

**Minutes of the  
75th Quarterly Meeting  
of the  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**August 9, 2000  
Rock Island, Illinois**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by Chair Don Vonnahme. The following State Representatives and Federal Liaison Representatives were present:

Don Vonnahme	Illinois Representative (IL DNR)
Gary Clark	Illinois Alternate (IL DNR)
Kevin Szcudronski	Iowa Representative (IA DNR)
Tom Jackson	Iowa Representative (IA DOT)
Steve Morse	Minnesota Alternate (MN DNR)
Steve Johnson	Minnesota Alternate (MN DNR)
Dick Lambert	Minnesota Alternate (MN DOT)
Jerry Vineyard	Missouri Alternate (MO DNR)
Terry Moe	Wisconsin Alternate (WI DNR)
Ellen Fisher	Wisconsin Alternate (WI DOT)
Stan Shaw	Wisconsin Alternate (WI DATCP)
Dusty Rhodes	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD)
Dan Stinnett	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 3)
Dave Carvey	U.S. Department of Agriculture (NRCS, Midwest Office)
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5)

Others in attendance:

Bill Bertrand	Illinois DNR
Jay Rendall	Minnesota DNR
Amy Denz	Minnesota DNR
Linda Merriman	Wisconsin DATCP
Greg Ruff	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD)
William Bayles	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Gary Loss	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Jerry Skalak	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Heather Wiese	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Laura Abney	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Darryl Carattini	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR)
Jon Duyvejonck	Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee
Jim Harrison	Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission
Keith Uhlig	Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission

(Continued)

Attendance (continued):

Dan McGuiness	National Audubon Society
Jeff Stein	American Rivers
Paul Werner	American Waterways Operators
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Holly Stoerker	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

## **Announcements**

Kevin Szcodronski announced Jim Harrison's retirement from the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission. Terry Moe announced that Mike Lester had retired from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. He will be replaced as a UMRBA representative by Stan Shaw. Dan Stinnett announced that Charlie Wooley will be replacing John Blankenship as the Fish and Wildlife Service representative to the UMRBA and EMP-CC.

## **Meeting Minutes**

Terry Moe moved and Kevin Szcodronski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2000 quarterly meeting as drafted. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Executive Director's Report**

Holly Stoerker reported that UMRBA staff had coordinated the development of joint letters to the Corps and to the Fish and Wildlife Service from the five state conservation agency directors regarding EMP ramp up. The letter to the Fish and Wildlife Service requested guidance on how to address EMP habitat projects on refuges. No replies have yet been received. [Note: The Service subsequently responded in a letter dated August 16.]

UMRBA staff has been assisting in the public involvement focus groups for the EMP Habitat Needs Assessment (HNA). In particular, Barb Naramore helped put together the background presentation used at the beginning of the sessions and also gave that presentation at the two meetings in St. Paul.

The UMR Spills Group will jointly sponsor a workshop on September 7 in Bettendorf, Iowa with the Quad City Sub-Area Committee. Similar to the workshops in Wabasha and Prairie du Chien last February, the Bettendorf workshop is designed to familiarize local responders, natural resource managers, and local river users with the issues associated with spill response on the UMR.

On July 24, UMRBA staff submitted a proposal to EPA to continue planning and mapping work under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA). The proposal is for \$150,000 of federal funding in FY 2001.

UMRBA ended FY 2000 with net income of \$34,000 and cash assets of \$506,000. The biennial audit is scheduled for the final week of August.

On July 18, Representative Ron Kind of Wisconsin introduced H.R. 4879, the Corps Reform Act. The bill calls for a variety of changes in project review, Principles and Guidelines (P&G),

and mitigation requirements. The House draft Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reportedly includes some of the reforms outlined in H.R. 4879, without the P&G changes and with pilot approaches to many of the other provisions.

In March 2000 the Corps and FEMA executed an MOA that declares flood control levees to be incompatible with open space uses and thus prohibited on lands acquired through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). Stoerker noted that the UMRBA had addressed this issue in a December 11, 1998 resolution requesting that the Corps and FEMA reconsider the definition of "structure" so as to allow flood control facilities on HMGP lands. Stoerker distributed copies of the relatively recent MOA and the UMRBA's previous resolution.

### **Navigation Study**

Gary Loss explained that the August Governors Liaison Committee (GLC) meeting was cancelled because there were insufficient new developments to merit a meeting. An internal draft report is currently under review, with the target for public release at the end of September 2000. Loss explained that, in response to a request from Corps Headquarters to review traffic projections, Jack Faucett Associates is reviewing and revising its original projections. In addition, two professors from the University of North Dakota have been asked to conduct an independent technical review (ITR) of Faucett's forecast methodology. The Corps will be evaluating the significance of the changes in the traffic forecasts. If the economic models need to be revised as a result of changes to the forecasts, Loss indicated that the study would likely need to be delayed.

Loss also reported that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel that is reviewing the navigation study held its second meeting in St. Louis on August 7-8. The third and final meeting will be held in September, with the panel's draft report scheduled for release in November and conclusion of its work in December. In light of the revised traffic projections, NAS has asked whether its review should also be delayed. According to Loss, the Corps has made no recommendations in this regard.

With regard to preliminary engineering and design (PED), Loss indicated that the 1999 WRDA had directed that the Navigation Study be completed as soon as possible and that PED be initiated on features that were justified. Funding for PED was provided in FY 00 appropriations. Loss explained that PED work was, however, stopped effective July 31, 2000.

With regard to GLC meetings, Loss said that the GLC would be convened in the future, as needed, with a 30-day notice. However, a GLC meeting is not anticipated to be necessary in February 2001.

In response to a question from Dick Lambert, Loss clarified that Faucett had completed its revisions to the traffic forecasts and that the Corps was now doing independent technical review, including a review of changes in international factors since 1993.

Terry Moe expressed concern about the fact that a mitigation plan was not yet developed. Dusty Rhodes explained that the mitigation plan cannot be formulated until a recommended plan, with associated traffic levels, is identified. Moe said that there is concern that the mitigation plan will be formulated without consulting the states and the Fish and Wildlife

Service. Loss indicated that mitigation options have been discussed with the Navigation Environmental Coordinating Committee (NECC). As an example, the mitigation actions associated with Alternative J total approximately \$180 million. Steve Johnson observed that, as a result of study schedule revisions, the amount of time available for developing the mitigation plan has been compressed. He also commented that some of the assumptions upon which the environmental studies and mitigation alternatives are based have been questioned by NECC. In particular, in 1993, NECC sought to have the NAS review the environmental studies. NAS declined, based on the narrow way in which the Corps scoped the proposed study. Johnson said that NECC had recently again asked NAS to review the environmental portions of the navigation study as part of the NAS review of the economics of the study. Loss reported that NAS had discussed this request at its last meeting, but that no decision had been made. The Corps explained to NAS that the 1992 scoping decision was based on what was within the Corps' authority to undertake at full federal expense. According to Loss, NAS' concern is based, in part, on whether there can be assurances that mitigation in future years will, in fact, be undertaken.

In response to a question from Jim Harrison regarding public meetings, Loss said that such meetings will likely be scheduled six weeks following release of the draft report. Assuming the report is released by September 30, public meetings will thus be held in November. Harrison noted that the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission intends to host meetings in every port city in Minnesota and Wisconsin that does not have a Corps-sponsored meeting scheduled.

### **UMRCC/Audubon Report**

Kevin Szcodronski explained that, at its last meeting, the UMRBA had agreed to review and discuss the recommendations for operation and maintenance of the UMRS ecosystem contained in the recently released UMRCC report called *A River that Works and a Working River*. The UMRBA intends to focus on one of the nine recommendations at each UMRBA meeting during the next year or two. The issue scheduled for this meeting is invasive species, for which Jay Rendall will present background. Szcodronski introduced Rendall, who is the Exotic Species Program Coordinator at Minnesota DNR and Chair of the Exotic Species Committee of the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resources Association (MICRA).

Rendall presented slides and background information describing both the global and regional issues associated with exotic species, including zebra mussels, round gobies, Asian carp, purple loosestrife, and other aquatic plants, as examples. He described the introduction, pathways, spread, impacts, and proposed solutions. Exotic species can be introduced and spread in various ways, including in ballast water and on barges, aquaculture escapes, aquarium and live bait releases, aquatic plant sales, recreational boating, and interconnecting waterways. Of particular concern in this region is the connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River system through the Chicago area waterways. Rendall explained that prevention is much more effective than remediation after species have been introduced outside their native habitat. The cost of management actions to address biological losses, industry impacts, and decreased recreational opportunities can be quite high.

Rendall also described a variety of actions that have been taken or are being proposed. The 1990 Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act established an Aquatic

Nuisance Species Task Force to coordinate prevention and control activities. Panels for specific regions were also formed, although there is no UMRB panel. The 1996 National Invasive Species Act (NISA) reauthorized the 1990 Act and specifically directed the Corps to investigate a dispersal demonstration project on the Illinois Waterway to address species movement between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River drainages. Rendall explained that a multi-agency advisory committee had been working with the Corps on the design of an electric dispersal barrier project on the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal. According to Rendall, progress on the project has been slow. While construction of the project is finally scheduled for later this year, round gobies have already been found downstream of the proposed site. Rendall noted that the issue of what to do in the long term about the connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River is complicated by the fact that the river has been reversed to address water quality and navigation needs.

Rendall also described efforts by MICRA to prohibit the use and distribution of black carp, including advocating that the Fish and Wildlife Service designate the black carp as an injurious wildlife species.

In concluding, Rendall described a number of potential actions that the UMRBA could consider, including:

- use and support MICRA as a voice for the basin on invasive species issues,
- advocate timely action on the Chicago dispersal barrier,
- seek funding for an investigation of long term solutions to the connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River system
- support national ban on black carp
- support standards for ballast water management
- offer comments on the draft plan being prepared under the direction of a 1999 Executive Order on invasive species
- support education and regulation to sever recreation pathways for invasive species

Dusty Rhodes asked Rendall to comment on the proposal that fish passages be included at Mississippi River dams, given that such features may contribute to the spread of exotic species. Rendall said that fish passage is important locally for native species and that some permanent barriers in strategic locations may be a better way of limiting pathways for exotic species.

In response to a question from Dave Carvey, Rendall explained that there is little funding available under NISA for developing strategic plans. However, there are some states that are preparing plans and there are also some interstate plans, such as the one that Minnesota, Wisconsin, and local tribes prepared for the St. Croix River. Rendall observed that there are also some management actions that require federal attention, such as regulation of ballast water exchange and Internet sales of exotic species.

Kevin Szcodronski asked whether there are any international forums to address invasive species issues, given that the U.S. may export, as well as receive, invasive species. Rendall

explained that the International Maritime Association deals with ballast water. He also noted that trade agreements can both increase the risk of exotics as well as offer opportunities to address them.

With regard to the question of what actions UMRBA should undertake, Steve Morse suggested that a letter be written to the Corps, urging prompt action on the dispersal barrier in Chicago. Terry Moe expressed support for such a letter and also suggested that UMRBA may want to consider helping to coordinate the five states' plans for controlling exotic species. He also suggested that UMRBA invite federal agencies to a future meeting to discuss invasive species programs and responsibilities under their jurisdictions, particularly those related to international shipping. Don Vonnahme noted that the Great Lakes Commission has a Task Force on invasive species that has looked specifically at ballast exchange. He suggested that UMRBA contact the Great Lakes Commission and see if there are any opportunities for the two groups to work together. Specifically, the Great Lakes Commission may have some resolutions that UMRBA may want to consider endorsing.

Vonnahme asked if there are any proposals other than the Chicago dispersal barrier demonstration project to address the problems associated with the connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River. Bill Bertrand asked whether the pathway could be severed by modifying the design of locks on the upper reaches of the Illinois River. Colonel Bayles offered to look into whether this issue could be included in the Illinois River Ecosystem study, for which the Corps and the State of Illinois are currently developing an MOA.

Terry Moe asked if it would be appropriate for UMRBA to invite MICRA representatives to the next UMRBA meeting to discuss how the two organizations could work together on invasive species issues. Steve Morse recommended, instead, that UMRBA write a letter to MICRA describing the actions UMRBA intends to take and inviting MICRA to contact the UMRBA if their members have additional suggestions.

Don Vonnahme summarized the actions that UMRBA will take as a result of these discussions: Write a letter to the Corps' Division Office in Chicago urging prompt action on the dispersal barrier, consult with staff at the Great Lakes Commission regarding their ballast water policies and activities, and write a letter to MICRA describing the actions UMRBA is taking with regard to invasive species.

### **EPA Region 5 Mississippi River Team**

Bill Franz of EPA Region 5 explained that the "Upper Mississippi Basin Strategy" included in the agenda packet has not changed much since EPA first developed it about five years ago. He indicated that the EPA Mississippi River Team will be trying to integrate the goals, which are identified in the strategy, into the agency's programs. In particular, according to Franz, Mississippi River goals should be reflected in the work being done under the wetlands program, source water protection program, and TMDL program. He invited UMRBA members to offer their perspective on where EPA should be focusing its efforts.

Terry Moe requested clarification on how EPA's Mississippi River Team strategy, the draft water quality coordination framework developed by Tim Henry, and the Clean Water Action Plan all fit together. Moe also asked whether the EPA Region 5 Mississippi River Team will

be taking the lead on the activities described in the coordination framework. Franz characterized the EPA strategy as flexible and said that the program offices, rather than the Mississippi River Team, are expected to take the lead on implementing the framework.

Holly Stoerker asked how EPA's strategy, which calls for a 25% reduction in nitrogen loading in the basin, relates to the plan being developed by the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force. Franz explained that the numeric goal in EPA's strategy is based on scientifically informed judgments about what is realistically achievable. The goal may be adjusted based on further information from the Gulf hypoxia planning efforts.

In response to a question from Terry Moe, Franz explained that he is currently the sole member of the Region 5 Mississippi River Team. Assigning several staff to the Team as a part time responsibility did not work well.

Holly Stoerker emphasized that the concerns expressed by UMRBA in its October 1995 letter to the Regional Administrator are still valid. In particular, UMRBA continues to urge that coordination between Regions 5 and 7 on Mississippi River issues be enhanced and that EPA Region 5 seek to integrate its Mississippi River activities more fully into the work of the program offices.

### **Framework for Water Quality Coordination**

Holly Stoerker reported that, following the May 12 meeting of the UMRBA Water Quality Task Force, Tim Henry of EPA Region 5 had drafted a document describing general ways in which coordination on Mississippi River water quality matters might be pursued. It addresses assessment and monitoring, standards and impaired waters, and coordination of TMDLs. It also describes proposed roles for individual states, EPA, and UMRBA. The document, entitled "Framework for Water Quality Coordination in UMR" is currently being reviewed by the Task Force. Stoerker also invited UMRBA members to provide their feedback. In particular, Stoerker asked if UMRBA members are generally comfortable with the proposed role outlined in the framework for the UMRBA, noting that it would likely require an increase in staff. She indicated that the draft identifies two specific roles for UMRBA: 1) information collection and dissemination and 2) workshop and meeting planning. Stoerker said she assumes the UMRBA role should be a bit more ambitious, seeking to more actively coordinate state programs and policies.

Bill Franz commented that the value of the framework is the ability to anticipate and resolve potential problems and to promote consistency.

Terry Moe indicated that Wisconsin supports the framework, including a leadership role for EPA and an increased role for UMRBA. However, he expressed concern about whether EPA had sufficient resources for a leadership role, noting that the current Mississippi River Team includes only Bill Franz. He also commented that, with funding from EPA, the UMRBA staff could provide the energy and work to make the effort successful. Franz assured Moe that EPA would devote the resources necessary.

Steve Morse said that his initial reactions to the framework were positive, but that Minnesota PCA would be the agency directly involved.

Kevin Szcodronski indicated that Iowa DNR supports the framework in general, but has some specific comments that he will pass on to UMRBA staff. In particular, he noted that the description of the current UMR water quality assessment project suggests that it is an EPA project, when in fact the UMRCC has been in a leadership position. In addition, Iowa DNR is suggesting that the TMDL map also reflect 305(b) assessments and that fish consumption advisories be added to the program areas covered by the framework.

Jerry Vineyard asked if EPA Region 7 has been involved in the development of the framework. Bill Franz indicated that Larry Shepard at EPA Region 7 has been participating.

Holly Stoerker thanked Tim Henry for his leadership in developing the framework. She also requested UMRBA authorization to move forward, if the UMRBA Water Quality Task Force responds favorably to the draft framework at its September 12 meeting. Kevin Szcodronski moved and Terry Moe seconded a motion to authorize staff to prepare a grant proposal or funding request to EPA based on the framework and in consultation with the Water Quality Task Force. The motion passed unanimously.

### **WRDA 2000 Nutrient/Sediment Study Provision**

Holly Stoerker noted that the legislative language included in the meeting packet for the “Upper Mississippi River Basin Sediment and Nutrient Study” is from a draft Senate WRDA bill. However, the same language appears in S. 2796, introduced on July 27. Stoerker described the provision as authorizing the Corps of Engineers to undertake a 5-year, \$5 million modeling and research effort to address the sources and transport of nutrients and sediment in the basin. A 50 percent nonfederal cost share would be required. Stoerker explained that Representative Kind’s staff has characterized the legislation as an effort to link the Corps into the work proposed in H.R. 4013, the Upper Mississippi River Basin Conservation Act.

Terry Moe and Steve Johnson expressed concern about the cost share requirement, noting that it is unlikely that states would agree to contribute funding to a basin wide research effort. Jerry Vineyard noted that much of the work authorized in the bill is already being done by states and that, if the cost-sharing requirement is retained, states should receive credit for that work.

Bill Franz and Steve Johnson expressed concern that EPA, which has significant involvement in sediment and nutrient issues, is not mentioned in the bill.

Don Vonnahme asked that UMRBA staff prepare a letter to the House Water Resources subcommittee, explaining UMRBA’s views on the sediment and nutrient study provisions. In particular, the letter should address cost sharing, the role of EPA, and the importance of state involvement in the study.

### **Upper Mississippi River Basin Conservation Act (H.R. 4013)**

Holly Stoerker reported that the UMRBA position statement on H.R. 4013, the Upper Mississippi River Basin Conservation Act, was finalized on July 12. Barb Naramore testified before the House Water and Power Subcommittee on July 27 at its hearing on the bill. One of

the House Agriculture subcommittees also intends to hold a hearing on September 13 or 14. Stoerker said she assumed that the UMRBA would want to testify at that hearing if there is an opportunity to do so.

Barb Naramore reported that witnesses at the July 27 hearing included Representatives Ron Kind and Gil Gutknecht; Denny Fenn, Director of USGS' Biological Resources Division; Linda Levy, Assistant Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; and Jeff Stein of American Rivers. Fenn estimated the cost of the bill's monitoring and modeling to be \$10.5 million per year. He also expressed concern about the data privacy provisions of the bill, noting that such restrictions could be an impediment to interagency coordination. Levy expressed general support for the concepts in the legislation, but urged that it be expanded to a larger geographic area. Stein described stakeholders' interest in the legislation and the benefits of reducing sediment and nutrient loss. Naramore's testimony focused on UMRBA's concerns that the new federal programs be better coordinated with existing state and local efforts, that the modeling be better integrated with the implementation actions, and that USGS and NRCS should coordinate with other federal agencies not currently mentioned in the bill.

### **Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan**

Holly Stoerker reported that the draft Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan was published in the Federal Register on July 11 and comments are due by September 11. The Federal Register notice requests that commenters specifically address the draft goals, implementation actions, and funding strategy. With regard to goals, the draft plan offers three options for a coastal goal — 1) decrease nitrogen loadings at the Gulf, 2) decrease the size of the Gulf hypoxic zone, or 3) pursue practical, cost-effective efforts. Recommended implementation actions include expanded monitoring and research efforts, as well as creation of sub-basin committees to develop specific strategies for reducing nutrient loadings. A Mississippi-Gulf Omnibus Restoration Fund is recommended as a vehicle for providing increased funding through existing programs. Stoerker also noted two other relatively minor provisions, including a waiver of local cost-share for modifications to Corps projects and grant funding for basin organizations.

Stoerker asked if the UMRBA would like to submit comments on the draft action plan and, if so, what process should be used to develop them. Don Vonnahme expressed support for having UMRBA develop and submit comments, but indicated that Illinois' comments will not be completed in draft form until August 21. Steve Morse questioned whether there would be adequate time to coordinate five states' comments and sufficient commonality among the states' views to make the effort worthwhile. With regard to the Action Plan itself, Morse indicated that Minnesota prefers that the plan include a quantitative goal, but has not yet determined which one. Terry Moe said that Wisconsin DNR and Agriculture Department will be working on a joint letter. In general, Wisconsin DNR is pleased with the draft plan in so far as it includes goals, adaptive management, monitoring, and voluntary approaches. Moe expressed support for development of a UMRBA letter of comment. Kevin Szcodronski cautioned that it may be difficult to gain Iowa's input to or concurrence on a joint five state letter of comment, but that he would circulate it for review.

Holly Stoerker suggested that UMRBA staff consult with individual state representatives to the Hypoxia Task Force prior to preparing any draft UMRBA comments. Stoerker noted that it may be possible to focus UMRBA's comments on issues such as funding and implementation, where there is potentially more agreement than there appears to be on the question of goals.

In response to a question from Jeff Stein, Stoerker explained that the states and the UMRBA will submit comments on the action plan, despite the fact that the states are also represented on the Task Force that helped develop the plan. The relationship between the states, the Task Force, and the UMRBA is complicated by the fact that several states are represented on these two groups by different agencies and individuals.

### **Flow Frequency Study**

Jerry Skalak presented a series of overheads describing the work underway as part of the Corps' Upper Mississippi River System Flow Frequency Study. By way of background, Skalak noted that, since flood profiles were last updated in 1979, there have been 20 years of record and new hydraulic models have been developed. The current Flow Frequency Study is being lead by an interagency Task Force with representatives from the Corps, FEMA, USGS, Bureau of Reclamation, National Weather Service, NRCS, TVA, and seven states. In addition, there is a technical advisory group composed of experts from universities and consulting firms.

According to Skalak, the study is about half way done, with two years of work remaining. Products will include flow frequency values and flood profiles. Based on this new information, Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), will be updated and digitized. However, the FIRM updates are not actually part of the Flow Frequency Study. Skalak identified the following remaining challenges:

- completion of digital terrain models for Rock Island and St. Paul Districts
- funding and scheduling impacts of additional requirements and data problems
- "off-loading" to and association with the Comprehensive Plan
- funding for subsequent development of new digital FIRMS.

Don Vonnahme noted that the issue of FIRM updates is really a question for FEMA. Holly Stoerker said that FEMA had previously been pushing to have the FIRM updates done by the Corps. However, FEMA now appears to have accepted some of the responsibility and the Corps and FEMA are developing an MOA that would define the two agencies' responsibilities in updating FIRMs. Stoerker indicated that funding will be critical and that at, some point, it may be helpful for the states to actively support funding for the updates. Barb Naramore noted that FEMA's budget proposal includes a national FIRM updating strategy, which is supported by a fee on underwriters. This strategy has met with substantial opposition.

Skalak noted that, although the Flow Frequency Study will provide valuable input to the UMR Comprehensive Plan, it is not necessary to wait until the study is complete before initiating the planning effort.

## Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan

Jerry Skalak described the scope of the UMR Comprehensive Plan as being quite broad. The legislative authorization calls for “a plan to address water resource and related land resource problems and opportunities in the upper Mississippi and Illinois River basins from Cairo, Illinois to the headwaters of the Mississippi River....” Skalak said the plan will be an integrated look at flood damage reduction and many other issues, including navigation, water quality, habitat, and recreation. He noted that there is potential to use the plan as a means of integrating activities that are currently being pursued on separate tracks and under separate authorities. The plan will also build upon previous and on-going work such as the Galloway Report, the Floodplain Management Assessment, the Delft Report, the Navigation Study, the Habitat Needs Assessment (HNA), and the Flow Frequency Study.

Skalak indicated that a Task Force is being proposed to guide the study. The group will likely be composed of representatives from the Corps and other federal agencies, the states, and nongovernmental organizations such as the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association (UMIMRA). Although no funds have yet been appropriated, the plan is anticipated to cost \$8 million over three years.

Skalak noted that a variety of questions will need to be addressed, including,

- Who are the stakeholders?
- What is the planning horizon?
- What are the data/information gaps?
- What are common and unique issues?
- What is the “Pareto optimal” allocation?

Noting that the original intent of the Comprehensive Plan legislation had been to develop a system wide integrated flood damage reduction strategy, Holly Stoerker asked if there is actually support for a more expansive scope. Skalak expressed an appreciation for the history of the Comprehensive Plan legislative language, but reiterated his view that the Comprehensive Plan offers an opportunity to integrate some of the work that is currently underway on separate tracks. As an example, he mentioned the potential for using the HNA Query Tool to design and evaluate flood control options.

Referring to the legislative language authorizing the Comprehensive Plan, Steve Morse noted that the terms “systemic flood damage reduction,” “structural and nonstructural flood control,” and “floodplain management strategies” are used. Yet, the Fact Sheet describing the Comprehensive Plan lists “construction of a...project” as one of the expected outcomes. Skalak attributed this apparent inconsistency to the generic use of the terms “construction” and “project.”

Don Vonnahme commented that the Comprehensive Plan will need to address many of the issues that were raised, but never resolved, during the 1993 Flood. For example, there continue to be questions about how to quantify induced impacts, whether there should be a uniform levee grade, and whether agricultural areas should be flooded to save urban areas.

Steve Johnson observed that the funding and timeframe are inadequate for such a broad planning effort. Vonnahme noted that the plan will likely draw upon the work being done in other arenas, such as the Navigation Study and Flow Frequency Study. Johnson agreed that these types of studies will provide useful data, but that the challenge of truly integrating all the policy and planning will be significant. Dave Carvey questioned whether the nutrient and sediment activities proposed in H.R. 4013 would be subsumed into the Comprehensive Plan.

Dusty Rhodes stressed that the first task will be to prepare a scope of work for the Comprehensive Plan. However, that will not be done until funding is made available to proceed with the plan. He also noted that the authorizing legislation requires the plan to be completed within three years of when the bill was enacted. Skalak indicated that there is some interest in amending the legislation so that the plan would not need to be completed until three years after funding is provided.

In response to a question from Jeff Stein, Skalak said that public involvement will be very important in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. A Public Involvement Group, similar to the one created for the Flow Frequency Study, will likely be formed.

### **State Dues**

Holly Stoerker said that the UMRBA typically addresses dues on a biennial basis at its August meeting. Two years ago, dues were raised \$13,000 from \$35,000 to \$48,000. That was the first increase in 13 years. Stoerker noted that no additional increases are necessary at this time.

Jerry Vineyard moved and Steve Morse seconded a motion to establish the FY 2002 and 2003 dues at \$48,000 per state. The motion passed with no objection.

### **Other Business**

Holly Stoerker announced that the next two UMRBA meetings (including days for the GLC and EMP-CC meetings) are scheduled for November 14-16, 2000 in St. Louis and February 27 - March 1, 2001 in the Twin Cities. If GLC meetings are not necessary, the November 14 and March 1 dates will be eliminated.

It was agreed that the spring UMRBA and EMP-CC meetings would be scheduled for May 15-16, 2001 in La Crosse, Wisconsin or the Quad Cities.

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