, and maintaining the diversity and extent of native communities.

Goals for the Buffalo Chute Sidechannel Restoration include improving fish over-wintering and rearing habitat, sidechannel connectivity to the river, and water quality within the sidechannel, as well as increasing habitat diversity within the sidechannel.

Johnson showed a time series of aerial photographs illustrating the impacts of channel training structures on Schenimann Chute over time. Project goals include maintaining a river connection during low flows, reestablishing flow from the channel’s entrance to its mouth during average seasonal flows,

improving access to the sidechannel habitat during critical times of the year, increasing habitat diversity through development of scour and meandering patterns, and improving water quality.

Johnson noted that none of these projects was originally conceived under NESP. Instead, each was initially proposed under the EMP and transferred over to NESP in hopes of accelerating construction. In response to a question from Ken Barr, Johnson said that each of the three projects has estimated costs below \$5 million, and is thus eligible for approval at the district level. Dan McGuinness asked about the anticipated dredging demands at Schenimann Chute. Johnson said he does not expect dredging would be needed more than once every 3-5 years.

Gretchen Benjamin asked if the Science Panel has been involved in pre-project monitoring for purposes of adaptive management. Johnson said pre-project monitoring at the three sites has not been designed to address adaptive management questions, but sufficient pre-project work has been completed to support basic performance evaluation. Johnson said he anticipates that, as the program evolves, a standardized monitoring protocol will be developed. Barr said that Ken Cook proposed that the Science Panel make recommendations for a project monitoring scheme, similar to the Panel's efforts related to water level management. Joyce Collins mentioned that post-project monitoring design has been structured to try to identify reach effects, and that project monitoring will consider reach and system effects more in the future.

Pool 2 Wing Dams

On behalf of Elliot Stefanik, Jeff DeZellar presented on the Pool 2 Main Channel Border and Sidechannel Habitat Enhancement project. DeZellar said that the project originated from the Lower Pool 2 Channel Management Study. The study's recommendations included notching wingdams and sidechannel restoration. Due to competing demands for limited funds, DeZellar said the recommendations were not immediately pursued under MVP's operation and maintenance (O&M) program. Instead, the project was moved to NESP, with the hope of earlier construction.

DeZellar showed photographs and schematics illustrating sand accretion behind the wing dams, most of which were inundated with the 9-foot channel project. Historically, the sidechannel was about 1,200 feet long and about 55 feet wide. Over time, sand has been accreting in the sidechannel, to the point that it is estimated the sidechannel will fill completely within 5 to 10 years if there is no management intervention.

DeZellar described the NESP recommended plan, which includes notching 30 wingdams and excavating a small channel. Total construction costs are estimated at about \$200,000. DeZellar said that project plans call for using several different approaches to modify the wing dams in order to evaluate their relative effectiveness. The sidechannel will not be restored to its historic dimensions due to cost considerations as well as concerns with the impacts from sidecasting the dredged material. DeZellar anticipates MVD's approval for the project within the next two weeks, and that the public review process should be initiated shortly thereafter.

DeZellar said Stefanik had offered the following lessons learned from his experience developing this project:

- Do not be the first study completed within a new program, especially when the project does not fit the "mold."
- The process for review and approval of feasibility reports should be more clearly defined.

- NESP program management should provide support to PDTs seeking direction for process, review, and approval.
- NESP, as structured, can not be effectively used for small scale projects — e.g., under \$1 million.

DeZellar took some issue with the final lesson, saying he sees promise in tailoring the project planning and approval process appropriately for different size projects. Barr agreed with Stefanik that NESP project reviews need to become more efficient, noting that the district O&M programs are quite efficient in processing small projects like this. Jeff Stamper said the level of review for a project like this does seem quite disproportionate to its construction costs. Chuck Spitzack emphasized the need to put risk in perspective, observing that, when people focus solely on a project and not its context, they can lose perspective and become overly conservative in terms of their approach to managing risk.

Partner Reports

Bill Franz said that UMRBA, with support from USEPA and USGS, will be holding a biological indicators workshop on May 5-7, 2009 in Dubuque.

Bernie Schonhoff mentioned there are issues with the numerical model for fish passages.

Butch Atwood noted that Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois has appointed Marc Miller as the Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Vince Shay reported that TNC has undergone some staff reductions, but said he does not anticipate that this will affect the work of the Conservancy's Mississippi River Team.

Jim Fischer said Wisconsin has a projected deficit of \$5.7 billion for the next biennium. Among other responses, Wisconsin DNR will be closing its service centers. Also, budget constraints mean the Mississippi River Team Leader position formerly held by Gretchen Benjamin will not be filled during the next two years. Dan Baumann will be the acting Team Leader, but Fischer will actually assume many of the Team Leader's responsibilities, including serving on NECC and EMP-CC.

Christine Favilla said the Sierra Club hopes to hire an education outreach coordinator, though funding is somewhat uncertain.

David Conrad said the National Wildlife Federation is working with a number of partners throughout the country in an effort to enhance communication among various restoration efforts and share information. Conrad welcomed any suggestions or input.

Mike Jawson noted that a group of supporters is lobbying for Congressional funding of invasive species control research at UMESC

Paul Rhode said Cornel Martin is the new CEO for the Waterways Council. The Waterways Council has a number of outreach activities scheduled for next week, including a press conference with Senator Durbin in Illinois, a D.C. Seminar, Congressional visits, and a dinner to honor Senator Tom Harkin.

Elizabeth Ivy said she looks forward to working on the UMR and encouraged NECC members to contact her with any questions or concerns.

Jon Duyvejonck said that climate change is a priority for the Service. He also reported the upcoming retirements of Don Hultman and Dick Steinbach.

Rebecca Soileau mentioned that Denver Tolliver is planning a late summer conference on how waterway transportation integrates with other modes. Soileau will send out information regarding the conference in the coming weeks.

Administrative Items

Tim Schlagenhaft expressed appreciation for Martin Konrad's efforts as a member of the EMP-CC and frequent participant in NECC. Bernie Hoyer will replace Konrad as Iowa's DNR representative on the EMP-CC.

A NECC conference call was scheduled for April 9, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

The upcoming quarterly meetings are as follows:

- **May 2009 – St. Paul**
 - UMRBA – May 19
 - **NECC – May 20**
 - **Joint EMP-CC and NECC – afternoon of May 20**
 - EMP-CC – May 21

- **August 2009 – Peoria***
 - UMRBA – August 4
 - EMP-CC – August 5
 - **Joint EMP-CC and NECC – afternoon of August 5** (if needed)
 - **NECC – August 6**

- **November 2009 – Quad Cities**
 - UMRBA – November 17
 - **NECC – November 18**
 - **Joint EMP-CC and NECC – afternoon of November 18** (if needed)
 - EMP-CC – November 19

* A NESP Navigation Coordination Group meeting will also be scheduled during the August quarterly meeting series.

**NECC-ECC Attendance List
February 19, 2009**

Elizabeth Ivy	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Rebecca Soileau	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Andrey Kravets	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Ken Barr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marvin Hubbell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Jack Carr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
T. Leo Keller	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Pat McGinnis	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jeff Stamper	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Joyce Collins	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marion Sub-Office
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Rick Frietsche	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuge
Mike Jawson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Butch Atwood	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Rick Mollahan	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Bernard Schonhoff	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Bernie Hoyer	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Martin Konrad	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
John Fleig	Iowa Department of Transportation
Tim Schlagenhaft	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Janet Sternburg	Missouri Department of Conservation
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Sherrie Turley	Missouri Department of Transportation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Christine Favilla	Sierra Club
Brad Walker	Izaak Walton League
David Conrad	National Wildlife Federation
Vince Shay	The Nature Conservancy
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Paul Rohde	Waterways Council, Inc.
Dan McGuinness	Dan McGuinness and Associates
Jennifer Schwent	URS Corporation
Tom Boland	MACTEC
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association