

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

**May 22, 2019  
Quarterly Meeting**

**Hampton Inn Gateway Arch  
St. Louis, Missouri**

Justin Sexton of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. on May 22, 2019. UMRR Coordinating Committee representatives present were Brian Chewning (USACE), Sabrina Chandler (USFWS) via phone, Mark Gaikowski (USGS), Randy Schultz (IA DNR), Megan Moore (MN DNR) via phone, Matt Vitello (MO DoC), Jim Fischer (WI DNR), and Marty Adkins (NRCS). A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

**Minutes of the February 27, 2019 Meeting**

Jim Fischer moved and Randy Schultz seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the February 27, 2019 UMRR Coordinating Committee meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**Regional Management and Partnership Collaboration**

Marshall Plumley expressed appreciation for the invitation from USGS staff to meet with elected officials and USGS Director Jim Reilly on April 16, 2019 at UMESC. The visit included a tour of the Center and a discussion of UMRR.

Plumley reported that \$7.56 million of UMRR's \$33.17 million FY 2019 appropriation was obligated in the second quarter and that \$11.5 million was obligated as of May 21, 2019. Plumley said the program has excelled at obligating funds into projects and science. The FY 2019 obligations to date are typical of UMRR's annual program implementation cycle at this point in the fiscal year. Bass Ponds habitat project is a considerable upcoming expenditure and Keithsburg and Clarence Cannon habitat projects will be awarded later this year. Plumley reviewed UMRR's FY 2019 internal allocations as follows:

- Regional Administration and Programmatic Efforts – \$1,100,000
- Regional Science and Monitoring – \$10,295,000
  - o Long term resource monitoring – \$4,920,000
  - o Regional science in support of restoration – \$3,750,000
  - o Regional science staff support – \$200,000
  - o Habitat project evaluations – \$975,000
  - o Habitat Needs Assessment-II/Regional Project Sequencing – \$450,000
- Habitat Restoration – \$21,775,000
  - o MVP – \$7,670,000
  - o MVR – \$7,695,000
  - o MVS – \$6,310,000
  - o Model certification – \$100,000

### *FY 2020 President's Budget*

Plumley said the President's FY 2020 budget recommendation for UMRR is \$33,170,000. The final FY 2020 UMRR appropriation is unknown.

### *UMRR Five-Year Plan*

Plumley pointed to page B-5 of the agenda packet, and said the UMRR five-year plan chart has been updated through FY 2023. Jim Fischer expressed appreciation for the inclusion of the five-year plan chart in the packet and said it is helpful for tracking as well as for sharing the complexity of the program with the Administration and elected leaders. In response to a question from Kirsten Wallace, Plumley said he anticipates that the project selection process will add projects in feasibility and he will continue to update the chart and provide in the agenda packets.

Marty Adkins suggested that Plumley meet with NRCS conservation easement program managers and state natural resource agencies to discuss improving coordination of HREPs with upland conservation areas and practices to maximize opportunities and outcomes in the system. Plumley agreed and said that it might be good to invite them to river team meetings as well. Adkins said coordination had been done previously, but suggested it be institutionalized. Sabrina Chandler noted their involvement would also be helpful to identify policy issues for HREPs involving WRP lands as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has avoided projects with WRP due to policy issues. Adkins said it would not be necessary to have HREPs on WRP lands, but provided Horseshoe Bend as an example where there was a mosaic of easement lands with some managed by The Nature Conservancy and some privately held that might provide an opportunity. Chandler noted that an HREP proposal for Horseshoe Bend was submitted and determined to be outside the scope of UMRR, and added that the policy issues arose on other fee title land encumbered by WRP. Chandler said that, if the policy issues could be addressed, WRP lands would provide an excellent opportunity for habitat restoration under UMRR. Gretchen Benjamin suggested looking for ways to coordinate NRCS projects on tributaries to improve inflow and identify HREP opportunities on the mainstem as a systems approach to conservation in the basin. Fischer said that improved coordination was discussed in the 2015-2025 UMRR Strategic Plan and suggested that fact sheets include a check box noting whether surrounding areas have been reviewed for related efforts that may provide benefits to the HREP. Andrew Stephenson stated that the river teams will be asked to consider synergy when developing project proposals.

### *Statements of UMRR's National Significance*

Plumley said there was minimal progress in developing statements of UMRR significance since the February 27, 2019 UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting due to other high priorities. He emphasized the importance of these statements as a communication tool to articulate the importance of the system, to define a desired future condition, and to help establish the end goal of the program to claim success. Plumley apologized for the delay and said he will schedule a call with the Coordinating Committee in the coming months to discuss next steps and will provide regional and national examples as read aheads. Fischer and Chandler both said no apologies were necessary and that it is understandable considering the compressed schedule due to government shutdown as well other higher priority initiatives.

### *Reflections on One Year as Program Manager*

Plumley provided reflections on major lessons learned during his first-year tenure as UMRR program manager through the themes: listen, people first, execution, partnership, stewardship, vision.

- Listen – He has appreciated getting out and hearing from a variety of people and partners about their missions and what needs to be brought to bear on the program and has found that those involved in the program are skilled at listening to the public and stakeholders.

- People first – The people involved in the program have so much to offer with their skills and gifts and Plumley credits them with solving tough issues for the program.
- Execution – This is a significant metric for gauging the quality of the program and the program’s ability to execute is due to the partnership.
- Partnership – The partnership serves as an example for other programs regionally and nationally.
- Stewardship – It is important to take care of this resource, which is the “body of the county,” and the greatest resource the country has next to its people.
- Vision – The partnership will be even more effective if we can share on a personal level why we do what we do and what we hope to do.

### *Potential Changes to State Management Responsibilities*

Matt Vitello discussed potential land management policy changes in Missouri DoC following the culmination of a two-year strategic planning process. The agency identified opportunities to alleviate its burden by reducing the number of acres managed for other agencies including General Plan lands owned by the Corps. Missouri DoC is currently working internally as well as with the Corps and USFWS to determine how these changes would affect current and future HREPs. In response to a question from Andy Barnes, Vitello said the agreement in place requires one year of notice before vacating management responsibilities. Subsequent changes to a number of waterfowl regulations would require additional analysis and public outreach. Chandler said she appreciated that Vitello raised the issue early so the necessary conversations can occur to ensure the issue will be addressed appropriately. Vitello expressed his appreciation to Chandler and the Corps for their productive conversation to date. Plumley said the Corps is currently identifying staff who should be involved in future discussions involving HREPs. In response to a question from Brian Chewning, Vitello said that continued coordination to understand the potential impact to these actions will take place over the next year and acknowledged the inopportune timing with the ongoing HREP selection process.

### *External Communications*

UMRR partners reported on the following communication and outreach activities since the February 27, 2019 UMRR Coordinating Committee meeting:

- Wallace reported that the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment invited UMRBA to speak at its April 10, 2019 hearing about the importance and compatibility of managing inland rivers for both navigation and ecosystem health.
- Karen Hagerty said UMRR had a booth with a sand table at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium’s April 20, 2019 “Party for the Planet” and interacted with about 500 visitors. Plumley added that conversations have begun regarding updating the 15-year old UMRR displays at the museum.
- Fischer mentioned that Steve Galarneau of Wisconsin DNR’s Office of Great Waters spoke on behalf of UMRR at a meeting with DNR leadership and the Secretary’s Office.
- Mark Gaikowski said USGS Director Jim Reilly, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Congressman Ron Kind, La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, and MRCTI Executive Director Colin Wellenkamp toured UMESC in April 2019 and were updated on UMRR. USGS is planning to host a Congressional delegation visit to Wisconsin in August, 2019 that may coincide with the UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting. Gaikowski added that American Queen is planning to bring a steamboat vessel up the river to stop in La Crosse as well. Scott Morlock said he and Sandy Morrison will be meeting with the American Queen boat to talk about water quality efforts.

- Chandler provided UMRR briefing papers to new USFWS leadership in Washington D.C. and attended the Mississippi River Parkway Commission's semi-annual meeting in April 2019. Chandler is coordinating with Parkway Commission meeting planners to determine field trip locations for the next meeting in La Crosse.
- Gaikowski said the 2019 Mississippi River Parkway Commission's annual meeting will be held in La Crosse and might present an opportunity to highlight some notable HREPs in the vicinity. Chandler said that USFWS staff are working with the meeting planners to determine fieldtrip locations.

In response to a question from Chewning, Wallace said that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee asked that she speak on the compatibility of navigation and ecosystem restoration on the river. Wallace explained that the interest is mostly due to Missouri River controversy following the spring 2019 floods as well as the newly authorized Lower Mississippi River feasibility study.

### **UMRR Showcase Presentation**

#### *Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands*

Brandon Schneider and Jasen Brown, both from MVS, described the tentatively selected plan (TSP) for Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands HREP including promoting natural river processes in island construction and self-sustaining dredge cuts to reduce O&M costs. The public meeting for this project was the highest attended in St. Louis District, which is still receiving calls and encouragement for the project to keep moving forward. Schneider said the last aerial photo of the area prior to the construction of the L&D in 1932 shows many islands of which only two large islands can be seen in aerials from 1941. Problems identified include loss of depth and flow in Piasa Chute, loss of backwater habitat, and loss of diverse island mosaic. Goals for the project are to increase depth and flow diversity in side channels, increase depth diversity in connected backwaters, and restore diverse island mosaic. The area used to be frequented by the Alton boat club and water skiers but is now too shallow. This project could restore recreational boating opportunities in the area as well as provide fishing and hunting, photography, and environmental interpretation and education opportunities. Navigation may benefit due to increased flows. Aquatic vegetation is anticipated to respond well in conjunction with environmental pool management.

Brown said Kat McCain was the lead planner on the project and he explained the engineering behind the Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands HREP. A braided dredge cut is intended to enhance natural river processes already occurring and promoting island creation. Brown highlighted the project's use of ERDC's TOPAZ high performing computer to run 150 adaptive hydraulics model variants with varying CFS from two-, five-, 10-, 25-, and 50- year events and emphasized the reduced time and cost of feasibility as a result. The TSP includes construction of notched rock structure to borrow energy from the main flow to ensure a self-sustaining dredge cut on the landward side of Piasa Island. The project finished planning in August 2018 and is now in design, with construction expected to begin in 2020 or early 2021.

In response to a question from Randy Schultz, Kat McCain explained that rootless islands are those that have no connection with other land. In response to a question from Plumley, Brown said the estimated cost of the project is \$25 million. In response to a question from Stephenson, Brown said there was no cost to use the high performing computer with the only restriction being available server time. Reduced time and labor of running these models resulted in substantial cost savings. Gaikowski said USGS has one high power computer available now and will have a new deep learning computer available in fall 2019 or spring 2020; both available for HREP use. In response to a question from Chewning, Brown explained that the addition of the rock structure will increase the flow through the chute by 40 percent and that structures will be built two feet above the max pool height so they should always be visible. In

response to a question from Marty Adkins, Brown explained that modeling high flow events showed that the rock structures can divert necessary flow to channel to be self-sustaining. In response to a question from Mike Klingner, Brown said the new islands will be built to the same elevation as the existing islands – i.e., Piasa and Eagles Nest. In response to a question from Plumley, McCain said that constructed islands are targeting least tern restoration and that vegetation on the islands is undesirable.

#### *Status and Trends of Smallmouth Buffalo in UMRS*

Kris Maxson, IRBS, presented on the status and trends of smallmouth buffalo in the UMRS. Maxson acknowledged that data for the presentation comes from all six UMRR LTRM field stations. Three species of buffalo (largemouth, smallmouth, black) make up 35 percent of commercial catch and 30 percent of commercial value in the UMR, totaling 3.5 million pounds of harvest. Smallmouth buffalo is the most abundant of the species. Standardization of fish monitoring across the six field stations has allowed for comparison across the UMRS. Maxson said there is a decreasing trend in harvest, which may be due to fewer commercial anglers. Large hoop net catch per unit effort (CPUE) is trending down in all LTRM pools, but up in the open river with the average length of fish increasing in all areas. Electrofishing CPUE has shown a slight downward trend in all pools and the open river, with the greatest change in LaGrange. In response to a question from Adkins, Maxson said the estimated mortality is approximately 9.7 percent per year in Pool 13.

Maxson explained that fish collected for the growth study were collected during LTRM and LTEF routine sampling in 2017, frozen, and transported to IRBS. Pool 4 had, on average, the longest fish, with smaller fish downstream. Growth curves show that, in Pool 13, smallmouth may be smaller (230-290mm) and younger (one to three years) at maturity than in other areas, with Pool 26 and LaGrange averaging approximately 340-405mm long and 5.1 to 7.3 years old at maturity. Maxson cautioned that these differences may be due to confidence in assigning ages as there is no structure that has been validate for ageing smallmouth buffalo.

Overall, Maxson said the population is not showing signs of overfishing and has low estimated mortality with individuals regularly reaching age 20. CPUE is trending down in most LTRM pools, but smallmouth buffalo are still abundant.

In response to a question from Adkins, Maxson said smallmouth are bottom feeders, but bigmouth are planktivores so there could be some competition with Asian carp. In response to a question from Jim Cole, Maxson stated that buffalo are common target species for bowfishing. While bowfishing has increased, he does not have the data to show any correlation between them. In response to a question from Fischer, Maxson said he does not know at what point action would be needed if the trend continues downward. He added that a bigmouth in South Dakota was recently estimated to be over 100 years old. In response to a question from Chewning, Maxson said that the downward trend in harvest may be due to decreases in licenses. In response to a question from Karen Hagerty, Maxson said large nets target larger fish and looking at young of the year may better indicate recruitment trends. Maxson responded to a question from Fischer, saying the majority of commercial harvest of bigmouth buffalo is for Asian markets and human consumption.

#### **Long Term Resource Monitoring and Science**

##### *FY 2019 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report*

Jennie Sauer said that LTRM is now tracking a record number of tasks and projects, which can be found in Appendix C of the meeting packet.

Sauer said accomplishments of the second quarter of FY 2019 include publication of the following:

- Manuscript: “Applying concepts of general resilience to large river ecosystems: A case study from the Upper Mississippi and Illinois rivers.”
- Completion report: “Off-channel waterbodies in the Middle Mississippi River: A pilot investigation.”

Sauer said the manuscript was part of the ongoing ecological resilience work by Kristen Bouska and briefly explained that the purpose of the resilience research framework is to outline research opportunities by examining how past, current, and future projects can inform and build on current knowledge. Sauer said current resilience work is focused on defining the following three potential alternate regimes: 1) a clear, vegetated state or a turbid, sparsely vegetated state; 2) a diverse native fish community or an invasive-dominant fish community; and 3) diverse and dynamic floodplain vegetation or invasive-dominant wet meadow. Sauer explained that differences among floodplain reaches in the ten identified indicators were represented through spider diagrams and noted that more color in the spider diagram denotes more indicators addressed.

Sauer explained that the completion report was a pilot investigation to explore water quality changes and fish communities in backwater areas formed through a levee break. Backwaters were clearer and warmer than the main channel and Horseshoe Lake showed changes in fish communities including presence of bluegill. Results may inform potential backwater creation in the Middle Mississippi River.

Sauer said that all 2018 LTRM vegetation, fish, and water quality raw data is now available on the graphical browsers. She noted that turbidity in Pool 8 decreased during the summer and that information and graphical outputs can help in HREP and management discussions.

Sauer stated that the LTRM water quality lab participated in the Standard Reference Sample, which consists of many organizations analyzing the same water sample and submitting their results for comparison. While it is not a certification process, USGS is required to participate and LTRM staff take pride in their participation and their results. Water quality lab Standard Reference Sample results show that LTRM water quality labs are rated good to excellent for phosphorous and nitrite and nitrate as N. Sauer emphasized that this is an example of the behind-the-scenes work that helps make UMRR successful and high quality.

Sauer observed that LTRM was well represented at the 51<sup>st</sup> annual meeting of the Mississippi River Research Consortium (MRRC) meeting with half of the 25 presentations and many posters utilizing LTRM datasets or models. She explained that Dr. Quinton Phelps from West Virginia University accompanied 10 students who are using LTRM-related data and resources. Hagerty mentioned John Chick was studying fish populations with archaeologists. Sauer added that the floodplain forest session was a particularly good example of connecting LTRM with restoration and of multiple partners coming together and using LTRM data.

Sauer reiterated that USGS Director Jim Reilly had visited UMESC and received an overview of UMRR and that Colin Wellenkamp of MRCTI had preserved the moment on Twitter.

#### *USACE LTRM Report*

Karen Hagerty said the Corps is planning that the FY 2019-2020 funding for UMRR monitoring and science in support is \$8.67 million. She explained that four science proposals were selected and will receive funding totaling \$583,137 and a fifth proposal will be funded through salary savings and support from UW-La Crosse. Funding for decadal LC/LU was approved and will total \$1.982 million over FY 2020-2023.

### *A-Team Report*

Vitello said the A-Team met in La Crosse on April 24, 2019 in conjunction with the MRRC. He reported that the A-Team received updates on UMRR from Marshall Plumley and on LTRM from Jeff Houser. A-Team members discussed the resilience framework with Kristen Bouska and were asked to submit comments on the document by the end of May 2019. The A-Team had a productive discussion concerning modifications to the science review process, including having discussions with PIs before members are tasked with ranking the proposals. A-Team members were asked to provide stories using LTRM data that could be included in the next LTRM status and trends report. The A-Team meeting also included a presentation on climate change impacts and trends in Minnesota and a similar presentation on Wisconsin. Jeff Houser will develop an outline and scope for the next LTRM status and trends report for the A-Team's input at its next meeting. Vitello said the next meeting has not been scheduled but will occur before the August 21, 2019 UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting. Minnesota DNR's Nick Schlessler is the new chair. [Note: The A-Team met July 31, 2019 via webinar.]

Hagerty and Fischer expressed their gratitude for Vitello serving as chair of the A-Team. In response to a question from Fischer, Vitello said no conclusions were made about how A-Team input could be used in the HREP selection process, but noted that a number of A-Team members serve on the river teams, so it may be duplicative. Marty Adkins asked if a summary of big picture results was available to pass on to NRCS state conservationists who may not be involved in discussions but would be interested in knowing about the available data. In response, Vitello said that some is posted on the LTRM and UMRR websites. Sauer added that those individuals could be added to the LTRM distribution list and clarified that the type of information should be similar to what is relevant to Congressional members and high-level administration. Hagerty suggested a report card for automated measures could be added as a follow-on to the Status and Trends Report. Wallace reflected on past conversations about the communication plan and identifying information that would be relevant to parties outside UMRR. Hagerty and Adkins suggested tailoring information to different audiences with different mediums for distribution. Fischer said the A-Team might help identify relevant information for other groups.

### *2020 LTRM Status and Trends Report*

Sauer explained that the target audience for the third edition LTRM status and trends report will be scientists, river managers, and knowledgeable public, with summary documents tailored to other audiences as needed. The report will be technical in nature, similar to the 2008 document. Sauer identified some previous relevant documents as Ecological Status and Trends of the UMRS (2008), Status and Trends of Selected Resources of the UMRS (2008), Indicators of Ecosystem Health for the UMRS (2013), and Fish Indicators of Ecosystem Health: UMRS (2017). Sauer stated that associated activities during FY 2019 will be identifying a clear purpose for the document, developing an outline of intended content, seeking review from A-Team and UMRR Coordinating Committee, and identifying staff that will assist in document production. Plumley stated that it is important to tell the story as a program and this report will help inform the 2022 UMRR report to Congress.

### *IWW Closure Monitoring Studies*

Hagerty explained that significant closures on the Illinois Waterway (IWW) in 2020 present an opportunity to monitor biological response to reduced navigation. An *ad hoc* group was established to evaluate research possibilities. The UMRR Coordinating Committee held a special meeting via conference call on April 30, 2019 to discuss the potential for using LTRM and other relevant monitoring sources. The ultimate goal is to leverage LTRM and other relevant WQ data to inform future HREPs. Hagerty explained that the 2020 land cover survey is already funded under existing work and that, on the April 30 call, the Committee unanimously endorsed funding the following research proposals using FY 2018 carry-over funding from cost-savings on MVR habitat project construction.

- Illinois Waterway aquatic vegetation study
- Pre- and post-maintenance aerial imagery from Brandon Road through Alton Pool
- Fish community response to the Illinois Waterway 2020 lock closure
- Water clarity and the Illinois Waterway 2020 lock closures

Costs for supporting the work through FY 2022 total \$570,436, however the program is only funding year one now for \$157,782. Hagerty emphasized that the selected proposals will assess the response to reduced navigation due to lock closure on water quality, vegetation, and fish at multiple scales and that insights will help inform future HREPs along the IWW and possibly the Mississippi River. Plumley expressed his appreciation that UMRR has something in place to capture information on this historic event on the river. He also acknowledged some risks and unknowns with these efforts, but commended the partnership for its willingness to move forward and advance science.

Matt Vitello moved and Randy Schultz seconded approving the draft April 30, 2019 special meeting minutes on the Illinois Waterways closure monitoring proposals as provided in the meeting packet. The minutes were approved unanimously.

In response to a question from Gretchen Benjamin, Plumley stated that there would still be recreational traffic and industry will move barges within pools. Hagerty and Chewning said that there have been no deviations to water control plans, which would be required for drawdowns for ecological purposes.

## **Habitat Restoration**

### *District Reports*

#### St. Paul District

Shahin Khazrajafari explained that MVP is working hard to complete planning and design on Bass Lake Ponds habitat project so that a construction contract of \$5,000,000,000 can be awarded this year. The District's other planning priorities are McGregor Lake, Reno Bottoms, and Lower Pool 10 habitat projects. McGregor Lake is in final approval for feasibility and a construction award is planned for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020. Lower Pool 10 is further along than Reno Bottoms and is being considered by MVP to move into feasibility. A construction award for the project is anticipated for the second quarter of FY 2020. Khazrajafari said the District is currently identifying information needs and assembling a team for Reno Bottoms. Construction is complete for Harpers Slough and a dedication ceremony is being planned for July 2019. A construction contract for Conway Lake was awarded in late calendar year 2018, with the goal of starting construction in FY 2020 and completing construction in 2021.

In response to a question from Adkins, Khazrajafari said shape files for each HREP location are available on the UMRR website. Fischer noted that Bass Ponds is located in a major metro area, providing high visibility for the program. He suggested adding signage and an informational display at the refuge center. Mark Gaiowski said that he, Gretchen Benjamin, Mayor Tim Kabat, and Scott Gruber participated in the Wisconsin Ideas forum that brought University of Wisconsin Faculty and Staff onto the river. He said they discussed social justice in urban areas and how to engage non-traditional groups in conversations about habitat restoration. Karen Hagerty noted that many of the public meetings for HREPs occur in rural areas, near the project locations. Sabrina Chandler said that USFWS staff at the Minnesota Valley Refuge have been focused on engaging diverse populations and would use this project as an opportunity to expand the program. In response to a question from Fischer, Khazrajafari said he will follow-up on a date for the ribbon cutting ceremony to allow adequate time for agency leadership to be present.



Julie Millhollin explained that MVR selected a TSP for Steamboat Island in February 2019 and held an IPR with MVD on April 11, 2019. The PDT is drafting feasibility chapters in anticipation for public review in November 2019. Lower Pool 13 and Green Island habitat projects are the District's other planning priorities. The Lower Pool 13 fact sheet was approved by MVD and the PDT held a scoping meeting with stakeholders on May 14. A kickoff for Green Island habitat project is scheduled for late summer 2019. USFWS anticipates signing the Keithsburg Division habitat project MOA soon. Millhollin said that high water has halted construction on Pool 12 Overwintering and Huron Island Stage II, and the projects will be assessed for flood damage after the water recedes. Millhollin said some tree removal was accomplished on Beaver Island and a ground breaking is planned for when water levels drop. She added that pumps at Rice Lake habitat project are in need of repairs and the Fox Island habitat project performance evaluation was postponed due to high water and will be rescheduled for when river levels decrease. Chandler said that USFWS was in the process of signing the MOA and it would be transmitted May 23, 2019. Plumley said they need a permit by July 15, 2019 to stay on schedule.

Brian Markert said MVS is continuing work on the feasibility study with the Forest Service on Oakwood Bottoms. He said Rip Rap Landing habitat project meetings will be scheduled when new Illinois DNR staff vacancies are filled. Work on PED for Harlow Island habitat project will hopefully begin soon so that work on plans and specs can begin next year. Crains Island is through design and awaiting funding availability to request construction bids. Markert said MVS is working on advancing the last major construction of levee setbacks at Clarence Cannon habitat project. Markert mentioned work is suspended in the fall at refuge areas. He noted that there may be some highwater damage to address. Markert said a pump station warranty issue needs to be addressed at Ted Shanks habitat projects, which is anticipated to be closed out next year. He said that USFWS anticipates signing the Harlow Island MOA soon. MVS staff are reaching out to regional partners about the opportunity for new habitat projects through the forthcoming HREP selection process. Chandler said USFWS is in the process of signing the MOA and expects its transmittal on May 23, 2019.

Marshall Plumley reported that UMRR has constructed 56 projects to date directly affecting 106,000 acres. He noted there are currently 20 HREPs planned in the next ten years, encompassing 65,180 acres.

#### *HREP Planning and Design Workshop*

Plumley said he has received tremendous positive feedback regarding the May 6-8, 2019 UMRR HREP Planning and Design Workshop. The goal was to bring HREP practitioners together to exchange lessons learned and collaborate on the future direction of HREPs. The workshop had over 100 attendees from various agencies and organizations. It provided a good opportunity for exchanging knowledge with 20 attendees having less than three years of experience with the program and 15 participants with over 20 years of experience. Plumley explained that the three themes of the workshop were 1) risk informed planning, 2) HREP lessons learned, and 3) the program's future. Discussion topics included tools used in developing HREPs, integrating LTRM and HREP, and identifying gaps in current habitat modeling. Various strategies were used to stimulate discussion and capture participant sentiments including presentations, breakout group discussions, facilitated exercises, and live polling. Plumley stated that the workshop was preceded by a webinar series that was also well attended with each webinar having over 50 participants. Recordings of the webinars are now available on the UMRR website and serve as a source of information on the basics of the program. Plumley explained that UMRR is planning to hold additional webinars and requested suggestions for topics.

Megan Moore said she had also heard positive feedback regarding the workshop, specifically the format and problem-solving questions and activities. Moore said she also heard that the pre-workshop webinars were valuable and was looking forward to the future webinars. Justin Sexton said he enjoyed the live polling exercises. Plumley explained that the live polling consisted of some prepared questions that

allowed responses to be viewed in real time. Live polling was a great tool to help visualize the discussion. Fischer agreed that the workshop was valuable and believed people learned a lot of new information. He mentioned that LTRM staff commented that the workshop was too in-depth on HREP planning while there was great value in the breakouts and getting practitioners in the same room together. He suggested that the next workshop could include an in-depth discussion day for the LTRM and HREP components separately, followed by a day of joint discussion. Plumley concurred that breakouts were valuable and mentioned that a summary would be available online with all past workshop materials.

### *HREP Selection Process*

Plumley said the Program Planning Team (PPT) is scheduled to have a call on May 28, 2019 to refine the next generation HREP selection process guidance materials that will be provided to the river teams at the beginning of June 2019. The river teams will have until December 2019 to engage potential project sponsors (including NGOs) in a collaborative process to identify a suite of fact sheet proposals that address HNA-II indicators. River teams will provide project recommendations to the PPT by the end of calendar year 2019 for consideration and implementation in FY 2021-2025. Plumley said the goals of the process are to optimize investment in habitat needs within UMRS, address ecological needs from pool- to system-scales and integrate with Habitat Needs Assessment, enhance public understanding and trust in the decision-making process, and retain flexibility to ensure efficient and effective program execution. Plumley reviewed the top four indicators from HNA-II across all reaches as aquatic function class, floodplain functional class, floodplain vegetation, and aquatic vegetation. Plumley explained that the science support team (SST) will include technical discipline experts and provide support to river teams as needed. Plumley also explained that NGO sponsor engagement will include a packet of information with an invitation letter, outline of roles of the river teams, points of contact on the river team, an overview of the selection process, fact sheet template, schedule, and sponsor requirements. Plumley said these materials would be provided to the river team chairs at the end of May 2019.

Kat McCain asked if there had been any discussion about how to coordinate with the FWIC and RRAT about an Illinois River working group. Plumley responded that the last time an Illinois River team was formed was when UMRR and NESP co-occurred and many of the individuals involved have retired. To his knowledge, Illinois has not expressed interest in standing a team up. In response to a question from Jodi Creswell, Wallace mentioned that Illinois has a new hire who will be the point of contact for UMRR. Nerissa McClelland would be the best contact for the Illinois River. Plumley said he could reach out to Matt O'Hara and Mike McClelland to identify the best point of contact. Fischer mentioned there may be value in the river teams going through the risk-informed planning exercise on Yorkinut Slough, as used during the HREP Planning and Design Workshop, to prioritize indicators. Plumley said that suggestion be lent to the river teams. McCain said that would be a good idea for the RRAT as it would provide something to react to. Fischer said it was a helpful exercise to move away from the old model of project development, but understood that the tight timeline for river teams might not allow it. Plumley said he would follow up with the river team chairs during the next call. Stephenson said, and Plumley agreed, that it would be helpful to get updates from the river team chairs about progress after their initial river team conversations.

### **Other Business**

#### *Marty Adkins Retirement*

Plumley congratulated Marty Adkins on his upcoming retirement thanked him for his service on the Coordinating Committee. Adkins expressed his appreciation for the opportunity and introduced Verlon Barnes, NRCS Missouri River Coordinator, who will be the next NRCS representative on the Coordinating Committee.

### *Future Meetings*

Wallace mentioned that the February 2020 meeting would be in Iowa, but the location was not yet determined.

Upcoming quarterly meetings are as follows:

- August 2019 – La Crosse
  - UMRBA quarterly meeting – August 20
  - **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – August 21**
- October 2019 – St. Paul
  - UMRBA quarterly meeting – October 29
  - **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – October 30**
- February 2020 – TBD (Dubuque, Quad Cities, or Muscatine)
  - UMRBA quarterly meeting – February 25
  - **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – February 26**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

**UMRR Coordinating Committee Attendance List  
May 22, 2019**

**UMRR Coordinating Committee Members**

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

**Others In Attendance**

Thatch Shepard	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Ben Robinson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Jim Cole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Chris Erickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Shahin Khazrajafari	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Andy Barnes	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Jodi Creswell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Julie Millhollin	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	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
Greg Kohler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brandon Schneider	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jasen Brown	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kat McCain	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Justin Sexton	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Scott Morlock	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Sandy Morrison	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Kelly Warner	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Verlon Barnes	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Kristopher Maxson	Illinois Natural History Survey
Maisah Khan	Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Brad Walker	Nicollet Island Coalition
Rick Stoff	Our Mississippi
Mike Klingner	Quincy Bay Area Restoration and Enhancement Association
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Andrew Stephenson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association