

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

**May 18, 2011
Quarterly Meeting**

**Holiday Inn
Rock Island, Illinois**

Ken Barr of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. on May 18, 2011. A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Minutes from the February 17, 2011 Meeting

Janet Sternburg moved and Jim Fischer seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2011 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Management

Chuck Spitzack reported that USACE has allocated \$610,700 in FY 11 funding to NESP. This follows enactment of the FY 11 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act on April 15, 2011. With approximately \$641,000 in FY 10 carry-over, NESP's total funds available for FY 11 are about \$1.25 million. NESP has already obligated more than this amount while operating under the previous continuing resolution authorities and thus is in the process of halting its preliminary engineering and design (PED) work. Spitzack reported that NESP is not included in the President's FY 12 budget request and thus future funding is thus once again dependent on a Congressional add.

Spitzack said Corps staff are scheduled to brief the District Commanders in late May about NESP's plans for deferring projects. Corps staff also hope to meet with USACE Headquarters (HQ) this summer to discuss a new implementation strategy for NESP.

Spitzack summarized NESP's navigation work plan under its earlier planning assumption of approximately \$1.325 million in FY 11 for the navigation component. In response to a question from Bernie Schonhoff, Ken Barr reported that the Cultural Resources Stewardship Teaching Guide is complete and will be posted on NESP's web page soon. Funding constraints preclude printing the Guide at this time. In response to a suggestion by Schonhoff, Barr said he will connect with Scott Yess regarding the UMRCC Education Group's potential role in distributing the Guide.

In response to a question from Karen Hagerty, Nate Richards said the draft white paper on submerged aquatic vegetation is currently under review by the paper's contributors.

Chuck Spitzack mentioned that District staff had anticipated monitoring USACE's progress in developing the Lock Operations Management Application (LOMA) for the UMR. In response to a question from Jim Fischer, Spitzack said LOMA is not a NESP project.

Project Status

Chuck Spitzack said Corps staff are in the process of bringing all NESP projects to a stopping point, with the goal of minimizing inefficiencies and allowing prompt project restarts should NESP receive new funding. Corps staff overviewed the current status of NESP's mitigation and ecosystem restoration

projects, including the next step for each project, with associated time and cost estimates. This information is included in the table below.

Project	Next Step		
	Activity	Anticipated Time	Estimated Cost
Moore's Towhead (Mitigation)	DQC and ATR	3 months	\$30,000
Reach Planning	System Objectives Report	N/A (Completed)	N/A
System Cultural Stewardship — Bank Stabilization in Pool 13	ATR	9 months	\$30,000
Forest Management — Reno Bottoms	Review process of PIR	4 months	\$30,000
Barge Fleeting Plan	Finalize, and make publically available, the barge fleeting website; develop barge fleeting narrative report outline	4 months	\$35,000
L&D 26 Fish Passage	Alternative Plans	1-5 months	\$75,000
L&D 22 Fish Passage	a) AFB b) Public review of draft PIR c) Public meeting d) Final PIR	a) 2 months b) 4 months c) 5 months d) 7 months	\$80,000
L&Ds 22 & 26 Fish Passage	Monitoring — telemetry, ELAM, etc.	Continuous	\$275,000
Root River Floodplain Restoration	2-dimensional calibrated computer model for alternative evaluation and design	8-12 months	\$50,000
Pierce County Islands	None		
Pool 18 Water Level Management	ATR	3 months	\$45,000
Peoria Reach Backwater Restoration	ATR	6 months	\$100,000
Upper Iowa River Delta Backwater Restoration	PMP	3 months	\$15,000
Lead Chute Backwater Restoration	PMP	3 months	\$15,000
Buffalo Island Side Channel	Public review of draft PIR	2 months	\$30,000
Scheniman Chute Side Channel	Report reconciliation memo to MVD (re project review done prior to release of the 1/11 review guidance)	3 months	\$25,000
Maple Island Side Channel	PMP	3 months	\$15,000
Herculaneum Wing-Dam Dike Alteration	IEPR exclusion waiver; MVD approval on project report	4 months, pending IEPR decision	\$25,000
Twin Island Shoreline Protection	Public review of draft PIR	4 months	\$25,000
L&D 25 Dam Point Control	None	N/A	N/A
L&D 8 Dam Embankment Lowering	AFB	N/A	\$75,000
Illinois River — new planning project (TBD)	PMP	3 months	\$15,000

Acronyms used in the table above are as follows: AFB (Alternative Formulation Briefing), ATR (Agency Technical Review), DQC (District Quality Control/Quality Assurance), ELAM (Eulerian-Lagrangian-Agent Method), IEPR (Independent External Peer Review), PIR (Project Implementation Report), PMP (Project Management Plan).

Bill Franz asked about the potential to incorporate the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) developed under NESP into the Inland Sensitivity Atlases for the UMRS that UMRBA and US EPA have developed. Jon Duyvejonck said resource managers contributing to the NRI have expressed reservations about any release of sensitive data, including use in the spill contingency maps. He said state approvals would be required.

Tom Crump asked about the potential to advance some deferred projects under other authorities, including planning assistance to the states and EMP. Marv Hubbell explained that any new projects implemented under EMP, including those transferred from NESP, would require an approved fact sheet. In addition, EMP partners would need to consider how to integrate any new projects into the project sequence. In response to a suggestion from Jeff DeZellar, Hubbell said he would consider using EMP outreach funds to distribute the Teaching Guide. In light of this discussion, Hubbell said partners can discuss transferring some of NESP's projects to other UMRS authorities at a future meeting.

In response to a question from Bernie Schonhoff, Barr said the biggest challenge in deferring projects will be staff turnover and other restart issues. He said external factors, such as addressing the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) shortfalls, will be major determinants of NESP's future.

In response to a request by Jim Fischer, Barr said Corps staff will prepare brief summaries for as many of the NESP projects as possible, including the location of the project data and other information. This effort is already underway, but is contingent on sufficient funds to support a smooth program shutdown.

Update on Model Certification

USACE model certification policy and procedures

Nate Richards overviewed the following USACE policies related to model certification:

- USACE formed the Planning Models Improvement Program (PMIP) in 2003 to review, improve, and validate USACE's analytical tools and models.
- USACE issued USACE Engineering Circular (EC) 1105-2-407 in 2005 to identify requirements for certifying and using planning models.
- In 2007, the PMIP developed the Protocols for Certification of Planning Models, which outlines the model certification process and the criteria used to evaluate proposed models.
- USACE provided additional policy guidance in 2008 that supplements EC 1105-2-407. The 2008 policy guidance includes recommendations for the certification of several planning models.
- In 2011, USACE updated the 2005 EC (now EC 1105-2-412), in which USACE reiterated the importance of doing quality assurance reviews of planning models.

Richards said the USACE Ecosystem Center of Planning Expertise (ECOPCX) is responsible for reviewing models used in the Corps' planning activities, and making recommendations to USACE Headquarters (HQ) regarding their certification. The ECOPCX examines planning models based on their technical and system quality and usability. Richards explained that ECOPCX forms a review team to provide it with input on a model's potential technical flaws or shortcomings, appropriate uses and limitations, and accuracy. The review team is also tasked with providing the ECOPCX with recommendations on potential near- and long-term solutions to improve the model's reliability, usefulness, and range of application.

UMR model certifications

Richards reported that District staff forwarded eight ecosystem models to ECOPCX for review. These models include the Aquatic Habitat Appraisal Guide (AHAG), Wildlife Habitat Appraisal Guide (WHAG), Bluegill Winter Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Model, Smallmouth Bass HSI Spreadsheet, Diving Duck Migration Model, Dabbling Duck Migration Model, Shorebird Migration Model, and Mink HSI Modification Model. District staff anticipate that ECOPCX will complete its review of these eight models soon.

Richards said review teams have submitted their comments to ECOPCX regarding AHAG and WHAG. The AHAG review team concluded that AHAG is outdated and identified several areas needing improvement, such as the Users Guide, species and guilds, and the variables used to predict ecosystem responses to restoration efforts. The review team recommended that a multi-agency team implements the AHAG and that the Corps consider ways to use LTRMP data in the Guide. While the WHAG review team concluded that WHAG is an appropriate ecological framework for conducting a habitat assessment, it recommended some modifications for improvement. These include updating the Users Guide, increasing documentation of the Guide's use, and correcting spreadsheet errors. In addition, the WHAG review team suggested that the Guide be implemented by a multi-agency team and that the Corps incorporate scientifically sound monitoring plans, better document component species, include standard operating procedures for data collection, and further refine and document the Guide's ecological response variables, species, guilds, and habitat type and use. Richards said the next steps in the AHAG and WHAG certification process are as follows:

- District staff and partners submit to ECOPCX their short- and long-term goals, improvements, and other recommendations for the models.
- ECOPCX considers forwarding these recommendations to USACE HQ, along with the models for certification.
- USACE HQ decides whether to certify the AHAG and/or WHAG.

Ken Barr stressed the models' importance in developing restoration projects, particularly as a communications tool among managers. He said the Corps can only use certified models, thus the need to invest in obtaining the certifications. Marv Hubbell clarified that the Corps is allowed to continue using the models in planning while making progress on their certification. EMP and NESP have co-funded the certification expenses, and District staff will have to consider how to fund any additional work needed. Richards reiterated that District staff will need to update some elements of both AHAG and WHAG before submitting them to USACE HQ for certification.

In response to a question from Barb Naramore, Barr said the AHAG and WHAG review teams' long-term conceptual comments focused on the lack of post-project verification of the models. Bernie Schonhoff noted that the AHAG and WHAG were developed for specific species and locations, but are being used in a much broader geographic range. He said developing new models may be needed.

Jon Duyvejonck asked how much flexibility will be allowed in applying these models (i.e., modifying models to reflect specific project attributes) once they are certified. Richards said major changes that would essentially produce a different model would not be allowed. However, minor changes in the input variables would be allowed. In response to a question from Barry Johnson, Richards explained that the model review process is iterative. A model's developers will have opportunities to comment on any recommended changes to the model. However, USACE HQ will make any final decisions regarding required modifications to a model.

Richards reported that USACE HQ approved the Fish Passage Connectivity Index for one-time use in planning the L&D 22 fish passage project. ECOPCX is expected to recommend to USACE HQ soon that the Index be certified and made available for other UMR fish passage projects. Richards said external review of the Index took four years to complete and cost at least \$80,000.

In response to a request from Janet Sternburg, Richards said he will distribute the AHAG and WHAG reviewers' comments to the NECC and EMP-CC distribution lists. Duyvejonck observed that the use of models has been inconsistent across projects on the UMRS. He offered his opinion that the models are most useful when done by a team of partners, rather than by an individual. Barr concurred, and stressed the need to document the importance of a team approach in the models' users guides.

Partner Reports

Rick Nelson introduced Amber Andress, who is now serving as the Rock Island Field Office's USACE liaison.

Janet Sternburg said the Corps has initiated watershed management planning as part of the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment (LMRRA).

Bernie Schonhoff announced that Iowa DNR's newly appointed Director is Roger Lande.

Steve Sletten said PBSJ has fully transitioned its name to Atkins. He said the company has provided services to USACE and USFWS.

Brad Walker said the Nicollet Island Coalition sent a letter to ASA(CW) Jo-Ellen Darcy on April 12, asking for support in de-authorizing NESP.

Kevin Foerster announced that Rick Frietsche will retire on June 3.

Olivia Dorothy said the Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Office is actively involved in Illinois' river restoration efforts. She said Illinois Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon chairs the Mississippi River Coordinating Council (MRCC) and the Illinois River Coordinating Council (IRCC).

Karen Hagerty encouraged partners to visit LTRMP's updated web page on UMESC's server: <http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/ltrmp.html>. Hagerty reported that the collection of systemic bathymetric data is complete and can be accessed by contacting Jim Rogala. LiDAR data collection for Pools 15 to 19 will begin once weather and water level conditions permit.

Jim Fischer said Wisconsin DNR continues to be affected by retirements and efforts to restructure and downsize the agency. Fischer reported that Ken Johnson is now serving as Wisconsin DNR's Water Division Administrator and Russ Rasmussen is the new Water Division Deputy Administrator.

Bob Clevestine said, over the next few months, USFWS will be updating its cooperative agreements with Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa that govern the states' management of General Plan lands that are part of the refuge system.

Kevin Bluhm, on behalf of the Public Outreach Team (PORT), apologized to USFWS for inadvertently eliminating a credit to the Service in the Spring 2011 *Our Mississippi* article, "The Corps' secret weapon: its army of volunteers." The Corps has added another review step to ensure that critical messages are not dropped from future articles.

Other Business

Ken Barr announced that the August 2011 NECC meeting is canceled. Future NECC and joint EMP-CC/ NECC meetings will be contingent on funding. Barr said that, if NESP receives FY 12 funding, NECC meetings will likely be held November 16, 2011 and February 29, 2012. In the interim, USACE staff will continue to communicate to partners about funding and other programmatic announcements through the NECC distribution list.

In response to a suggestion from Barb Naramore, meeting participants agreed to review today's minutes this summer via email.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

**NECC Attendance List
May 18, 2011**

NECC Members

Ken Barr	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Rick Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Butch Atwood	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Bernie Schonhoff	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Janet Sternburg	Missouri Department of Conservation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5

Others in Attendance

Tom Crump	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Kevin Bluhm	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marvin Hubbell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Chuck Theiling	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Nate Richards	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Donovan Henry	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kevin Foerster	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Amber Adress	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Bob Clevestine	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Mike Jawson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Bob Buchmiller	U.S. Geological Survey, Iowa Water Science Center
Olivia Dorothy	Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Office
Rick Mollahan	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Steve Shults	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Harold Hommes	Iowa Department of Agriculture
Pat Boddy	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Walt Popp	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Steve Sletten	Atkins
Brad Walker	Izaak Walton League
Tom Boland	MACTEC
Don Powell	SEH Inc.
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Dave Hokanson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association