

**Minutes of the
107th Quarterly Meeting
of the
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**August 5, 2008
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by UMRBA Chair Martin Konrad. The following were present:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

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

Federal Liaisons:

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| Charles Barton | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD) |
| Mike Sullivan | U.S. Department of Agriculture (NRCS) |
| Bill Franz | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 5) |
| Charles Wooley | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 3) |
| Mike Jawson | U.S. Geological Survey (UMESC) |

Others in attendance:

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| Marc Miller | Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Office |
| Tim Schlaghaft | Minnesota (DNR) |
| Janet Sternburg | Missouri (DoC) |
| Jim Fischer | Wisconsin (DNR) |
| Terry Dukerschein | Wisconsin (DNR) |
| Rich Worthington | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (HQ) |
| Terry Smith | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVD) |
| Rebecca Soileau | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP) |
| Jeff DeZellar | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVP) |
| Gary Meden | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Roger Perk | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Chuck Spitzack | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Ken Barr | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Marv Hubbell | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Karen Hagerty | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (MVR) |
| Don Hultman | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UMR Refuge) |

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| Gary Wege | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Loyd Mitchell | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Scott Yess | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UMRCC) |
| Max Ethridge | U.S. Geological Survey |
| Michael Slifer | U.S. Geological Survey |
| Jennie Sauer | U.S. Geological Survey (UMESC) |
| Brad McMillan | Bradley University |
| Paul Rhode | Waterways Council, Inc. |
| Garry Loss | CDM |
| Tom Boland | MACTEC |
| Brad Walker | Prairie Rivers Network |
| Christine Favilla | Sierra Club - Illinois |
| Vince Shay | The Nature Conservancy |
| Doug Blodgett | The Nature Conservancy |
| Gabe Horner | The Nature Conservancy |
| Don Vonnahme | Retired (IL DNR) |
| Barb Naramore | Upper Mississippi River Basin Association |
| Dave Hokanson | Upper Mississippi River Basin Association |
| Kirsten Mickelsen | Upper Mississippi River Basin Association |

Meeting Minutes

Mike Wells moved and Todd Ambs seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2008 meeting as drafted. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Barb Naramore highlighted the following items from her written report included in the agenda packet:

- The LTRMP Strategic Planning Team has completed its draft Strategic Plan for FY 10-14 and will present the document to the EMP-CC on August 6, 2008 for endorsement. The team will also ask the EMP-CC to consider effective ways to communicate with a broad array of stakeholders and decision makers, and for the EMP-CC's support for developing a follow-on operational plan that will link the Strategic Plan to the LTRMP's annual work plans. An operational planning process would prioritize outcomes and outputs, consider various funding scenarios, and evaluate issues associated with the potential integration of LTRMP into the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). Specifically, this may include identifying a funding floor that would afford stability during the NESP ramp-up process.
- On June 20, 2008, UMRBA submitted a FY 09 cooperative agreement to the US EPA for \$150,000 in new federal funds to support UMRBA's planning and mapping activities under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA). FY 09 priorities will include ongoing updates to the sensitivity maps, as well as an increased emphasis on contingency planning and responses strategy development. UMRBA's proposal is pending at Region 5, so the actual amount of FY 09 funds and thus the final work plan priorities remain to be determined.
- The Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) withdrew its proposal to work with USACE on a national assessment of state and interstate water planning because of differences in objectives, methodologies, and timelines. ICWP will look for other potential funding sources.

- UMRBA closed FY 08 with a positive net income of \$596, which includes all budgeted categories, depreciation, accrued vacation liability, and capital gains from investments. The FY 07-08 biennial audit will take place in September. Due to new risk assessment standards and inflation, the estimated fees are \$7,500, which is \$2,250 above the budgeted amount. Naramore will arrange for an opportunity for the Board to speak with the auditors following the audit.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP)

Program Update — Chuck Spitzack provided the following updates:

- On June 4, 2008, Steve Stockton, USACE Director of Civil Works, signed the Record of Decision for the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study. This action completes the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is construction prerequisite.
- On July 2, 2008, ASA Woodley issued NESP implementation guidance. It is standard practice for the ASA to issue implementation guidance for new Corps authorities in order to articulate the Administration's perspectives and intent on questions related to implementation, particularly on matters where the authorizing language is ambiguous.
- On July 29, 2008, the Corps held a public meeting on the Lock and Dam 22 fish passage project. The deadline to comment on the proposal was extended to August 29, 2008.
- Spitzack and Ken Barr participated in the LTRMP Strategic Planning Team's July 2008 meeting. Discussions focused on issues related to the LTRMP's potential transition from EMP to NESP. Spitzack characterized the conversations as quite helpful.

Final WRDA Implementation Guidance — Rich Worthington expressed appreciation for the partner and stakeholder review comments on the draft implementation guidance. Worthington explained that ASA Woodley's recent approval of the guidance represents an important step for NESP. Although the guidance does not represent a commitment by the Administration to budget for NESP, its issuance does mean that the Corps will be in a position to proceed with implementation if and when Congress funds the program. Worthington noted two changes made by the ASA to the draft implementation guidance:

1. Consultation and funding — District Engineers' approval authority for funding transfer agreements is capped at \$200,000 annually for any one of the States or agencies identified in WRDA 07 as eligible for such agreements. Agreements exceeding \$200,000 annually for any state or agency must be approved by the MVD Commander.
2. Advisory Panel — The ASA(CW) will be the convening authority for the Advisory Panel. This reflects ASA Woodley's judgment that decisions regarding the naming of nongovernmental members of the Advisory Panel should be done at his level. ASA Woodley is, however, inviting input from the Partnership regarding the Advisory Panel's structure and related matters.

Congressional Developments—Worthington reported that the House Appropriations Committee's draft FY 09 Energy and Water report includes language directing the Corps to develop a plan to transition the EMP to NESP. Furthermore, the language would preclude any new starts under EMP and indicates that the Committee will not consider construction funding for NESP until the transition plan is received. Based on ASA Woodley's response to UMRBA's November 2007 vision statement, Worthington said it is unlikely that the Administration would prepare a transition plan in response to such a directive because it would imply an intent to budget on the part of the Administration. The Administration does not view NESP as a budgetable program and continues to see the EMP as the appropriate vehicle for ecosystem restoration on the Upper Mississippi River System.

Barb Naramore observed that there are at least two significant challenges facing NESP—i.e., 1) apparent Congressional insistence on a transition plan coupled with the Administration's unwillingness to budget for NESP and 2) the shortfall within the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Worthington said discussions are ongoing regarding the Interim Report on the Economic Reevaluation, but said the prospects for NESP being deemed budgetable do not appear good. Worthington also described the Trust Fund balance as a significant hurdle. However, he characterized discussions at last week's Inland Waterways Users Board meeting as productive, offering hope for a solution if the cooperative spirit persists.

Martin Konrad asked if NESP's prospects may change with a new Administration, and Worthington responded that the answer is unclear because issues such as energy and healthcare have dwarfed infrastructure and restoration in the campaign. In response to a question from Gretchen Benjamin, Worthington said the Administration continues to evidence strong commitment to ecosystem restoration on the UMRS through the EMP, but has serious questions about the economic justification for the UMRS navigation improvements and thus does not support funding for NESP.

June 09 Implementation Report — Spitzack reported that the first NESP Implementation Report to Congress is due in June 2009, and subsequent reports due every four years thereafter. The draft Project Management Plan (PMP) is completed and will be shared with program partners in the near future. Spitzack noted that the Corps has shared an earlier version of the PMP previously. The PMP addresses the reach planning process as well as development of the first Implementation Report.

Spitzack noted that results from the first reach planning workshop have resulted in a reassessment of the reach objective setting process. He explained that reach and system planning notebooks are being developed to guide future efforts. These planning notebooks will be a major component of the June 2009 Implementation Report.

Institutional Arrangements (IA) — Marc Miller, representing Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, described a proposal to create a Illinois River Working Group (IRWG) for the Illinois River Basin as a part of the NESP Institutional Arrangements. Miller explained that the proposal is designed to build off of the existing Illinois River Coordinating Council (IRCC) established under state law to guide restoration efforts throughout the Illinois River Basin. According to Miller, the Work Group would consist of two sub-groups, IRWG Exec and IRWG Tech. The IRWG Exec would be similar to the River Resources Coordinating Team (and its MVP and MVS counterparts), while the IRWG Tech would parallel the Fish and Wildlife Interagency Committee (and its MVP and MVS counterparts). The IRWG Tech would report to IRWG Exec, which in turn would report to the IRCC and the River Advisory Panel (RAP). For NESP purposes, the IRWG Exec's relationship to the RAP would parallel that of the RRF, RRCT, and RRAT.

Miller explained that the State of Illinois wants to address issues on the Illinois River reach of the UMRS through the IRCC. He said this offers the best opportunity to build on the IRCC's past success in engaging stakeholders, which is key to enhancing appropriations for restoration efforts on the entire system. According to Miller, the IRCC was established in 1997 and includes a diverse representation of state and federal agencies, as well as nongovernmental members. Under Illinois' proposal, the IRCC would provide oversight for planning and prioritization of activities. To ensure inclusiveness and breadth in representation, Illinois is proposing that the IRWG Exec and IRWG Tech include appointments from the Illinois Lt. Governor. The IRCC Science Advisory Committee would provide scientific expertise and insight to the IRWG and IRCC.

Miller stressed his hope that this institutional structure on the Illinois River would enhance efficiency, increase stakeholder involvement, improve access to cost-share funds, forge better linkages with

restoration work throughout the Illinois River Basin, and promote increased restoration funding for the entire UMRS. He emphasized that Illinois would continue to participate on the MVR- and MVS-based coordination teams for the UMR.

Brad McMillan observed that state law confers coordination functions for the Illinois River Basin on the IRCC, and names the Lt. Governor as the Chair of the IRCC. Given this, McMillan said it is entirely appropriate for the Lt. Governor to appoint members of the proposed IRWG Exec and Tech. He emphasized that grassroots support is essential to the success of restoration efforts. McMillan also stressed the importance of maintaining the 5-state coalition supporting NESP and acknowledged that the needs of all five states across the system's four major geomorphic reaches must be prioritized at a system level. Project selection should be science-based, according to McMillan. But he said political support is essential to getting the funding needed to execute those priority projects.

Naramore asked whether the IRWG Exec and Tech would address only ecosystem restoration issues, or the full suite of issues with which the current district-based groups deal, including operation and maintenance. Miller said that this question is open to negotiation. He acknowledged the value of having the IRWG address the full range of issues, but said he was also sensitive to the desire to avoid duplication. Miller said this is a question that Illinois intends to explore further with the Corps.

Gretchen Benjamin said the IWRG Exec as proposed does not appear comparable to RRF, RRCT, and RRAT, in that it does not include river managers from the relevant agencies. McMillan said that the IRCC's Science Advisory Committee is comprised of scientists with significant experience working on the river, who will ensure a sound scientific foundation for decisions. Benjamin said there is an important distinction between river scientists and river managers. She reiterated her concern that river managers do not appear to be well represented on the proposed groups. Miller said the IRWG Tech be the place where river managers are represented. In response to a question from Christine Favilla, Miller said the IRCC would be prepared to take the lead on lobbying efforts. Favilla noted that many of the NGOs serving on the IRCC may not have the capacity to lobby on an individual basis.

Spitzack reported that the Corps is preparing materials for ASA Woodley related to establishing the RAP. He explained that this will include a memo from General Walsh, as well as a revised version of the IA Focus Group's May report. Mike Wells expressed frustration with the time that has elapsed, noting that a similar effort on the Missouri River has proceeded more quickly. He urged that the letters seeking state appointments be sent to the Governors quickly, explaining that Missouri's response will be delayed considerably if the letter arrives during the gubernatorial transition. Wells also emphasized the importance of having federal agency RAP members who can make decisions and commitments on behalf of their agencies. Charles Barton said it is not yet known who General Walsh will tap as his RAP member.

Spitzack added that more work needs to be done concerning the river teams' and working groups' relationship to the RAP, the RAP's relationship to the ASA(CW), and the appointment process. Gary Clark asked whether the RAP will have a charter and whether its scope will extend beyond NESP. Spitzack said the proposed purpose statement limits the RAP to NESP implementation issues and integration as needed with other programs.

Naramore asked if the proposed 8-year term length for NGOs would be problematic, in that it will limit the opportunities for new members. Spitzack replied that, since the Congressional reporting cycle is every four years, 8-year terms would give NGO members the opportunity to participate through two cycles. Doug Blodgett and Paul Rhode recommended having the NGO terms staggered to ensure reasonable continuity. Martin Konrad asked about the process for determining the RAP's NGO members. Spitzack said the Corps' proposal to the ASA will include a list of possible organizations to be solicited, a form that could be used in soliciting information and nominations from the NGOs, and a

proposed process and criteria for evaluating the NGOs' responses. The partnership will have an opportunity to review these materials before they are provided to ASA Woodley. The Corps will not be recommending specific groups or individuals to the ASA.

Spitzack outlined the following timeline for the RAP's development:

- August 08 — agreement on RAP proposal and begin the solicitation/evaluation process
- September 08 — request proposals from NGOs
- October 08 — evaluate NGO proposals and draft sample letters and a final RAP proposal
- November 08 — MVD/MRC and USACE HQ endorsements, and invitations sent by ASA(CW)
- January 09 — responses to ASA's invitations, and develop RAP start up packets
- February 09 — first RAP meeting

Dru Buntin, Todd Ambs, and Martin Konrad recommended sending the letters of solicitation to the Governors as quickly as possible, and said they saw no reason to delay letters to the Governors and federal agency heads, noting they can proceed separately from the NGO selection process. Spitzack expressed his willingness decouple the process, allowing the state and federal agency letters to move forward more quickly.

Clean Water Act/ Ecosystem Restoration Project

Kirsten Mickelsen summarized the recent workshops on potential opportunities to better integrate Clean Water Act (CWA) and ecosystem restoration efforts on the Upper Mississippi River (UMR). The workshops were hosted by UMRBA, with support from US EPA and USACE; and interest in the topic came from both program areas in a variety of contexts.

Mickelsen explained that the purpose of the workshops was to explore policy and practice interfaces between ecosystem restoration and CWA programs on the UMR. Specific goals were to:

- exchange information about current policies and practices in both areas of endeavor,
- articulate key assumptions and understandings that underpin work in both areas, and
- identify and recommend opportunities for enhanced interaction and coordination.

Approximately 50 participants, representing a range of disciplines and agency/organizational affiliations, attended each of two workshops, which were held in April and June. The first workshop consisted of a series of panel discussion on the background and goals and objectives of the CWA and ecosystem restoration programs, in an effort to create a common understanding of statutory and regulatory responsibilities, practical challenges, and operating practices. Following the panel discussions, participants discussed potential opportunities and limitations to enhancing collaboration between these efforts on the UMR, with a focus on 1) assessment and characterization and 2) restoration and remediation.

The second workshop began with presentations on the Chesapeake Bay and Florida Everglades that offered lessons learned and strategies for consideration. A case study on the Lake Pepin TMDL process highlighted an important current effort on the UMR to integrate across ecosystem restoration and CWA programs. Participants were then asked to consider the opportunities identified at the first workshop, which had been grouped into five broad themes, adding additional actionable ideas based on discussions at the second workshop.

Dave Hokanson briefly described the actionable ideas that workshop participants selected as the most promising. They are as follows:

Theme 1: Ecosystem Restoration Objectives and Water Quality Standards

- a. Include CWA staff in ecosystem objective-setting process for geomorphic reaches.
- b. Continue CWA water quality standards discussions, with input from ecosystem restoration staff.
- c. Include CWA staff in UMRCC Fisheries Plan.
- d. Establish standing UMR Ecosystem Restoration — CWA committee.
- e. Develop a UMR “report card.”

Theme 2: Biological Indicators

- a. Develop biological indicators for the UMR serving both CWA and ecosystem restoration programs, including the following steps:
 - i. hold an initial workshop
 - ii. review existing approaches/use of indicators,
 - iii. identify key target/indicator species,
 - iv. seek public input, and
 - v. use conceptual models to make biota-water quality linkages.

Theme 3: Water Quality Monitoring

- a. Examine quality assurance and other data requirements as they relate to the potential for data sharing.
- b. Coordinate monitoring schedules.
- c. Summarize and share data from US EPA’s Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program.
- d. Use LTRMP data to assess biological response to nearby HREPs.
- e. Form a UMR Water Quality Monitoring Council.

Theme 4: Watersheds, Tributaries, and TMDLs

- a. Greater involvement of agriculture agencies in UMR ecosystem restoration and water quality protection.
- b. Hold joint meetings between those working on tributary TMDLs and UMR ecosystem restoration projects.

Theme 5: Water Quality Considerations in Ecosystem Restoration Projects

- a. Include CWA program staff in ecosystem restoration project teams.
- b. Include CWA program staff in ecosystem restoration project prioritization.
- c. Model and predict the cumulative water quality impacts of restoration projects.

Hokanson observed that many of these ideas would require further elaboration to be actionable, and also acknowledged that even this subset of “most promising” ideas offers more options than can be pursued in the near future. He identified the following next steps:

1. feedback and discussion regarding the workshop ideas at today’s meeting,
2. ask the potential agency leads to reflect on the workshop results and identify which ideas they are inclined to pursue, and
3. deliver a project report to the UMRBA Board and sponsoring agencies.

Barb Naramore said that interest in biological indicators for the UMR has been growing in a number of venues. One possible near term action would be to plan and host a workshop designed to explore the indicators issue in more detail.

Martin Konrad asked who will coordinate action on the various ideas that emerged from the workshops. Hokanson explained that there is no expectation that all of the ideas will be pursued. It will be up to individual agencies and organizations to determine which, if any, of the ideas they want to advance. Naramore added that the pending project report should help the UMRBA Board and others assess and prioritize the potential action items. While not a condition of the project funding, Naramore said she anticipates UMRBA will provide a forum, at least initially, for interagency discussion of possible action on the workshop action items.

Todd Ambs praised the efforts of workshop participants, and said the project report can help document the need for increased federal resources to address these important opportunities. He noted that there is considerable interest in indicators and other ways of using existing monitoring data more effectively. With increasing pressure to document the results of restoration investments, Ambs said developing sound water quality-related metrics will be crucial. He asked that UMRBA devote more attention to the ideas outlined in the report at its November meeting, while acknowledging that funding will continue to be a challenge when it comes to pursuing these ideas. Mike Wells observed that current controversies concerning Gulf hypoxia and modeling results underscore the importance of having good data to feed into models. He observed that there are fewer water quality monitoring stations in place than there were just a few years ago. This is a particular challenge when it comes to addressing systemic issues like nutrients. Wells said the workshops are an important step forward, and expressed appreciation for the participants' efforts.

Hokanson said that the report may also have value in describing longer term needs that might not be able to be addressed immediately. Gretchen Benjamin stressed that, at the same time, there are efforts already underway related to several of the workshop ideas, such as EMAP, biological indicators, and a report card for UMR. Progress is being made using existing structures, according to Benjamin. Gary Wege offered the Lake Pepin TMDL as an example of the need to involve agriculture agencies, and those working on tributaries, in ongoing discussions.

Announcements and Recognitions

Martin Konrad announced that John Fleig is replacing Tammy Nicholson as Iowa DOT's representative to the UMRBA. Konrad said Fleig has been with Iowa DOT for 15 years, working in the areas of freight data and aviation.

Konrad recognized the upcoming retirement of Don Powell, of the Corps' St. Paul District. Konrad noted that Powell has been with USACE for more than 35 years, and has worked on the EMP since the program's inception. Konrad expressed the UMRBA Board's profound appreciation for Powell's many contributions and presented him with a certificate of appreciation.

Recent Flooding on UMR and Tributaries

States Perspectives on the Impacts, Lessons Learned, and Outstanding Issues — Todd Ambs reported that 30 counties in the southern portion of Wisconsin were affected by the recent flooding. For many of them, this was the second major flood event in 10 months. Following historic rainfall events, some areas experienced two to three times their previous maximum flow rate of record. Ambs noted that the incident at Lake Delton was mistakenly reported as a dam break, but was actually due to the failure of a road berm. Officials identified over 200 dams with the potential to fail during the floods, many of which were monitored 24-hours per day for a week or more. In the end, only five of dams failed. Not surprisingly given the large volume of water, there were over 500 sanitary overflow events, involving 175 communities. However, with the high flow rates, the water quality impacts of these overflows were minimal. No public drinking water supplies were compromised, something Ambs attributed at least in

part to Wisconsin DNR's efforts over the years to encourage relocation of drinking water plants to higher ground.

Ambs said rain events appear to be becoming much flashier in Wisconsin. If this is in fact a new pattern, Ambs said it raises important questions about future policy and the adequacy of existing models and program requirements. He noted that this year's flooding occurred during planting season. According to Ambs, increased land under cultivation and reduced enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program exacerbated the run-off associated with the tremendous rainfall. He noted that Wisconsin is developing a comprehensive report on the floods and expressed hope that this will provide additional insight.

Mike Wells said Missouri has learned a lot about response over the last several years. Since March 2006, Missouri has had a record 19 federal disaster declarations, involving floods, ice, and tornadoes. As a result of the heavy precipitation events this spring and summer, reservoirs throughout the state exceeded flood levels. Significant amounts of agricultural land and crops were damaged, and Wells said yields will be down for the state. Many wastewater and some drinking water facilities were inundated. Among the current recovery issues in Missouri are burning and disposal regulations, vegetation and building debris clean-up, and sandbag disposal. Wells said that several state parks were completely closed, but damages are not expected to be severe. He noted that the state park at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers has been closed since April. Governor Blunt has established four subcommittees to address housing and business assistance, demolition and debris removal, levee repair, and voluntary buyout and relocation. Wells observed that there were some buyouts in Missouri following the 1993 flood, but that they were not extensive. He said it is possible there will be more interest this year, particularly among landowners who have experienced repeated losses.

Rebecca Wooden said that this year's flood impacts were relatively minor in Minnesota. However, she noted that the southeastern part of the state is still recovering from severe damages associated with extensive flash flooding in August 2007. Mike Jawson said USGS is increasingly concerned with how the loss of stream gauges is impairing flood forecasting efforts.

Gary Clark reported that Illinois experienced widespread flooding and is dealing with many of the same issues as in the 1993 flood, including emergency flood response and levee improvements. Recent completion of the Comprehensive Plan is increasing the focus on levee-related issues. Clark said he shares with Jawson's concern over the loss of stream gauges, noting that agencies have lost some key tools for making sound forecasts. He said this year's flooding also underscores the importance of the National Flood Insurance Program and strong local implementation of its requirements. Clark said Illinois continues to enforce key regulations, including elevation of substantially damaged structures. In combination with buyouts, previous enforcement efforts resulted in significant avoided damages this year. Clark also reported that Illinois is working with the Corps on the issues of repetitive loss structures in cabin lease areas.

Mike Sullivan said that, within eight flood-affected states, NRCS has identified approximately \$70 million in eligible Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) projects. It remains to be determined how many of these projects will be approved. In addition, NRCS is also examining its options for funding restoration of conservation practices under other authorities.

Don Hultman gave a brief presentation regarding the impacts of this year's flooding on the Service's UMR refuges. Damages included 14 breaks to the perimeter levee at Lake Odessa, affecting both federally and state managed lands. Hultman noted the spillway at Clarence Cannon Refuge appears to have prevented significant damages. There was no significant levee damage at Clarence Cannon this year, compared with 12 breaks in 1993, prior to construction of the spillway. The EMP-built water

control structures at Swan Lake survived this year's flooding well. Hultman said the Middle Mississippi Refuge, where agricultural lands were converted to refuge following previous floods, sustained very little damage this year. Had those lands still been in agricultural production, Hultman said the losses would have been considerable. He estimated flood-related refuge damages on the UMRS at \$7.4 million, and offered a region-wide estimate of \$18.0 million.

Martin Konrad reported that Iowa experienced extensive flooding this year, exceeding the scope of 1993. In addition, two large tornados resulted in fatalities and substantial damage as well. According to Konrad, 78 of Iowa's 99 counties have been declared federal disaster areas, with damages in the billions of dollars and large scale dislocations. Crop losses are also extensive. Conditions remain precarious in many areas, and recent rainfall produced a new round of flooding. Konrad said it will take considerable time for Iowa to recover fully. In part due to lessons from 1993, Konrad said interagency communication was excellent during the flood response, and evacuation plans were executed well. He noted that debris disposal has been a major issue, and also emphasized the need for river gauges and GIS tools to support river forecasts. Konrad said an Iowa DNR fish hatchery on the Little Turkey River suffered extensive damages following a rapid, and unpredicted, levee overtopping.

Terry Smith reported that, on August 1, the Corps hosted the first meeting of the Regional Interagency Levee Task Force (ILTF). Smith explained that the ILTF is designed to bring federal and state agencies together, with the goal of accelerating flood recovery while also promoting the best long term options for future flood damage reduction.

UMRBA's Flood Response and Recovery Statement — Barb Naramore noted that, following the 1993 Flood, UMRBA developed a flood response and recovery statement that proved very helpful in a variety of ways. Given the magnitude of this year's flooding, Naramore suggested that the Board revisit the 1993 statement and consider whether UMRBA should issue an update or revision of any kind. Naramore briefly summarized the major points of the 1993 statement as follows:

- Offer genuine, comprehensive flood damage reduction alternatives to communities and landowners.
- Repair and restore damaged P.L. 84-99 levees to their pre-flood condition, where that is the local desire.
- Enforce NFIP requirement that substantially damaged structures be elevated above the 100-year flood as part of repair or reconstruction.
- Behind lower levees, encourage public purchase of floodprone structures, demolition of structures, and flood-compatible uses.
- Enforce regulations that prohibit construction of significant new encroachments in floodways.
- Devise and implement levee modification projects where economically and environmentally feasible and where property rights issues have been satisfactorily resolved.
- Evaluate the feasibility and cost of preparing new flood routing models.

In addition, the 1993 statement includes two addenda that elaborate on the issues of 1) flexibility and alternatives and 2) comprehensive basin planning and management.

Clark observed that the major elements of the 1993 statement remain quite relevant. He suggested having UMRBA staff draft a follow-up statement that would affirm these principles and highlight any lessons learned or special considerations in light of this year's experience. Ambs agreed, and asked that the new statement emphasize the need for gauge funding and the human impacts of flooding. Wells added that NRCS's Emergency Watershed Protection program should be recognized. Konrad asked staff to draft a statement and provide it to the Board for review.

USGS Water for America Initiative

Max Etheridge reported on the Department of the Interior's Water for America Initiative, a multi-year plan designed to assess the availability and uses of the nation's water resources. The President's FY 09 budget request includes \$9.5 million for the USGS portion of the initiative and \$31.9 million under the Bureau of Reclamation. The USGS request includes \$2.75 million for advances in streamgaging and telemetry, \$1.05 million for water use data, \$4.2 million to initiate regional and focus area studies, and \$1.5 million for the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program.

Etheridge explained that a core element of the Water for America Initiative is an assessment of each of the 21 water resource regions in the United States — i.e., the 2-digit HUC level watersheds. Each of these regional studies will cost approximately \$1 million, will require three years to complete, and will produce water budget and hydrologic trend information. Every three years, six to seven regional studies will commence, with the goal of completing the national assessment in ten years. In addition to the 21 regional studies, the initiative calls for completion of nine focused area studies that will take a more detailed look at major water resource questions in the context of a smaller basin or aquifer. These focus area studies will each require about three years and \$3 million to complete. Etheridge noted that, under the Great Lakes Basin Pilot Project, USGS has completed various reports on groundwater recharge and storage, streamflow, and consumptive water use, with additional reports pending. These studies will be used as part of the national assessment.

Other important efforts planned under the initiative include consideration of climate change, ecological flows, land cover changes, indicators of water availability, and water quality-related limitations on water availability. To date, Etheridge reported that stakeholder feedback on the proposed Water for America Initiative has been positive overall. He identified a series of questions on which USGS is actively seeking input regarding the proposal. While the House Appropriations Committee approved \$4.7 million for the initiative, Etheridge said FY 09 funding is unlikely under the anticipated Continuing Resolution.

Mike Wells emphasized that the states want to ensure their data and other information sources are used as part of the study and assessment effort. Etheridge emphasized USGS's commitment to making use of all relevant and available data, and the agency's desire to work collaboratively with the states and other partners. Wells observed that federal resources to address water supply issues are allocated disproportionately to western states. He emphasized that water supply problems are not unique to the western states.

Midwest Natural Resources Group

Terry Smith briefly described the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG), explaining that the members consist of senior regional managers from 14 federal agencies. The group has been in existence since 1998, and provides a collaborative forum to talk regionally about major issues facing the agencies and how agencies can work together on those issues. At its May meeting, MNRG focused on issues related to climate change. Smith also reported that General Walsh became chair of the group in May, with Max Etheridge assuming the co-chair position.

Etheridge said he is pleased to be participating on the MNRG once again, noting that it offers an opportunity for federal agencies to talk about issues, and build relationships and partnerships. He also stressed that the MNRG's meetings are open forums and provide an excellent opportunity to bring issues to the attention of the federal agencies' regional leadership. Smith encouraged people to visit MNRG's web site at <http://www.mngr.gov>.

Water Quality Update

Recent Water Quality Task Force Activities—Dave Hokanson reported that the Water Quality Task (WQTF) is focusing its designated uses project on aquatic life uses, at least initially. He explained that the project will take an ecosystem-informed approach that recognizes the river's diversity. The LTRMP strata will be used as a "conceptual framework" at the start, to help determine which distinctions are most significant from the perspective of aquatic life use support (e.g., which strata present clear distinctions in terms of key parameters such as dissolved oxygen needs?). Ultimately, this may lead to sub-categories within the aquatic life use designation on the UMR and/or modifications in methodology to account for this variability, according to Hokanson. He said the WQTF hopes to complete a brief concept paper by the end of this summer that will outline the intended approach, with a final report targeted for completion in approximately one year. He noted that some efforts anticipated under the designated uses project relate closely to potential coordination opportunities identified during the Clear Water Act/Ecosystem Restoration workshops. This includes ecosystem-informed standards discussions and biological indicators work. Hokanson explained that the designated uses project is ultimately aiming towards a review and identification of appropriate water quality standards criteria for the river's distinct aquatic areas.

Hokanson reported that WQTF provided a mechanism to coordinate sampling for perfluorochemicals (PFCs) this spring and summer. PFCs are a class of widely used industrial chemicals that are an emerging concern in both ground and surface water. State and regional US EPA staff conducted the sampling to assist efforts by EPA research scientists to establish sampling methodologies for PFCs. Approximately 125 samples were collected at 75 sites on the UMR and its tributaries. Hokanson said EPA researchers have provided some initial information back to the cooperating agencies, and some follow-up sampling is planned. Participants were briefed on the initial results, and a manuscript will likely be available in late August. [Note: Subsequent to this meeting, UMRBA staff learned that issues at the laboratory that processed the PFC samples will delay release of the sampling results and manuscript.] In response to a question from Martin Konrad, Hokanson said the samples for the PFC analysis were collected from the water column.

Hokanson discussed ongoing and emerging issues regarding interstate consultation on CWA assessment and listing. The issues include:

- Missouri is pursuing adoption of the interstate assessment reaches and revisions to its use designations.
- 303(d) listings related to PFCs in fish tissue are proposed in Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin has added a sediment/submersed aquatic vegetation impairment that matches the areas of Minnesota's turbidity impairment.
- Changes to fish consumption advisories in Iowa (based on mercury in fish tissue) will result in new impairment listings in Iowa.
- Illinois has proposed changes to its dissolved oxygen criteria.
- There continue to be challenges in coordinating assessments and listings, including issues related to timing, underlying differences in standards and methodology, and emerging contaminants.

US EPA Support for UMRBA Water Quality Activities — Hokanson reported on efforts to establish an interagency personnel agreement (IPA) with US EPA. By way of background, he explained that the IPA was identified as a mechanism whereby EPA could provide near-term, tangible support to the states' water quality coordination efforts on the UMR. Under a two-year IPA, EPA would furnish a

dedicated staff person to support the designated uses project and other WQTF efforts. However, Hokanson reported that the recent posting for the IPA did not succeed in attracting qualified candidates. Other options might include eliminating the requirement that the IPA staff person operate out of UMRBA's office or seeing whether EPA would fund a staff person who UMRBA would hire directly. Dru Buntin suggested it might be possible for EPA to fund someone currently at a state agency under the IPA. Bill Franz said this IPA is structured in such a way that it limits eligibility to EPA candidates. He added that EPA is looking at options, such as EPA-funded travel support, to alleviate some of the communication problems that might occur if the IPA staff person works outside of the Twin Cities area. Mike Wells encouraged the exploration of various alternatives, but said this should not delay prompt action on filling the position, noting that personnel transitions associated with the change in Administration could present a complication if the IPA is not completed this calendar year.

National Developments Relevant to UMR Water Quality—Hokanson reported that US EPA officially established a Council of Large Aquatic Ecosystems in May 2008. At an earlier organizational meeting, the Council set the following objectives:

- Strengthen aquatic ecosystem programs
- Strengthen core water program implementation
- Improve links to EPA Strategic Plan and budget
- Improve links to EPA research plans
- Develop and define new aquatic ecosystem programs

The Council's 10 initial ecosystems include the Chesapeake Bay, South Florida, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, and Columbia River, all of which currently receive significant EPA focus and resources. The UMR is not among the Council's initial members, though Region 7 representatives did apparently advocate for its consideration.

Hokanson reported that a revised Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan was released in June 2008 as an update to the 2001 Action Plan. The major Gulf goals remain unchanged in the revised Action Plan, which details 11 specific actions, including accelerating nutrient reduction and advancing science, tracking progress, and increasing awareness. The revised Action Plan was also accompanied by an FY 08 Operating Plan, detailing more specific and immediate steps related to the 11 broad action areas.

Hokanson conveyed the Water Quality Executive Committee's recommendation that UMRBA develop a letter of comment on the new plans. He explained that such a letter might best focus on the UMR-specific implications of items in the Operating Plan. Franz encouraged such a letter, explaining that it would help demonstrate how what the states are doing on the UMR is relevant to Gulf hypoxia efforts. Wells stressed that any letter should be consistent with the Action Plan and Operating Plan, given that the states have already endorsed these plans through their Hypoxia Task Force members. Mike Sullivan observed that the Action Plan's new emphasis on state level nutrient reduction strategies could represent a significant change.

Wells moved and Gary Clark seconded the motion directing UMRBA staff to draft a letter of comment, with sequential review by the WQEC and UMRBA Board. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Hokanson reported that the National Research Council has convened a second panel to follow-up on its 2007 panel's assessment of Clear Water Act implementation on the Mississippi River. While the first panel was funded by the McKnight Foundation, US EPA is funding the new effort, which will focus on Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) approaches to addressing sediment and nutrients on the Mississippi River. Hokanson explained the panel's assessment is a major element of EPA's efforts to

implement the Hypoxia Operating Plan item related to CWA implementation on the Mississippi River. The panel held its first meeting on July 14, and is scheduled to meet again on September 12, 2008.

Enhancing UMR's Water Quality Profile — Hokanson listed the following current and potential strategies to support and enhance UMRBA's water quality work:

- Maintain connection and communication with US EPA headquarters
- Investigate opportunities presented by the Council of Large Aquatic Ecosystems and US EPA's Strategic Plan
- Congressional outreach (e.g., follow-up to March 2008 trip)
- Investigate the potential of authorizing a UMR water quality program
- Build relationships with potential partners
- Keep relevant by commenting and communicating on various fronts
- Emphasize the basic message of modest initial funding for a state-led effort focused on "local" water quality issues and building on existing institutional capacity

Franz reported that on August 25, US EPA Regions 5 and 7 will discuss the potential for the UMR to be included on the Large Aquatic Ecosystem list and in US EPA's updated Strategic Plan. The meeting will also focus on opportunities for the two regions to support each other's work.

Administrative Issues

FY 10-11 State Dues Assessment — Martin Konrad indicated that the UMRBA Board typically sets dues for the upcoming two years at its August meeting in even-numbered years. Mike Wells moved and Gary Clark seconded a motion to keep UMRBA dues at \$48,000 annually per state for FY 10 and 11. This is unchanged from the current level, which has been in place since FY 00. The motion was approved unanimously.

Personnel Manual Amendment re Transportation Benefits — Martin briefly described a proposed amendment to the UMRBA Personnel Manual that would allow permanent employees to choose between employer-paid parking or mass transit benefits. Dru Buntin moved and Todd Ambs seconded a motion to approve the proposed change, with Section V of the Personnel Manual now to read as follows (and with subsequent sections of the manual to be renumbered accordingly):

Permanent employees shall have the option of receiving either A) parking accommodation at a nearby facility of the Association's choosing or B) a public transit pass. For an employee electing Option A, the Association shall pay for the parking accommodation in its entirety. For an employee electing Option B, the Association shall secure transit passes at a cost not to exceed the cost of an express route transit pass, and not to exceed the then-current cost of Option A. Employees declining both the parking accommodation and the transit pass shall not be provided any offsetting compensation.

The motion carried unanimously.

Future Meetings — Naramore reported that the next two quarterly meeting series are scheduled for November 18-20, 2008 in the Quad Cities and February 17-19 in St. Louis, with UMRBA's meeting falling on the first day of each series. The Board set the spring meetings for May 19-21 in the Twin Cities.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.