

**Minutes of the
109th Quarterly Meeting
and
28th Annual Meeting
of the
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**February 17, 2009
St. Louis, Missouri**

The meeting was called to order at 9:39 a.m. by UMRBA Chair Martin Konrad. The following were present:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

Gary Clark	Illinois (DNR)
Rick Mollahan	Illinois (DNR)
Martin Konrad	Iowa (DNR)
Bernie Hoyer	Iowa (DNR)
John Fleig	Iowa (DOT)
Dick Vegors	Iowa (DED)
Tim Schlagenhaft	Minnesota (DNR)
Dick Lambert	Minnesota (DOT)
Dru Buntin	Missouri (DNR)
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin (DNR)

Federal UMRBA Liaisons:

Charles Barton	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD)
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5)
Charlie Wooley	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 3)
Mike Jawson	U.S. Geological Survey (UMESC)

Others in attendance:

Olivia Dorothy	Illinois Governor Pat Quinn
John Chick	Illinois Natural History Survey
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri (DNR)
Janet Sternburg	Missouri (DoC)
Colonel Tom O'Hara	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)
Elizabeth Ivy	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD)
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP)
Andrey Kravets	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP)
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Ken Barr	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)
Leo Keller	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)

Jack Carr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)
Jeff Stamper	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)
Todd Strole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)/TNC
Steve Ashby	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ERDC)
John Goodin	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (HQ)
Tim Henry	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5)
Art Spratlin	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 7)
Rick Frietsche	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UMR Refuge)
Rick Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Rock Island Field Office)
Joyce Collins	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Marion Field Office)
Matt Mangan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Leon Carl	U.S. Geological Survey
Mark Fuchs	National Weather Service (St. Louis)
Jeff Jacobs	National Research Council
Brad Walker	Izaak Walton League
Diane Herndon	Monsanto
Michael Martin	MCIRCC
Vera Bojic	National Great Rivers Research and Education Center
Joseph Britt	Sand County Foundation
Mike Bush	St. Louis Confluence River Keepers
Christine Favilla	Sierra Club
Vince Shay	The Nature Conservancy
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Paul Rohde	Waterways Council, Inc.
Gary Loss	CDM
Tom Boland	MACTEC
Don Powell	SEH
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Announcements

Martin Konrad announced that this would be his last meeting representing Iowa on the UMRBA. Konrad explained that Bernie Hoyer, of the Iowa DNR Director's office, will be named as a new Iowa representative. John Fleig, Harold Hommes, and Dick Vegors will continue to serve as Governor Culver's other representatives to UMRBA.

UMRBA Vice Chair Gary Clark expressed the Board's appreciation to Konrad for his years of service, and particularly for his past year as Chair. On behalf of UMRBA, Clark presented Konrad with a certificate of appreciation, recognizing his many contributions to interagency collaboration on the UMRS. Konrad said he has greatly enjoyed his three years participating on UMRBA and other UMR groups, explaining that the experience taught him a great deal about collaboration and partnership. Konrad said he views UMRBA as a national model for water resource collaboration.

Meeting Minutes

Gary Clark moved and Jim Fischer seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2008 meeting as drafted. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report

Barb Naramore highlighted the following items from her written report included in the agenda packet:

- UMRBA staff continue to coordinate with the *ad hoc* group of industry and environmental interests in advocating for EMP and NESP. The group is revising the joint fact sheet it developed last year and will again be seeking meetings with committee staff and members’ offices. Naramore expressed appreciation for the efforts of the various partners in these efforts, including Waterways Council, Inc., River Resource Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, and Audubon.
- UMRBA and US EPA finalized an intergovernmental personnel agreement (IPA) on January 15, 2009. Under this agreement, Peg Donnelly of EPA Region 5 will be working on assignment with UMRBA for the next two years. The majority of Donnelly’s time will be devoted to the Water Quality Task Force’s designated uses project, and a work plan has recently been completed to guide her efforts. Donnelly will remain stationed at Region 5, but will be visiting the states and other key players during the course of her work.
- In follow-up to the 2008 workshops on enhancing coordination between water quality and ecosystem restoration programs, UMRBA will be hosting a UMR biological indicators workshop this spring. USACE and US EPA are providing funding to support this workshop. Invitations will be issued shortly.
- Also in follow-up to the 2008 workshops, Water Quality Executive Committee Chair Marcia Willhite sent a January 22 letter to Rock Island District Commander Colonel Robert Sinkler. The correspondence expressed the WQEC’s interest in engaging their staff in the ecosystem restoration objective-setting process and asked USACE to provide further information regarding the process and the need for water quality expertise.
- The Interagency Levee Task Force (ILTF) is considering options for ongoing regional and state-level interagency coordination following the scheduled July 2009 sunset of the ILTF and its state work groups. The ILTF is also developing a comprehensive communications plan and advising a national policy review designed to ensure consistency among regions for similar groups in the future.

Interstate Diversion Consultation

Martin Konrad explained that the Governors’ 1989 Upper Mississippi River Basin Charter sets forth a notification and consultation process for any new or increased water diversion out of the basin that would exceed an average of 5 million gallons per day during any 30 day period. At their February annual meetings, UMRBA members are to report on any qualifying diversion requests. The UMRBA member states reported as follows:

Iowa (Martin Konrad)	—	no diversions to report
Illinois (Gary Clark)	—	no diversions to report
Minnesota (Tim Schlagenhaft)	—	no diversions to report
Missouri (Dru Buntin)	—	no diversions to report
Wisconsin (Jim Fischer)	—	no diversions to report

Konrad directed Barb Naramore to send letters to the Governors reporting the results of the annual diversion consultation.

NRC Report on Nutrient Controls

Jeff Jacobs provided a brief background on the National Research Council (NRC), a working arm within the National Academies of Science (NAS), that provides independent scientific and technical advice to the federal government. The NRC typically executes its projects by convening and staffing a project-specific committee comprised of volunteer experts, explained Jacobs. He then briefly described the background leading up to the NRC's recently released report entitled *Nutrient Control Actions for Improving Water Quality in the Mississippi River Basin and Northern Gulf of Mexico*. According to Jacobs, US EPA approached the NRC shortly after it completed its 2007 report on Mississippi River Water Quality, which had been funded by the McKnight Foundation. Some of the 10 committee members for the current report also participated on the panel for the previous study. Jacobs also observed that the current study was completed on a very fast time track, with the committee meeting just three times over the 9-month study period.

The committee was asked to address the following:

- 1) Given the state of scientific knowledge, and associated uncertainties, about nutrient and sediment loadings and Gulf hypoxia, how might loading estimates and targets be used to initiate pollutant control programs?
- 2) What are the alternative methods to allocate load reductions to tributaries, land uses, and other source classifications?
- 3) How should the effectiveness of pollutant loading reduction strategies on the Gulf hypoxic zone and states' designated uses be documented?

Among the committee's findings, Jacobs highlighted the following:

- Nine states (AR, IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MO, OH, and TN) contribute approximately 75% of all nitrogen and phosphorus loadings to the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- Point sources are estimated to account for 10% of all nutrient loadings to the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- Progress toward reducing hypoxia will require acknowledging that there is a considerable time lag (≥ 10 years) between nutrient reduction actions and water quality response in the Gulf.
- Purposeful targeting of nutrient control efforts toward areas of higher nutrient loadings will be essential. USDA and others should make projects in these locations a priority.
- EPA should require major municipal and industrial point source dischargers to monitor nutrient concentrations (both nitrogen and phosphorus) as a condition of NPDES permits.

Based on its findings, Jacobs said the committee recommended that US EPA and USDA jointly establish a Nutrient Control Implementation Initiative (NCII) designed to demonstrate the ability to reduce nutrient loadings in priority watersheds, evaluate local water quality benefits of nutrient controls, and evaluate the cost effectiveness of various control options. According to Jacobs, projects within the NCII would:

- promote more systematic monitoring and comparison of land and water conservation efforts;
- provide a framework for implementing and testing best management practices (BMPs) on a basin-wide scale;
- include pre-project planning and design, facility installation, operation and maintenance, and water quality and land use monitoring;
- total approximately 25,000 acres and coincide with watershed boundaries to the extent possible.

In addition, the committee recommended that NCII projects be sited in watersheds with high loadings, where previous work has been done and that are of interest to USDA, state, and local parties. In terms of financing, Jacobs said the committee envisions the NCII pilot projects being funded primarily under existing USDA conservation programs, with additional EPA Clean Water Act funding, as well as state, private sector, and foundation resources.

Jacobs explained that the committee recognizes the importance of remaining scientific uncertainties, but also believes there is sufficient knowledge to take action. Thus, the report recommends the agencies select an interim goal for load reductions as the first stage in an adaptive and incremental process. It further calls for targeting watersheds for load reductions and adopting an allocation formula for interim reductions that balances equity and cost-effectiveness. In addition, the committee stressed the importance of allowing credit for past progress and encouraging market-based approaches to promote flexibility in achieving reductions. While acknowledging the important water quality work of others, the committee also concludes that no existing entity has the resources needed to administer the NCII and instead recommends that US EPA and USDA jointly administer a Mississippi River Basin Water Quality Center to plan and implement NCII projects.

Jacobs also said US EPA has expressed interest in having the NRC extend the term of the committee that developed the report, with the same membership, to provide ongoing advice.

In response to a question from Mike Jawson, Jacobs said the report addresses USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Program as current activity that could serve as a model. Bryan Hopkins observed that the time lags from management intervention to load reduction can greatly exceed 10 years even on a local level. He also noted that significant load modeling work remains to be done on the sub-basin level. Given these uncertainties, he questioned whether we are really ready to select sub-basins for load reduction targeting. Jacobs acknowledged the importance of the uncertainties Hopkins identified, but said the NRC committee members believe there is sufficient knowledge to implement interim, "directionally correct," actions while data collection and analyses continue.

Tim Schlagenhaft asked whether USDA has been involved in discussing the potential to target its conservation programs for nutrient reduction purposes. Jacobs said USDA has generally been receptive to the ideas raised in the report, and expressed hope that USDA might be involved more directly in any follow-on work undertaken by the NRC. In response to a question from Mike Bush, Jacobs acknowledged that large floods can have tremendous effects on loadings.

John Goodin expressed US EPA's thanks to Jacobs for the committee's excellent work. Goodin explained that, through the use of the Clean Water Act and other federal programs, the federal agencies are looking for opportunities to support and drive the states' work related to nutrient reduction. He offered the following perspectives regarding the NRC committee's report:

1. The study lays out some very important conclusions, particularly regarding agency roles and load allocations.
2. US EPA is using this report and other information to develop a federal strategy for nutrient reduction. He stressed EPA's desire to engage the states and others in development of this strategy, and said a draft would be put out for review and comment by late spring/early summer.
3. Under the Clean Water Act, there is a mix of actions, both voluntary and regulatory, that can be used to support nutrient reduction.

Goodin said that, over the last few months, EPA has been reviewing specific elements of the Clean Water act that can be used to further the Hypoxia Action Plan's goals. Identified options include:

1. Clarify specific policy and program practice issues—e.g., ensuring a consistent interpretation of what it means to attain downstream standards and consistent effluent monitoring of Section 402 dischargers.
2. Address development of numeric nutrient standards as part of the triennial review process.
3. Develop targets for HUC-8 and HUC-12 level watersheds in the basin, with the idea of picking sensible targets and adapting them overtime, rather than seeking perfection at the outset.
4. Review impaired waters, both on the mainstem and in the basin.
5. Review opportunities to direct Section 319 funding to support nutrient reduction efforts in target watersheds.

Goodin also stressed the importance of measuring outcomes and developing effective ways of communicating these results to the public.

Joe Britt observed that some agricultural groups will undoubtedly be concerned that nutrient reduction efforts will lead to regulation. Goodin said US EPA is simply examining all of the tools it has available under the Clean Water Act to address the problem of nutrients. He observed that, historically, not all of these tools have been used as effectively as they might have been.

Martin Konrad asked who is charged with bringing US EPA and USDA together to act on the NRC report. Jacobs emphasized that NRC is strictly an advisory body. As such, it does not monitor implementation of its recommendations. Goodin said US EPA and USDA staff have been meeting regularly and will jointly brief the USDA leadership within the next couple of weeks about the report and development of a federal nutrient reduction strategy.

Barb Naramore asked Board members whether they would like to develop comments on either the NRC report or the pending federal nutrient reduction strategy that Goodin described. Members directed staff to explore commenting on both with UMRBA's Water Quality Executive Committee. Dru Buntin suggested that the comments include a focus on the state role in nutrient reduction efforts.

Nature Conservancy's Monsanto-Funded Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Demonstration Project

Vince Shay briefly described The Nature Conservancy's Mississippi River program, which was initiated in 2001. He explained that the program has a relatively small staff that is augmented by chapters in the bordering states. In 2003, TNC completed a conservation assessment of the Mississippi River, identifying four mainstem and 43 tributary areas in the UMRB as priorities for the protection of biological diversity. Shay noted that 66 percent of the UMRB is devoted to agricultural production, and the hydrology of the system has been profoundly altered. TNC is seeking to identify strategies to combat these and other stressors on the basin's biological resources.

Shay explained that TNC's traditional approach of buying land is not viable when the goal is to protect and restore a large aquatic ecosystem. Targeted best management practices (BMPs) offer promise, according to Shay; but he emphasized that traditional BMPs focused on soil erosion will not necessarily yield the desired water quality results. Thus, with financial support from Monsanto, TNC is working with its partners to develop and test practices that will support aquatic ecosystem restoration. Practices will be tested, targeted, and applied in four watersheds — i.e., Mackinaw River, IL; Boon River, IA; Root River, MN; and Pecatonica River, WI. Shay observed that the Root River project area, a

watershed of more than 1 million acres with almost 800 miles of tributaries, illustrates the importance of effective targeting in order to achieve results.

Diane Herndon explained that Monsanto is exclusively an agricultural company, and focuses primarily on seeds and biotechnology rather than agricultural chemicals. Through its Sustainable Yield Initiative, Monsanto is seeking to increase yields, reduce resource use, and improve farmers' lives. In addition to TNC and other conservation groups, Herndon explained that Monsanto is involving grower organizations and groups such as the National Fertilizer Institute in its efforts. She expressed optimism that, by bringing the right partners together, effective ways will be identified to keep nutrients on the farm.

In response to a question from Barb Naramore, Shay said the kinds of practices being evaluated include 2-stage ditches, fall cover, treatment wetlands, and wood chip bio-reactors. TNC will employ paired watershed studies where possible. He explained that, with the project's 3-year funding, lag time, and other factors, the effects of an experimental measure in even a 5,000 acre watershed may not be measurable. Therefore, TNC will also be employing edge-of-field measurements. Shay said TNC is working with a wide range of partners on these projects, filling in gaps in funding and capabilities where needed. As such, the landowner agreements take a range of forms. In response to a question from Tim Schlagenhaft, Shay explained that the monitoring responsibilities for the individual projects vary, depending on the particulars of that project. TNC will submit annual reports to Monsanto, as well as a comprehensive project report at the end of the three years.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

Funding Status — Chuck Spitzack reported that NESP is currently operating under continuing resolution (CR) funding of \$3 million. The CR runs through March 6, 2009. Spitzack observed that this is NESP's lowest rate of funding since Congress started providing preconstruction engineering and design (PED) funds for NESP in FY 05. He said it remains to be seen what, if any, additional FY 09 money Congress will provide for NESP as part of the omnibus measure that is anticipated to follow the CR. Also of note, the recently enacted stimulus package precludes construction general funding for new projects, including NESP, according to Spitzack.

Spitzack also reported that NESP will have obligated approximately 60 percent of its CR funds by March 6. Barb Naramore noted that this is considerably below the obligation rate the Corps had been estimating earlier in the fiscal year. Spitzack attributed this to competing demands for staff within the Corps, citing New Orleans recovery efforts and response to the spring/summer flooding on the UMR and its tributaries in particular.

June 2009 Implementation Report to Congress — Spitzack explained that the NESP authorization in WRDA 07 requires periodic reports to Congress on implementation of the ecosystem restoration component. The reports are to address baselines, milestones, goals, and priorities for the restoration projects and measure progress in meeting the goals. The first implementation report is due to the House and Senate authorizing committees by June 30, 2009, with subsequent reports every four years thereafter.

Spitzack reported that the Corps has contracted with Dan McGuiness and Associates to assist in drafting the first report. McGuiness will present a draft outline to the NECC at its February 19 meeting, and a draft report will be circulated for partner review in mid- to late April. The draft will then be discussed at the May quarterly meetings, with a final draft going to Corps Headquarters in mid-June.

Spitzack said the ongoing ecosystem-objective setting process will be an important element of the June report. He explained that planning teams are currently working actively on the four major floodplain

reaches — i.e., Upper Impounded, Lower Impounded, Open River, and Illinois River. Each team is identifying reach-based ecosystem objectives. The amount of progress possible before the June report will, in part, be determined by NESP's level of funding after March 6.

Because NESP has thus far received only PED funding, Spitzack observed that this first implementation report will not, of course, include any completed project reports. Spitzack acknowledged that the schedule for developing the report is quite tight, but said he would like to meet the deadline and use the report as an opportunity to communicate NESP's readiness to implement.

River Advisory Panel Update — Elizabeth Ivy distributed General Walsh's Advisory Panel (AP) proposal, which was transmitted to Corps Headquarters on February 11, 2009. She briefly reviewed the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA 07) provisions related to the NESP AP, explaining that the panel is charged with:

- providing "independent guidance" in the development of each implementation report, and
- consulting in the development of a system to rank the proposed ecosystem restoration projects.

She noted that the Corps is interpreting "independent guidance" as meaning independent from the Corps, but not as precluding AP members' involvement in the NESP restoration program.

Per WRDA 07, the AP will include:

- State resource agencies (or other gubernatorial designee) — one from each of the five states;
- one representative each from USDA, US DOT, USGS, USFWS, and USEPA;
- affected landowners — one representative;
- conservation and environmental advocacy groups — two representatives; and
- agriculture and industry groups — two representatives.

Ivy explained that General Walsh's proposal comes in response to the ASA(CW)'s NESP implementation guidance, which requested USACE recommendations on how the AP should be established, the AP's specific roles and responsibilities, its operation in conjunction with the ASA(CW)'s role, and the AP's funding. Under General Walsh's proposal, the MVD Commander would chair the AP on behalf of the ASA (CW), and members would fund their own participation.

To facilitate the AP's decision-making and coordination with Congress and OMB, the proposal calls for the other federal agencies to be represented at the regional director level or higher, with the states represented at the department director level. Ivy emphasized that General Walsh's proposal is subject to further change by Corps Headquarters and the ASA(CW). She explained that the proposal is currently at the staff level within Corps Headquarters, having been submitted to the MVD Regional Integration Team (RIT) last week.

Spitzack explained that, until the AP is stood up, the Corps will continue to coordinate reach objective-setting and other NESP restoration program matters through the NECC.

In response to a question from Martin Konrad, Ivy and Charles Barton said it is difficult to estimate how long it will be before the ASA(CW) acts on the AP proposal. They suggested it would likely be a minimum of six to eight weeks.

Tim Schlagenhaft observed that the partners worked hard on joint recommendations regarding the AP, and that those partner recommendations differ substantially from General Walsh's proposal in several

important respects. In particular, Schlagenhaft emphasized that the elevated AP would not be well-suited to addressing program implementation details that will need to be coordinated with the partnership if NESP is to be successful. He cautioned the Corps not to wait too long to establish a “technical implementation mechanism” to address these needs. Ivy said she fully expects that the AP will want such a group, but said General Walsh believes that formation of any technical groups should be left to the AP. In the interim, Spitzack emphasized that the Corps will continue to coordinate with the partners through NECC.

Dru Buntin said he understands and appreciates the General’s thinking in wanting to elevate the level of representation on the AP. However, he observed that the AP’s actual charge under the NESP authority (i.e., guiding the implementation reports and developing a project ranking system) would not make particularly effective use of state department directors and federal regional agency heads. He said these tasks will require people who are conversant with both the technical and policy questions at issue. Buntin asked the Corps to notify UMRBA when the ASA(CW) sends the AP solicitation letters to the Governors.

Jim Fischer concurred with Buntin’s and Schlagenhaft’s observations. He said Wisconsin liked the partnership proposal for the AP. While there may be advantages to higher level representation, Fischer stressed that a system scale group at more of a working level will be essential to NESP’s success.

Middle Mississippi River Regional Corridor Study

Brian Johnson explained that the Middle Mississippi River was selected as one of five regional studies in the nation to be conducted at 100 percent federal expense. The study area was defined as approximately 500,000 acres of floodplain corridor on the Middle Mississippi. Approximately 50 agencies and groups came together and identified three natural resource focuses for the study:

- 1) develop a science-based regional restoration planning and prioritization tool,
- 2) set regional goals and objectives, and
- 3) complete reach assessments.

According to Johnson, major issues and concerns on the Middle Mississippi include habitat loss, lack of connectivity, demand for river-based recreation, need for agricultural viability, need for reliable navigation, and desire for ecosystem restoration. A landscape-level planning tool was developed using hydrogeomorphic methodology (HGM). Johnson explained that the tool integrates GIS-based information concerning soils, geomorphology, topography, climate, flood frequency, and plant and animal communities. The tool can inform restoration planning and prioritization by quantifying prior and existing habitat, identifying restoration potential, and providing a scientific basis for the selection of restoration targets.

On the topic of setting regional goals and objectives, Johnson explained that the Corridor Study sought to build on previous work by the Middle Mississippi River Partnership (MMRP). Working with the MMRP and other stakeholders, five reaches were established, each with a different entity providing coordination. Workshops were used to set objectives and develop cooperative strategies to accomplish those objectives. The groups also attempted to identify metrics for measuring success and articulated next steps. Written assessments for each of the five reaches will identify information needs and opportunities in each reach.

Johnson characterized the Corridor Study as a very effective partnership effort. Among the lessons learned, Johnson highlighted the need for regional leadership, the value of an organization like the MMRP, the slow pace of collaboration, limited understanding of other agencies’ programs and authorities, and the importance of setting realistic expectations.

Jim Fischer asked how much of the restoration potential identified through the HGM is in private ownership. Johnson said most of the area for potential restoration is privately held on the Middle Mississippi. He explained that the value of the HGM tool is in focusing efforts. For example, if you want to restore or protect bottomland hardwoods, HGM can tell you where, specifically, you should be looking.

Dick Lambert asked what factors drove the deterioration of habitat on the Middle Mississippi. Johnson cited isolation of the river floodplain to support agricultural production. Joyce Collins agreed that this was a major factor, but also said establishment and maintenance of the 9-foot channel project had a profound impact on aquatic resources. Collins also observed that the Corridor Study's HGM model is terrestrially oriented and would need to be extended if the partners want to account more fully for aquatic resources.

Visions of Sustainable Mississippi River Conference

John Chick announced that the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and The Nature Conservancy are jointly sponsoring a conference entitled *Visions of a Sustainable Mississippi River: Merging Ecological, Economic, and Cultural Values*. The event will be held August 10-13, 2009 in Collinsville, Illinois. Chick explained that conference organizers want to bring together the full range of river interests to focus on critical issues on which there are important differences. There will be four focus areas:

- 1) ecosystem services and economic value;
- 2) floodplain connectivity, flood control, and hydrologic regime;
- 3) ethanol production; and
- 4) clean water uses and threats.

Chick emphasized that the conference is organized to maximize discussion and working time, with those discussions catalyzed by a series of speakers and panel discussions. He encouraged the UMRBA and others to consider various opportunities for involvement, including attending the conference, participating as panelists or facilitators, and supporting high level participation in the policy forum slated for the conference's final day.

Federal Agency Updates — Stimulus Measures, FY 10 Budget, and Agency Leadership News

Corps of Engineers — Charles Barton reported that President Obama is expected to release his FY 10 budget request in mid-April. Until the budget is formally released, federal agencies are not at liberty to discuss the potential details of the request. The Corps, along with much of the federal government, is operating under a continuing resolution that runs through March 6, 2009. Thus, full year FY 09 funding levels are still not yet known. Barton said the expectation is that Congress will likely enact an omnibus measure to fund agencies for the balance of the fiscal year. He also noted that President Bush's FY 09 request for MVD projects and programs totaled \$716 million, while the House and Senate Appropriations Committees approved \$787 and \$948 million, respectively.

Regarding the stimulus measure, Barton reported that the Corps' civil works program received a total of \$4.6 billion, with military construction receiving more than \$6 billion. The stimulus bill identified specific amounts for the Corps' major accounts (e.g., investigations and construction), but left further determinations to the Administration. Corps Headquarters is currently working to develop its proposal for allocating the civil works funding to specific projects and programs. In response to a question from

Barb Naramore, Barton said the decision criteria include ability to let contracts quickly and the prohibition on new starts.

Environmental Protection Agency — Bill Franz said EPA's water priorities include 1) ensuring that drinking water is safe and 2) restoring and maintaining oceans and watersheds, and their aquatic ecosystems, for the benefit of human health, economic and recreation activity, and habitat. Under the current continuing resolution, Franz said EPA's clean and safe water programs are being funded at about two-thirds of their FY 08 level — i.e., \$1.8 billion under the CR vs. \$2.9 billion in FY 08. He observed, however, that these FY 09 funding levels are expected to come up when EPA is funded for the balance of the year.

Franz also reported that EPA's draft FY 10-14 Strategic Plan still includes general language, though not specific sub-objectives, related to water quality efforts on the Upper Mississippi. He said it remains to be seen what inclusion in the Strategic Plan might mean in terms of future budgets.

In response to a question from Naramore, Franz said naming EPA's Assistant Administrator for Water and Regional Administrators (RAs) may still take some time. Art Spratlin said that, when there is a change in party, Region 7 has not typically seen its new RA until the fall. In response to a question from Jim Fischer, Franz said EPA is also emphasizing contract readiness in allocating its stimulus funding.

Fish and Wildlife Service — Charlie Wooley reported that the Fish and Wildlife Service will receive approximately \$280 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka stimulus bill). Of this amount, Region 3 will likely receive approximately \$40 million. The Service is seeking to obligate the majority of the stimulus funds within four months, with an emphasis on jobs creation. Projects will include refuge and hatchery maintenance; mission critical capital improvements; trails, roads, and bridges; habitat restoration; and energy efficiency measures at facilities.

Wooley briefly reviewed the Service's budget structure, including the major resource management accounts of ecological services, refuges, and fisheries. Under the continuing resolution, the Service is being funded at its FY 08 levels, minus any earmarks. This includes \$259 million for ecological services, \$433 million for refuges, and \$126 million for fisheries.

Regarding FY 10, Wooley reported that the Service recently received its OMB passback. He also briefly reviewed FY 09 funding levels under the Service's permanent appropriations, which include several important pass thrus to the states. Sport Fish Restoration is funded at \$467 million in FY 09, and Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration is receiving \$348 million. The UMR states are expected to receive \$32 million and \$25 million under these two programs, respectively, in FY 09.

Wooley announced that Tom Melius is the Service's new Regional Director for Region 3. He also highlighted the UMR-related work of the Service's Rock Island, Marion, and Twin Cities field offices, including Corps projects and programs, endangered species consultation, contaminants work, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects. For FY 09, UMR-related work at the three field offices is estimated at \$729,000. Wooley said future challenges for these field offices include the increased workload associated with Corps navigation and restoration programs, limited funding and data to support species protection efforts, and declining budgets for Conservation Planning Assistance and environmental contaminants work.

The Service has 11 refuges on, or near, the UMRS, totaling 300,000 acres and hosting more than 4 million visitors per year. The FY 09 base budget for these UMRS refuges is estimated at \$8.5 million, which would represent flat funding from FY 08. In addition, the refuges will receive \$1.7 million in storm/flood supplemental funds. Wooley said it is not yet known what the UMRS refuges will receive

from the stimulus package. UMRS refuge priorities for FY 09 include ongoing implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs), repairs from the 2007 storms and 2008 flood, stimulus package projects, ongoing EMP projects, a reed canary grass adaptive management project, a Pool 6 drawdown, an ongoing forest inventory with the Corps, and acquisition of 600-800 acres. In addition, Wooley reported that the Service expects a Wetland of International Importance designation under the Ramsar Convention in 2009.

Region 3's UMRS-related fisheries operations include Fisheries Resources offices in La Crosse, Columbia, and Carterville, as well as a hatchery in Genoa and a Fish Health Center in La Crosse. FY 09 funding for fisheries work at these facilities will be essentially flat from FY 08. Priorities will include large migratory species (lake and shovelnose sturgeon), maintaining the MICRA paddlefish database, aquatic nuisance species (Asian carp and round goby), and endangered mussels (Higgins eye and winged mapleleaf).

U.S. Geological Survey — Mike Jawson reported that USGS is also operating under the continuing resolution that runs thru March 6. He said the consensus expectation is that an omnibus measure would likely fund USGS at a higher level than it is receiving under the continuing resolution. Jawson said Suzette Kimball is serving as Acting Director of USGS. He also highlighted Secretary Salazar's announced priorities for the Interior Department, including energy, climate change, ethics, and ensuring that the department focuses on the entire country. Jawson reviewed USGS's new regional structure, explaining that the goal of the reorganization was to enhance coordination among USGS's four disciplines by bringing them together under the same regional structure. Unfortunately, this has also resulted in the UMR states being split among three regions — i.e., Illinois and Wisconsin in the Midwest, Minnesota and Iowa in the North Central, and Missouri in the South Central.

Jawson briefly highlighted accomplishments and ongoing work at the UMR states' Water Science Centers (WSCs) as well as UMESC. Several centers are engaged in research related to emerging contaminants, nutrients, and sediment. This includes the Wisconsin WSC's SPARROW nutrient modeling effort and the Minnesota WSC's work with UMESC and the National Park Service on nutrient processes in backwaters. Jawson noted that endocrine disruptor studies are finding levels in the environment that produce demonstrable effects on mussels and other biota.

Jawson also reported that there is a proposal to fund UMESC to research Asian carp control options. While this is not a USGS proposal, Jawson observed that UMESC has a long history with invasives control (e.g., the lampricide used to control the sea lamprey in the Great Lakes) and is certainly capable of doing such research. He noted that Asian carp are known to be reproducing at least as far north as Pool 9. The proposed research would focus on identifying a life cycle vulnerability in the carp and developing a control agent that specifically exploits that vulnerability. The research would be done in coordination with Advanced BioNutrition Corporation, which has developed a promising delivery technology. In response to a question from Wooley, Jawson said UMESC has not yet received any dedicated funding to research Asian carp control, but is using very modest amounts of its base funding to initiate efforts as best it can. Jawson emphasized that UMESC fully recognized the importance of the Asian carp issue on the UMRS.

Jawson explained that UMESC's overall research and monitoring themes include large river ecosystems, geospatial sciences and decision support systems, invasive species control, fisheries management chemical and drug development and registration, endangered species, and contaminant effects on wildlife. Jawson explained that UMESC's staff function in teams, which work across the theme areas. Martin Konrad asked whether UMESC's new regional structure with its division of the UMR states, is affecting UMESC's work. Jawson said UMESC is able to work effectively across the regional boundaries. Leon Carl, director of the Midwest Region, said the three regions are working on ways to increase their focus on the Mississippi River.

Administrative Issues

Adoption of New Administrative Policies — Barb Naramore announced that the Board's consideration of new administrative policies is being deferred to UMRBA's May 19, 2009 meeting.

FY 09 Budget Revisions — Martin Konrad indicated that UMRBA needs to amend its FY 09 budget to reflect expenses and revenue associated with the Biological Indicators workshop. Dru Buntin moved, and Gary Clark seconded, a motion to amend UMRBA's FY 09 budget as follows:

- +\$14,800 in contract and grant income to reflect the US EPA workshop grant
- +\$6,700 in biological indicators expenses, broken out between travel (\$1,200), contractual (\$3,000), and other (\$2,500)

The motion carried unanimously. Naramore explained that the remaining expenses for the workshop are permanent staff-related and are thus already captured in UMRBA's FY 09 budget.

Election of Officers — Tim Schlagenhaft moved nominations of Gary Clark to serve as UMRBA Chair and Todd Ambs to serve as UMRBA Vice Chair. Buntin seconded the motion. Konrad noted that, while not present, Ambs has been consulted and is willing to serve as Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously.

Future Meeting Schedule — Naramore reported that the next two quarterly meeting series are scheduled for May 19-21, 2009 in the Twin Cities and August 4-6, 2009 in Peoria, with UMRBA's meeting falling on the first day of each series. The Board set the fall quarterly meetings for November 17-19, 2009 in the Quad Cities.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.