

**Minutes of the  
Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program  
Coordinating Committee**

**April 30, 2019  
Special Meeting**

**Conference Call**

The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m. on April 30, 2019.

**Illinois Waterway Consolidated Closures Monitoring Proposals**

Marshall Plumley reported that opportunities have been raised for UMRR to monitor the response of the ecosystem during the extended closure of the L&Ds on the Illinois Waterway in 2020. Plumley explained the details of the planned O&M activities in FY 2020, resulting in full closure in all stretches of the Illinois Waterway from July through September or October 2020. This is the most extensive closure of an inland waterway throughout the nation and offers an important learning opportunity, particularly to better understand limiting habitat factors. Anecdotal evidence from a past closure at Starved Rock L&D in 1994 resulted in a significant biological response.

Plumley recalled that Illinois Waterway monitoring was discussed with the A-Team briefly at its February 6, 2019 meeting and in greater detail at its April 24, 2019 meeting. The potential for this work was also raised at the October 31, 2018 and February 27, 2019 UMRR Coordinating Committee meetings. Options were also discussed with UMRR program partners at the March 26-27, 2019 UMRR LTRM field station team meeting. Plumley said an *ad hoc* work group was formed to consider options and is recommending four proposals for the UMRR Coordinating Committee's consideration and endorsement, if appropriate. The proposals would assess the response of water quality, vegetation, and fish at multiple scales to reduced navigation traffic.

Jeff Houser reviewed the four Illinois Waterway monitoring and research proposals as follows; only activities in FY 2019 are proposed for funding this fiscal year:

- Illinois Waterway aquatic vegetation study
  - Cost: \$14,661
  - Purpose: To examine changes in prevalence of aquatic vegetation before, during, and after the lock closures and whether any increases in vegetation are sustained when navigation traffic returns in Starved Rock pool. Additionally, monitoring will examine species and habitat characteristics – e.g., depth, velocity, and substrates.
- Pre- and post-maintenance aerial imagery from Brandon Road through Alton Pool
  - Cost: \$45,325
  - Purpose: Monitor river and backwater conditions before and after the lock closures, assuming that the reduced navigation traffic will affect sediment suspension, water clarity, and aquatic vegetation. The regularly scheduled LCU collection will occur during the 2020 closure.

- Fish community response to the Illinois Waterway 2020 lock closure
  - Cost: \$94,002
  - Purpose: Coordinate existing and additional fish monitoring among UMRR LTRM, universities, and states as well as the explanatory variables directly related to lock closures – e.g., wave height, sediment resuspension, and boating frequency. Additionally, assess non-transitory, short-lived fish species’ otolith and body conditions to determine the effects of reduced navigation traffic on fish growth and condition.
- Water clarity and the Illinois Waterway 2020 lock closures
  - Cost: \$3,794
  - Purpose: To examine the effects of reduced wave action on sediment resuspension and water clarity and whether and how that differentiates spatially. Water quality sampling will be coordinated with the other proposed efforts/teams.

In response to a question from Sabrina Chandler, Plumley clarified that the Corps will be maintaining its typical pool levels – i.e., it will not be seeking a diversion for the water control plan to hold water level lower.

Plumley explained that FY 2018 carry-over funding from cost-savings on MVR habitat project construction is available for these projects. Their implementation will not take away from any restoration or science projects already planned and approved by the UMRR Coordinating Committee. Jim Fischer asked whether funding for these projects would be cut should there be a low UMRR FY 2021 appropriation. Plumley suggested those decisions be made if that scenario would be realized but assured that decision would involve consultation with the UMRR Coordinating Committee.

In response to a question from Kirsten Wallace, Jim Fischer moved and Megan Moore seconded a motion to approve FY 2019 funding for the four recommended proposals as discussed above. By roll call, the motion was passed unanimously.

Karen Hagerty acknowledged that the UMRR Coordinating Committee has discussed its desire to be flexible with funding to allow for taking advantage of these opportunities.

## **Attendance List**

### **UMRR Coordinating Committee Members**

Brian Chewning	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Jeff Houser	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC [on behalf of Mark Gaikowski]
Randy Schultz	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Megan Moore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

### **Others In Attendance**

Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Sara Schmuecker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Andrew Stephenson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association