

**Minutes of the
98th Quarterly Meeting
of the
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**May 18, 2006
Rock Island, Illinois**

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by UMRBA Vice Chair Dru Buntin.
The following were present:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

Gary Clark	Illinois (DNR)
Rick Mollahan	Illinois (DNR)
Martin Konrad	Iowa (DNR)
Dick Vegors	Iowa (DED)
Rebecca Wooden	Minnesota (DNR)
Mike Wells	Missouri (DNR)
Dru Buntin	Missouri (DNR)
Gretchen Benjamin	Wisconsin (DNR)

Federal Liaisons:

Susan Smith	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD)
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5)
Rick Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (RIFO)
David Kennedy	U.S. Geological Survey (UMESC)
Mike Sullivan	Natural Resources Conservation Service

Others in attendance:

John Whitaker	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Rich Worthington	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (HQ)
Col. Duane Gapinski	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Marv Hubbell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Ken Barr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Gary Loss	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Teresa Kincaid	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Roger Perk	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Scott Whitney	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Heather Anderson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP)
Dan Wilcox	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP)

Dave Leake	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)
Dennis Fenske	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVS)
Sheila Calovich	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5)
Bill Gradle	Natural Resources Conservation Service (Illinois)
Tom Boland	MACTEC St. Louis
Paul Rohde	MARC 2000
Ron Kroese	The McKnight Foundation
Max Starbuck	National Corn Growers Assoc.
William Doe	Western Illinois University
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lisa DeAlessio	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Derek Martin	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Meeting Minutes

Gary Clark moved and Gretchen Benjamin seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2006 meeting, as drafted. The motion was approved unanimously.

Announcements

Holly Stoerker thanked Gary Loss and Heather Anderson for organizing the preceding day’s tour of Lock and Dam 15.

Executive Director’s Report

Holly Stoerker reported that, in March, UMRBA submitted testimony to House and Senate appropriations subcommittees on the FY 2007 proposed budgets for the Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, Geological Survey, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Agriculture. She distributed a compilation of that testimony and thanked UMRBA’s federal liaison members for their assistance in providing the necessary budget information and background.

Stoerker highlighted the following items from her written report provided in the agenda packet:

- The UMRBA Water Quality Task Force held a meeting on February 8-9 and is scheduled to meet again on June 7-8. Among other things, the group is working to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to express the States’ and EPA’s joint commitment to develop sediment-related water quality criteria for the Upper Mississippi River.
- On May 2-3, Stoerker attended a workshop in Omaha, Nebraska focusing on interstate water quality coordination on the Missouri River. She described the interstate consultation work that UMRBA is leading on the Upper Mississippi River.
- UMRBA staff has been helping plan the 20th Anniversary celebration for the Environmental Management Program (EMP). The event will be held on August 23, 2006

in conjunction with the quarterly meetings of the EMP Coordinating Committee and UMRBA.

- UMRBA's office lease expires June 30, 2006. Some minor remodeling and reconfiguration of the office space is underway. UMRBA will be responsible for ½ of the cost of the construction and those costs will be incorporated into the new lease.

Stoerker requested that UMRBA consider designating someone to execute a new office lease. Gretchen Benjamin moved and Martin Konrad seconded a motion to delegate authority to negotiate and execute a new lease to Executive Director Holly Stoerker. The motion passed unanimously.

Navigation Needs on the Upper Mississippi River

Heather Anderson, Acting Program Manager for Major Rehab and O&M in the Rock Island District (MVR), described the problems associated with the navigation system's aging infrastructure. In particular, she provided an overview of the status of MVR's major rehabilitation projects, including Locks and Dams 11, 19, 24 and Peoria. She also said there is a regional backlog of nearly 300 projects, totaling \$443 million. Approximately 90 percent of the backlog is in the upper three districts on the Mississippi River. The top three most critical projects on the backlog list are in the St. Louis District. Problems include concrete deterioration and metal fatigue, failures of which would shutdown navigation on the river.

Anderson explained that funding for O&M is decreasing, while needs are increasing. The Corps is attempting to meet this challenge by sharing resources regionally and prioritizing the backlog regionally. But there will likely be some reduction in service.

Dan Wilcox of the St. Paul District gave a presentation on the navigation safety and embankment problems at Lock and Dam 3. He noted that Lock and Dam 3 is the navigation dam second most vulnerable to failure in the country. Wilcox explained that the lock is built at a bend in the river and an outdraft above the dam makes downbound transit and approach very difficult. In addition, low embankments on the Wisconsin side have only an 8-foot head at low flow. There have been a series of incidents where tows collide with the dam.

Wilcox described the multi-agency and stakeholder planning process underway to address the Lock and Dam 3 problems. The group has developed a recommended plan that includes a landward guide wall with channel modifications and strengthened embankments. The plan costs \$63.8 million and has a B:C ratio of 2.10. Public review is scheduled for June 2006 and construction could begin as early as FY 07.

Dennis Fenske of the St. Louis District provided an overview of O&M activities on the Middle Mississippi River, including dredging, dikes and revetments, avoid and minimize work under the Biological Opinion, the effects of the Missouri River, and major rehabilitation of Locks 27. Fenske explained that the dikes and revetments on the Middle Mississippi River have environmental benefits, but are also very cost-effective river training structures. As a result of these channel improvements, dredging requirements are 44 percent lower than in the late 1980s, despite lower flow levels.

Fenske explained that reductions in Missouri River flow have affected navigation on the Mississippi River, below the Missouri River confluence. In particular, the navigation season has been reduced by 30 days or more the past three years. Mike Wells voiced Missouri's concern about the decreased navigation season, particularly during key fall shipping times.

Gary Loss explained that the President's FY 07 budget proposal for the Corps includes two changes to O&M. Major rehabilitation projects, which were previously included in the construction account are now in the O&M account. In addition, O&M costs are aggregated by region and are not displayed by individual project or by Corps district. Susan Smith noted that work related to Threatened and Endangered Species (such as Northwest salmon recovery and Missouri River mitigation) has also been moved to the O&M account.

Mike Wells asked whether Missouri River dredging is done by the Corps or a contractor. Fenske explained that the St. Louis District provided a dredge to the Kansas City District by request. However, the Kansas City District, which is the district responsible for Missouri River dredging, typically uses contractors.

Mike Wells asked if the shift of Major Rehab to the O&M account is a backdoor effort to begin using the Inland Waterway Trust Fund to pay for O&M. Gary Loss said that was not OMB's expressed intention.

Gretchen Benjamin asked if the \$443 million backlog is mostly O&M projects or Major Rehab. Heather Anderson explained that it consists primarily of O&M projects, which are federal costs rather than user costs.

Dru Buntin asked for information regarding each district's "critical" needs. Gary Loss explained that the term "critical" means that the work cannot be deferred and should be addressed within a year. Loss commented that funding for the Illinois River is \$8 million short this year. If there is a failure, there will likely be a shutdown of navigation. According to Loss, it may be necessary to eliminate 24-hour service on the Illinois River.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP)

Reevaluation — Chuck Spitzack expressed hope that UMRBA would serve the function of the former Governors' Liaison Committee (GLC) during the NESP reevaluation phase. In particular, UMRBA could help facilitate the position of each State and consensus building among the States. He commented that the reevaluation phase will be "fast-paced" and will require working with UMRBA staff to communicate information and distribute materials.

Spitzack said that the directive from the ASA(CW) stated that the economic analysis should be updated by September 30, 2007 and that the reevaluation should be a #1 priority. In contrast to the original feasibility study, the reevaluation will address only navigation, start with reevaluation of the recommended plan, use updated models and data, and focus on all four accounts rather than just National Economic Development (NED). Spitzack also explained that the reevaluation will be subject to external peer review.

Budget and Work Plans — To accomplish the reevaluation, FY 06 funds will need to be reallocated. Spitzack showed the adjustments to each of the components in FY 06, as well as the proposed FY 07 expenditures, assuming an appropriation of \$10 million. Holly Stoerker noted that the Administration did not request any funding for NESP in FY 07, even though Administration officials have directed that the reevaluation be undertaken, presumably with PED funding provided by Congress.

Gretchen Benjamin asked why FY 06 funds originally allocated for ecosystem restoration planning are being reduced to help pay for the economic reevaluation. Spitzack acknowledged that as a concern, but noted that the future of the ecosystem restoration work is dependent on the reevaluation.

Spitzack presented a list of early construction starts, which could begin as soon as FY 08, assuming an FY 07 PED budget of \$10 million. He explained that some projects were dropped from the list due to the complexity of the remaining planning that needs to be done. Spitzack also showed a bar graph of annual cost estimates for the first 15-year increment of NESP. Those costs peak in 2016 at over \$300 million. Spitzack acknowledged that the shape of the graph and the amount in each year will change if the funding in FY 07 is not \$50 million, as assumed for this version of the bar graph.

Communication Update — Spitzack explained that there is a temporary lull in public involvement and institutional arrangements work efforts due to the high priority being placed on the reevaluation. However, those activities should increase in FY 07. The newsletter and web site development will continue under the reevaluation. Spitzack also noted that there was a very successful public hearing held recently on the Lock and Dam 22 fish passage and expansion plans.

Spitzack reported that a “Commanders’ Agreement” is currently being developed to express the three district commanders’ commitment to inter-district program development on the Upper Mississippi River and as a prelude to the River Council.

Dru Buntin thanked Spitzack for acknowledging the role UMRBA can serve, similar to the GLC. He noted, however, that the UMRBA representatives may not be the most appropriate people to involve in the technical aspects of the economic reevaluation. Missouri DNR is working to facilitate the right connections in Missouri for the Economic Coordinating Committee (ECC).

Gretchen Benjamin expressed concern that the reallocation of FY 06 funding was done without consulting the State partners, who, among others, are working in support of NESP appropriations. Benjamin also commented that public involvement should be more than just public meetings on specific projects. She stressed the importance of increased public education to change the public image of the program and help garner public support for authorization and appropriations.

EMP and NESP Strategic Planning

Holly Stoerker explained that, last November, UMRBA began to develop a series of issues papers exploring the legislative options related to the potential merger of EMP and NESP.

The assumption was that the process would culminate in August 2006, with a proposal to forward to Congress. However, given recent indications that the Senate will be moving forward with consideration of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) this spring, the process had to be expedited. Therefore, UMRBA developed a proposal to amend the existing NESP authorizing language in WRDA, based on what appear to be the two highest priority issues that have emerged thus far from discussion of the issue papers. In particular, the proposal seeks to add monitoring authority to NESP by directly linking to the 1986 EMP authorization. In addition, the proposal seeks to add provisions to NESP requiring consultation with Interior and the States and providing authority for funding transfers. Stoerker reported that these proposals have been shared with House and Senate Committee staff.

Barb Naramore provided an overview of the final issue paper, which focuses on the related issues of reporting to Congress and the role of advisors. Both the EMP and NESP legislation have provisions requiring reports to Congress and establishing advisory committees or panels. However, the provisions are not the same. The timing and intent of the Congressional reports for the two programs differ. In addition, the role and focus of the advisory groups differ. Naramore described a variety of options that could be pursued, some of which would integrate or harmonize the disparate approaches and some of which would retain the differences. Naramore also described a number of considerations related to report scheduling, scope of reports, the role of advisors, the composition of advisory groups, the need for advisors, and program integration.

Naramore summarized the conclusions that emerged from the discussion at the EMP-CC meeting on the preceding day, regarding Congressional reporting and advisory groups:

- Integrating EMP and NESP reports to Congress is preferable to separate reporting processes.
- Longer report intervals are preferable to short report intervals.
- Advisory groups related to the EMP and NESP should be coordinated.
- The spirit of what the legislation is seeking to accomplish by mandating the establishment of advisory groups is already being met by a combination of existing groups, such as the District Teams, EMP-CC, LTRMP audits, and SET.
- Recognize that there is a limit to what can be fixed now, in the abstract, without the benefit of experience in implementing NESP.
- Rather than seeking legislative changes now, use the first report due to Congress following authorization of NESP to make recommendations on the future of the two programs and their integration.
- In the interim, more effectively communicate to Congress and other interested parties what the partners are doing in the spirit of bringing independent perspectives to NESP and the EMP.

UMRBA representatives expressed general agreement with the conclusions of the EMP-CC members.

UMRBA Hazardous Spills Coordination and Oil Pollution Control Activities

Overview — Dave Hokanson provided an overview of UMRBA's program activities related to 1) hazardous spills coordination through the efforts of the UMR Spills Group and 2) the planning and mapping work being done under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) through an EPA cooperative agreement. Hokanson noted that the two efforts are integrated and represent another contact point between UMRBA and State agencies. He also noted that these activities constitute a significant portion of UMRBA's staff effort and funding.

The UMR Spills Group, which was formed in 1989, at the request of Iowa DNR, facilitates coordination of the region's State and federal response agencies on the river. In particular, the group has developed a *UMR Hazardous Spill Response Plan and Resource Manual*, which is currently in the process of being updated. The group also has produced a UMR response resource DVD and emergency action field guide, and supports training classes and exercises.

Hokanson also described UMRBA's OPA planning and mapping efforts, which started in 1992. Under a cooperative agreement with EPA, UMRBA staff has created an *Inland Sensitivity Atlas* and is supporting a variety of interagency planning efforts, including sub-area plans, Net Environmental Benefits Analysis (NEBA) workshops, and the 2007 Spill of National Significance (SONS) exercise.

In addition, Hokanson described UMRBA's work on the Early Warning Monitoring Pilot Project, a cooperative venture with State and federal agencies, the Upper Mississippi River Water Suppliers Coalition, and the American Water Company. The focus of the project is on detecting sudden contamination events and providing timely alerts to intake operators. A pilot monitoring station is currently in place at Lock and Dam 15, with a multi-parameter sonde and online data reporting at RiverGages.com.

Rebecca Wooden asked whether the instrument detects products on the surface or in solution. Hokanson and Sheila Calovich from EPA explained that it varies depending on the product and where it is in the water column. Although the sonde does not currently detect crude oil, changes in the parameters currently measured may be indicative of a petroleum spill, and its value is also in helping to exercise the communication network.

States' Perspective — John Whitaker, current Chair of the UMR Spills Group and leader of Missouri DNR's Bureau of Emergency Response, gave a presentation offering the State responders' perspectives on hazardous spill coordination on the Upper Mississippi River. He described the unique characteristics and challenges associated with spill response on the river and the need for interstate cooperation. Whitaker also described the important role that the UMR Spills Group plays in providing a forum for discussion and information sharing, meeting colleagues in other States, and in maintaining and updating the UMR Spills Plan. Of particular note is the Spill of National Significance (SONS) exercise, scheduled for June 2007. The exercise will be based on a New Madrid earthquake scenario, and will include massive damage in a variety of sectors, including spills. The exercise will involve multiple agencies in 13 States, including 4 of the 5 UMR States, in addition to the Coast Guard, FEMA, EPA, and others. There are a number of pre-meetings and exercises in advance of the June 2007 event, including a mid-planning conference in St. Louis in October 2006.

Mike Wells presented Whitaker with a certificate of appreciation, thanking him for his service as Chair of the UMR Spills Group.

Inland Sensitivity Mapping — Lisa DeAlessio and Derek Martin gave an overview of the Inland Sensitivity Atlas series, which provides a set of databases, tables, and maps that display cultural, economic, and natural resource information for spill responders and planners. The atlas can provide useful information for spill response, writing facility plans, training exercises, or updating area contingency plans. The atlases were originally on paper, but are now available digitally and are currently in the process of being updated. Among the standard atlas contents are: environmentally sensitive areas, managed natural areas, tribal lands, sensitive species, surface water intakes, marinas, locks and dams, archeological sites, aboveground storage facilities, and oil product pipelines.

Sheila Calovich said that the Atlas is a huge project that has been 14 years in the making. She commented that it could not have been done without UMRBA's work. It is a very popular product. Over 5000 atlases have been distributed.

Barb Naramore thanked Sheila Calovich and Ann Whelan of EPA Region 5 for their commitment to the project.

Dru Buntin asked whether the Atlas is used outside of the spill response community, noting that it may be valuable for NEPA review. Calovich commented that the Atlas is growing in popularity and that the regulated community is currently the largest customer.

Dan Wilcox asked if the Atlas contains all potential spill sources. Naramore clarified that there are size cut-offs, which vary by product and source type. But large, concentrated sources are included. Wilcox commented that it is lucky there hasn't been a large spill on the UMR like the ones on the Ohio and Rhine Rivers. He noted that a fate and transport model would be very helpful.

Interstate Water Quality Organizational Options

Holly Stoerker provided an overview of the ongoing work and preliminary results of UMRBA's project related to organizational options for addressing water quality coordination on the UMR. She explained that one of the questions that is being investigated is whether UMRBA would qualify under Section 106 of the Clean Water Act as an interstate agency and thus be eligible for funding to support water pollution control programs. Stoerker explained that 2.6 percent of the Section 106 funding is reserved for interstate agencies and the remainder is allocated among the States. There are currently six interstate organizations nationwide that receive Section 106 funding. Stoerker said that the conclusion is that UMRBA would not qualify under Section 106, largely due to a requirement that interstate agencies must have filed with EPA within 120 days of enactment of the Clean Water Act in 1972 to receive funding. She also commented that changing that requirement would be difficult and is not recommended.

Stoerker noted, however, that through UMRBA's Organizational Options project, the five State water quality agencies have been learning about how other interstate organizations

address interstate water quality issues. Of the 6 agencies that receive Section 106 funding, all are interstate compact agencies, the federal government is a member of all but 2 of them, all are in the eastern region of the U.S., and all have more responsibilities than just water quality. Information is being compiled on the budget, staffing, and structure of these agencies.

Stoerker reported that, at their March meeting, the representatives from the five State water quality agencies identified a preliminary list of functions they would like an interstate agency to serve on the UMR. Those functions relate to standards and criteria, monitoring, assessments, impairments, TMDLs, and permitting. In some cases the interstate agency would serve a coordinating role, and in other cases, the agency would actually undertake specific responsibilities assigned to it by the States. But Stoerker emphasized that the interstate agency would be a creation of the States, not independent of them. Stoerker noted that references to an “agency” or “commission” do not suggest that the States are inclined to form a new entity. Discussion is still focusing on whether and how to modify UMRBA.

Stoerker reported that the next meeting of the State water quality administrators is scheduled for July 12-13, 2006. Remaining topics for consideration include the authority, structure, and funding of a new interstate agency; development of cost estimates; and development of a strategic plan. A final report is targeted for November 2006, at which time a meeting of UMRBA representatives and State water quality administrators is planned.

Dru Buntin asked whether EPA has an opinion about the organizational options under consideration. Bill Franz indicated that EPA is supportive of the effort to look at organizational options and the work of the UMRBA Task Force in general. However, EPA no longer has grant funding available to support the Task Force’s work through Section 104 funds, which have been used in the past. Franz noted that it may be possible to use targeted watershed funding.

Rick Mollahan asked if States could designate UMRBA as a regulatory water quality planning agency and then use State Section 106 funding to support it. Franz replied that EPA would probably not object to that approach, as long as it did not impair the States’ ability to meet their own water quality management obligations.

Holly Stoerker commented that the Organizational Options project is looking for ways to add resources and value, not simply divert a portion of current funding to interstate work. She noted that this will require building a vision for the future and political awareness of the current geographic inequities. In particular, some regions (i.e., the six 106 interstate agencies, the Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes, etc.) receive additional funding for regional programs, while the Mississippi River does not.

Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan

Teresa Kincaid distributed copies of the Corps’ draft public meeting notice for the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan (UMRCP) Study. She said there are four public meetings planned for June 2006 to seek comment on the draft UMRCP report and recommendations. She noted that continued funding for the UMRCP in FY 07 is uncertain. Therefore, the report needs to be completed and forwarded to Corps headquarters by the end of FY 06, with options for additional analysis in FY 07, if funds are made available.

In describing the study results, Kincaid noted that the constraining assumption employed for the evaluation was that up to a one-foot rise would be allowed. She acknowledged that this was not necessarily consistent with some State laws or regulations. Kincaid said that important hydraulic insights were gained from this study. For instance, above Keokuk, levees can be raised without causing more than a one-foot increase in the 100-year flood profile.

Kincaid said none of the plans evaluated have a positive B/C ratio, with the exception of Plan L, which involves protecting the Quincy Bridge to maintain its functionality during a flood. The Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association (UMIMRA) favors Plan G, which involves 500-year protection on the upper river, with no minimization of impacts on the lower river.

Kincaid explained that a number of events occurred during the UMRCF study that influenced the way in which the Corps is considering approaching the final report and recommendations. These events included: a new engineering circular on collaborative planning, which puts more emphasis on accounts other than National Economic Development (NED); Hurricane Katrina, which raised questions about whether selection of the NED plan always leads to the best decisions; and meetings that Corps Headquarters had with UMIMRA representatives, which generated interest in the possibility of identifying a “good plan,” even if that plan is not the NED plan.

Kincaid briefly reviewed the conclusions resulting from the study, including:

- The existing system prevents about 95 percent of average annual damages.
- There is no systemic plan with net NED benefits.
- Reconstruction of levees could be necessary in the future.
- The Corps could continue as facilitator and evaluator if asked and if funding and authority are provided.

Kincaid said that the Corps would consider presenting a “regionally preferred” plan in the final report, if the States want to develop such a plan. According to Kincaid, a regionally preferred plan could take into account where economic development is anticipated in the future and the level of protection the States would like to have in place in the future. The planning process could begin in FY 06 and continue into FY07, if additional funding is made available.

Gary Clark commented that developing a regionally-preferred plan represents a different policy approach, where essentially the question is to identify what the States would like, if money were no object. This open-ended question, with no constraints, puts the States in a difficult position.

Dru Buntin commented that floodplain management involves more than one agency in Missouri and he would thus need to consult with the Missouri State Emergency Management agency.

Martin Konrad asked how the States have been involved in the study to this point. Kincaid said that State involvement has been limited due to travel restrictions in some States. Iowa was not represented at any of the meetings of the UMRCP Collaboration Team. Holly Stoerker noted that Iowa DNR floodplain staff have participated in some of the conference calls UMRBA hosted on this topic.

Holly Stoerker commented that it may be very difficult for the States to agree on a “regionally-preferred” plan given their varying levels of interest and involvement in this study. This may be particularly true if it’s assumed to be a plan for which the States have no financial obligation. However, thus far, the States have identified a few consensus positions on the study, including the value of the flood routing model and the need for reconstruction authority.

Bill Franz asked how the UMRCP relates to floodplain restoration efforts under NESP. He also asked whether the Corps intends to include preferred plans from other stakeholder groups, if it includes UMIMRA’s preferred plan in the final report.

Dave Leake explained that the idea of a “regionally-preferred” plan is unique to the UMRCP, but derives from the concept of a “locally-preferred plan,” which is used in other Corps planning reports. Leake noted that, since there is no single local sponsor for the UMRCP, there should be some other way of identifying a preferred plan from the region’s stakeholders. The Corps assumed this should be the States’ responsibility because they have the broadest expression of regional perspective and interest.

Rebecca Wooden expressed surprise that the Corps is searching for a “preferred plan” or is contemplating further evaluations, given that there was no economically justified plan identified. She questioned why the Corps would support any additional funding for this effort, in light of budgetary shortfalls in other areas. Wooden noted that identifying a “regionally-preferred” plan may be misleading and inadvertently lead to future funding for a plan that is not actually supported by all the States. For instance, Wooden suggested that Minnesota would actually prefer to buy-out floodplain landowners rather than build any more levees.

Dru Buntin said that the States have some comments they will be presenting in a letter from UMRBA. However, the States are not prepared to respond to the Corps’ proposal for developing a regionally-preferred plan.

Gary Clark expressed appreciation for the Corps’ efforts to coordinate and communicate with the States on the UMRCP Collaboration Team.

USDA Conservation Programs in the UMR Basin

Bill Gradle, Illinois State Conservationist, explained that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is both a planning and a program delivery agency. Although NRCS has no direct authority on the UMR, it does work throughout the basin that has a significant impact on the river. NRCS has worked in watersheds for decades, primarily with private landowners and local communities.

Gradle explained Resource Management System plans, which are long range plans that identify a package of land treatment options that landowners can implement over time. Gradle also explained the role of State Technical Committees. The Illinois Committee is composed of over 60 members, including representatives of State and federal agencies, commodity groups, and conservation organizations. Their role is to advise the State Conservationists, voice client concerns, and identify potential problems.

Gradle also described the Swan Lake project in Calhoun County, Illinois. The lake is a 2500 acre backwater of the Illinois River that is filling up with sediment. Through the EMP, the Corps provided some cost share funding to the local soil and water conservation district, which worked with NRCS on an upland land treatment component to the Swan Lake EMP project. Gradle commented that many of the techniques used in the Swan Lake project are being used in many of the post-2002 Farm Bill programs. The Spoon River project is an example, where EQIP funding is being used for streambank stabilization.

Gradle emphasized that NRCS depends on the voluntary cooperation of landowners and does not mandate participation in its programs. He noted that most landowners are very motivated and simply need financial and technical assistance.

Gretchen Benjamin asked if NRCS monitors the land treatment practices to measure their effectiveness. Gradle explained that NRCS is not funded to do monitoring. The monitoring is typically done by USGS, EPA, or others.

Administrative Issues

FY 2007 Budget — Stoerker presented a draft FY 2007 UMRBA budget and said that UMRBA approval is needed prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2006.

Martin Konrad said that Iowa representatives would not be requesting travel reimbursement in FY 2007, so the \$1667 allocation for Iowa can be deleted.

Gretchen Benjamin moved and Gary Clark seconded a motion to approve the draft budget, amended to reflect Konrad's suggested change regarding Iowa travel reimbursement. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Meetings — The future meeting schedule for the Navigation Environmental Coordination Committee (NECC)/Environmental Coordinating Committee (ECC), EMP Coordinating Committee (EMP-CC), and UMRBA is as follows:

- August 22-24, 2006 in La Crosse, Wisconsin
- November 14-16, 2006 in St. Paul, Minnesota
- February 20-22, 2007 in St. Louis, Missouri.

Holly Stoerker said that beginning with the November 2006 meeting dates, the order of the meetings will be changed. UMRBA will meet on the second day, with the NECC/ECC meeting on the first day and EMP-CC meeting on the last day.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.