

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

**August 10, 2010
Quarterly Meeting**

Web-based Teleconference

Chuck Spitzack of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on August 10, 2010. A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Bernie Schonhoff introduced Pat Boddy, Iowa DNR's Deputy Director. Boddy will serve as Iowa DNR's UMRBA and EMP-CC representative, and will likely attend some NECC meetings.

Minutes from the May 19, 2010 Meeting

Corrections to May 19, 2010 meeting minutes

Jim Fischer clarified that Wisconsin DNR has approved a draft appraisal report for L&D 3 fish passage, not a feasibility report, as was written on page A-9 of the draft minutes. He requested that the draft be amended accordingly. Brad Walker requested that, in the second sentence of the third paragraph on page A-1, the word *shall* be substituted for *should*.

Janet Sternburg moved and Bernie Schonhoff seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 19, 2010 meeting with the amendments offered by Fischer and Walker. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of May 19, 2010 meeting

Schonhoff asked how fish passage is prioritized relative to other ecosystem restoration projects in NESP's first increment. Scott Whitney said fish passage is a top priority for NESP, but is not likely feasible with the low funding anticipated in the near future. He said fish passage projects require consistently high funding levels, similar to new lock construction.

Schonhoff reiterated his earlier request for the comments the Science Panel has received on its draft Water Level Management report. Barry Johnson said he had submitted those comments to Ken Barr, with the expectation that they would be forwarded to NECC. Johnson said he will follow up with Barr regarding distribution of the comments. (Subsequent to the meeting, Nate Richards distributed these comments to NECC members. The Corps plans to make these comments available to all partners at the same time the final report is distributed.)

Chuck Spitzack recalled that, at the May 19 NECC meeting, Brad Walker asked why the Inland Marine Transportation System (IMTS) Team used the high traffic scenario in its Capital Investment Plan. Spitzack said he has not communicated directly with the IMTS Team, but believes the high traffic scenario is reasonable in that it is consistent with findings and recommendations in the 2004 feasibility report and the 2008 reevaluation report. According to Spitzack, the potential implications of the high traffic scenario on the UMRS would require major lock improvements, as recommended in NESP's first increment. He said the high traffic scenario is very reasonable and therefore its appropriate to use in

estimating future costs and benefits. Walker requested that Spitzack provide the Corps' and, if possible, the IMTS Team's rationale for using the high traffic scenario its cost-benefit criteria.

Spitzack said Walker also asked if the 2008 reevaluation report satisfied the requirements for further examination outlined in the 2004 Feasibility Study. Spitzack said NESP staff believe the reevaluation requirements have been fulfilled, with the understanding that some level of uncertainty will remain. He explained that the Corps will assess appointment scheduling (i.e., traffic management), moorings, and switchboats during the first increment implementation. Walker said he believes the Corps still needs to complete a notification report and the related requirements of the recommended plan. He requested that the Corps convene an *ad hoc* meeting to discuss reevaluation-related questions.

Program Management

Inland Waterways Trust Fund Update

Chuck Spitzack said Corps staff are currently reviewing the UMRS lock construction sequence proposed in the Inland Marine Transportation System (IMTS) Team's Capital Investment Plan. Under the 20-year plan L&D 25, La Grange, L&D 22, and L&D 24 would be initiated, in that order. Spitzack explained that the remaining new locks authorized in NESP (i.e., L&D 20 and 21 and Peoria) would be initiated beyond the Plan's 20-year time horizon. He said the NESP Team is inclined to accept this proposed sequence, unless partners identify a compelling reason to seek modification or Corps HQ or the ASW(CW) direct otherwise. Spitzack requested that partners submit any comments regarding the lock sequencing to him (charles.p.spitzack@usace.army.mil, 309-794-5297) by COB September 30, 2010. [Note: Subsequent to the meeting, on September 26, Spitzack extended the comment deadline to COB October 31.]

In response to a question from Rick Nelson, Spitzack said this proposed sequencing approach reflects a shift in focus from best value implementation to single lock implementation. In response to a question from Gretchen Benjamin, Spitzack said Corps staff will also request comments from industry partners on the revised lock sequencing approach.

Spitzack reported that the President's FY 11 budget request, matched by the Senate Appropriations Committee's FY 11 energy and water spending measure (S. 3635), includes \$350,000 for major rehabilitation of La Grange. He explained that, since construction of the new lock at La Grange is not in the immediate future, USACE is proceeding with major rehabilitation in the near-term.

FY 11 Appropriations Status

Scott Whitney said the President did not include NESP in his FY 11 budget request. Whitney reported that the Senate Appropriations Committee's FY 11 energy and water spending measure and the House Energy and Water Subcommittee's FY 11 appropriations markup include \$4.0 million and \$1.0 million in general investigation (GI) funding for NESP, respectively. Whitney said it is highly probable that the Corps and other federal agencies will operate under a continuing resolution authority (CRA) until after the November elections. However, the specific implications of a CRA for NESP are not yet known.

Draft FY 11 Work Plan Scenarios

Whitney explained that NESP staff had developed FY 11 work plans based on scenarios ranging from \$6 million to \$10 million in GI funding and \$15 million in construction general (CG) funding. However, with the recent House and Senate Committee actions, it is clear these funding levels are no longer realistic. On August 24, NESP managers and project team leads are scheduled to discuss FY 11 planning priorities under \$1 million and \$4 million GI funding scenarios. Whitney said Corps staff will

distribute planning scenarios to NECC for review this fall. With such a dramatic decrease in funding, the Corps estimates that it will have to halt work on at least half of the projects currently in planning under NESP.

Reach Planning Status

Spitzack overviewed the UMRS reach planning process. He explained that, while program neutral, reach planning will occur on a four-year cycle that coincides with NESP's report to Congress schedule. Reach planning is also intended to serve as a planning tool for NESP's first increment implementation. Spitzack said the first iteration of reach planning was previously scheduled for completion in early 2010, but will likely be completed in FY 11. To coincide with NESP's 2013 report to Congress, the second iteration of reach planning will commence in FY 12 with a target completion in early 2013.

Spitzack reviewed the reach planning process, which is intended to encompass both a top-down and bottom-up approach:

- NESP/EMP Regional Support Team (RST) prepares a reach and system planning notebook, which guides the reach planning process.
- On an ongoing basis, RST coordinates with NESP's Science Panel and EMP's Long Term Resource Monitoring Program (LTRMP) scientists for input regarding habitat and information needs and monitoring and adaptive management approaches.
- The reach planning teams (RPTs) draft reach objective reports and reach plans, from which the RST develops a systemic objectives report and a plan for ecosystem restoration for the UMRS.
- Corps district-based River Management Teams (RMTs) and the Illinois River Team review the documents listed above that apply within their respective district boundaries.
- NECC and EMP-CC consider endorsement of the system-level documents — i.e., the notebook, system objectives report, and system plan.

Spitzack noted that the RST also provides guidance to NESP's system planning teams (SPTs) in their development of specialty system plans (e.g., systemic forest management plan), which are then provided to the RPTs to inform reach planning. The reach planning teams identify restoration needs and recommend systemic adaptive management activities to the RST. In response to a question from Tim Schlagenhaft, Spitzack said the RMTs are currently reviewing the February 5, 2010 draft UMRS Objectives Report. The RST will consult with the RPTs in developing the UMRS System Plan. In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Spitzack listed the NESP SPTs, including fish passage, water level management, forest management, cultural resources, floodplain restoration, and barge fleeing.

Bernie Schonhoff asked whether the RST, rather than the RPTs, should develop the systemic adaptive management activities. Spitzack explained that the RPTs will simply identify potential adaptive management activities within their respective floodplains for the RST's consideration in developing a systemic adaptive management plan. In response to a question from Barry Johnson, Spitzack said all of the reach planning materials will function as living documents, and will undergo major updates every four years. Schlagenhaft asked if this process and current status is represented visually in a table or chart. Spitzack said the UMRS reach planning notebook will be revised to include a more detailed description of the process.

Spitzack said the RMTs have endorsed, or are currently reviewing, draft FY 09-12 Floodplain Reach Plans. The Corps anticipates that the RMTs will consider the draft UMRS Objectives Report by the end of calendar year 2010, with EMP-CC and NECC action following in February 2011. Spitzack said the RMTs, EMP-CC, and NECC will also likely be asked to act on the UMR System Plan in early 2011.

Spitzack acknowledged that this first attempt at reach planning had complications. He recalled that partners at the August 3 UMRBA and August 4 EMP-CC meetings stressed the need for the Corps to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and clarity of the reach planning process. Spitzack said the Corps will develop an after-action report for this iteration and will incorporate lessons learned from this round into future reach planning cycles. In response to a question from Sternburg, Spitzack said NESP and EMP partners will have an opportunity to include their perspectives on the reach planning process in the after-action report. He said the Corps has not yet established a schedule for the after-action report. In response to a question from John Barko, Chuck Theiling explained that the February 5, 2010 UMRS Objectives Report is in its final draft stage, but will incorporate the floodplain objective reports when they are finalized. Theiling said the System Plan describes a systemic implementation strategy for the UMRS, based on the habitat and ecological needs identified in the individual floodplain reach plans.

New Planning Starts

Todd Strole reported that the River Resources Action Team (RRAT) Tech and Exec have endorsed Maple Island Complex for the next NESP planning new start in the Unimpounded Reach. Maple Island would construct a river training structure to restore a side channel. Strole said the RRAT Exec has not yet considered endorsement of the Unimpounded Reach Plan.

Nate Richards said the Lower Impounded RPT has selected Eagle Fill Backwater in Pool 17 and Lead Island Chute in Pool 19 for the next NESP planning new starts. Schonhoff asked if the Lower Impounded RPT or the River Resources Coordinating Team (RRCT) considered the time sensitivity issue surrounding Lead Island Chute, since the current owner of some of the land involved may auction the land shortly. Theiling said the Corps is not in the position to move forward at this time. Schonhoff said the owner may be willing to hold some of the needed land if the Corps communicates its interest in pursuing this project. He noted that most of Pool 19 is privately owned, so this project represents a good opportunity to restore some of its habitat.

Jon Hendrickson explained that the Upper Impounded RPT has developed proposals for most of the 35 projects it initially identified for planning in May and June 2010. Hendrickson explained that Upper Impounded RPT used conceptual models to define reference conditions to select priority areas for restoration opportunities. The Fish and Wildlife Work Group (FWWG) selected the Upper Iowa River Delta as the Upper Impounded Reach's priority new planning start and Lower Pool 2 as the second priority project. The Upper Iowa River Delta project would restore flows into this backwater complex, with the goal of reducing sedimentation and partially restoring the natural hydrology. Hendrickson said the RPT has submitted a draft Upper Impounded Reach Plan and the Upper Iowa River Delta project proposal to the River Resources Forum (RRF) for consideration at its next meeting, which is scheduled for August 26-27, 2010. Following RRF's endorsement, the draft Plan and project proposal will be submitted to NECC and EMP-CC. Hendrickson clarified that the Upper Impounded Reach Objectives Report is not yet out for review.

In response to a question from Johnson, Hendrickson said the Upper Impounded RPT has selected targeted areas for potential restoration opportunities and is now considering possible management actions. Schlagenhaft expressed concern that pool-scale water level management opportunities will be overlooked if the RPT focuses exclusively on smaller scale project areas within pools. Hendrickson said, while the targeted project areas are all at a sub-pool scale, water level management will be considered as a potential management action to achieve desired objectives. Schlagenhaft said having

a System Plan in place to guide the RPTs would be more effective to connect the system goals and objectives to the reach plans and identified projects.

Marshall Plumley said the Illinois RPT has identified nine potential new projects for initiation under EMP or NESP. These will undergo simultaneous review by the Illinois River Coordinating Council, RRCT, and RRAT Exec shortly. The nine potential projects include both pool scale and site specific floodplain restoration opportunities.

Scott Whitney said NESP has allocated \$15,000 to develop project management plans for each new planning start. Because of delays in project identification and work loads, this work will begin in FY 11.

Pool 18 Water Level Management Plan

Chuck Theiling said partner questions about the fish and wildlife impacts of the proposed Pool 18 water level management project have expanded the scope of the project monitoring plan. On August 26, 2010, the Pool 18 Water Level Management Project Delivery Team (PDT) and the Science Panel will meet to discuss possible approaches to incorporating biological response monitoring in the current monitoring plan for the Pool 18 drawdown. They will also examine ways the Pool 18 drawdown might address some assumptions in the Science Panel's water level management conceptual models. Theiling noted that the Science Panel has proposed using Pool 20 as a reference, given that the two pools are in the same general area, are each influenced by a major tributary, and are buffered by Pool 19.

Karen Hagerty mentioned the possibility of collaborating with Western Illinois University's field station at L&D 19. The field station is examining the potential to monitor Pools 19 and 20 using LTRMP protocols. Barb Naramore asked how the estimated monitoring costs compare with the total investment to implement a Pool 18 drawdown. Theiling said the estimated costs to implement a Pool 18 drawdown in its first year is between \$800,000 and \$2 million, and perhaps less in its second year. He noted that advanced dredging may also reduce implementation costs. This compares with estimated monitoring costs of \$500,000, assuming a reference pool is included. Theiling emphasized that the monitoring would represent an investment in adaptive management.

Floodplain Restoration System Team

Todd Strole showcased a new database of information about 314 potential floodplain restoration sites on the UMRS. He once again emphasized that these are simply potential restoration sites, based on input from members of the Floodplain Restoration System Team (FRST) and RPTs. He stressed that they have not been ground truthed and landowner interest has not been determined. Strole demonstrated how to filter the data based on user-selected criteria (e.g., levee height, number of existing building sites, floodplain and geomorphic reach, land use, etc.) and how to display potential restoration projects graphically in ArcGIS, using internal links. Strole said he is currently verifying content and evaluating where to house the database. Scott Whitney encouraged Strole to review the data on level of protection, observing that the database appears to include far too many levees listed at a 500-year level. Chuck Theiling suggested adding floodplain inundation data to Strole's database.

Strole reported that the FRST's next steps will include shifting from the Team's top-down approach and fostering more local level discussions regarding specific potential restoration opportunities. This will necessitate bringing in new participants knowledgeable about particular areas.

In response to a question from Janet Sternburg, Strole said planners can overlay side channel and floodplain restoration opportunities using the database.

Science Panel

Nate Richards described the Science Panel's FY 11 work plan priorities, which are as follows:

- Leverage Adaptive Hydraulics-Comprehensive Aquatic Systems (ADH/CASM) and other modeling capabilities to aid selection and design of ecosystem restoration projects.
- Evaluate fish response to fish passage and secondary channel restoration projects.
- Communicate with the Illinois Science Advisory Council regarding ecosystem goals and objectives and enhance collaboration on various Illinois River planning efforts.
- Develop biological indicators for use in an ecosystem health report card for the UMRS. This might include collaboration with the EMP's Analysis Team.

Scott Whitney noted that the Science Panel's FY 11 work plan assumes NESP is funded at approximately \$10 million. Given the prospects for significantly lower FY 11 funding, the Science Panel will likely need to rescope its FY 11 work plan, according to Whitney.

Side Channel Restoration Workshop

Ken Cook said MVS currently is planning three side channel restoration projects under NESP, including Herculaneum, Schenimann Chute, and Buffalo Chute. Biological monitoring thus far in preparation for the projects have focused on fish sampling. Cook explained that the 2009 RRAT boat trip included a major focus on side channel restoration, and subsequent discussions led Corps staff and district partners to conclude that an effort should be made to promote side channel restoration as a system-wide tool. MVS sponsored a January 20-21, 2010 scoping session in Cape Girardeau to develop a workshop agenda and an invitees list. Conclusions from the scoping session included the following:

- Planning side channel restoration projects is typically challenging because these projects are often opportunistic, there is a lack of understanding about large river processes, and there are substantial monitoring challenges related to side channel restoration.
- Understanding the potential for side channels to contribute to the UMRS's sustainability is needed.
- Conceptual models to estimate the capacity for side channel restoration projects to restore regional and systemic ecological functions and overall sustainability should be developed.

Cook reported that, as an outcome from the scoping session, Corps staff plan to host a side channel restoration workshop, which is tentatively scheduled for January 2011. The workshop will focus on how side channel restoration can support ecosystem goals and objectives across the UMRS.

Partner Reports

Janet Sternburg reported that the Missouri Department of Conservation's six Division Chief positions are now filled, which should facilitate decision making within the department. Sternburg said Governor Nixon is increasing restrictions on out-of-state travel.

Bernie Schonhoff expressed support for the proposed Lead Island Chute restoration project. He also noted that Iowa's out-of-state travel restrictions are tightening.

Butch Atwood said Illinois now requires approval for in-state travel.

Bill Franz said US EPA and USGS are working collaboratively to refine SPARROW modeling of phosphorus and nitrogen loading within the Mississippi River Basin. The agencies' eventual goal is to model outputs from each of the Basin's 12-digit HUCs. A September 15 webinar is scheduled to report on the modeling effort.

Jim Fischer said Dan Baumann is serving as Wisconsin DNR's interim Deputy Water Division Administrator. Wisconsin DNR hopes to fill 144 federally funded positions by October. Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board recently approved new rules to limit both point and nonpoint sources of phosphorus. Both the Wisconsin State Legislature and US EPA have an opportunity to review the rules.

Barry Johnson announced that USGS initiated land cover/land use data collection in early August. USGS will also study mussel mortality during the Pool 6 drawdown, which is currently underway.

Tim Schlagenhaft reported that Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) recently approved site-specific standards for total suspended solids and aquatic vegetation immediately above Lake Pepin. US EPA is now reviewing the standards. If approved, Minnesota PCA will develop a Lake Pepin TMDL based on those standards. Schlagenhaft noted that LTRMP data was invaluable in developing the standards.

Other Business

The upcoming meetings are as follows:

- **November 2010 — Quad Cities**
 - UMRBA — November 16
 - **NECC — November 17**
 - **Joint EMP-CC/NECC — afternoon of November 17**
 - EMP-CC — November 18

- **February 2011 — St. Louis**
 - UMRBA — February 15
 - EMP-CC — February 16
 - **Joint EMP-CC/NECC — afternoon of February 16 (if needed)**
 - **NECC — February 17**

- **May 2011 — Quad Cities**
 - UMRBA — May 17
 - **NECC — May 18***
 - **Joint EMP-CC/NECC — afternoon of May 18 (if needed)**
 - EMP-CC — May 19

* NESP staff are considering holding the May 2011 NECC meeting via webinar.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

**NECC Attendance List
August 10, 2010**

NECC Members

Chuck Spitzack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Rick Nelson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Barry Johnson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Butch Atwood	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Bernie Schonhoff	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Tim Schlagenhaft	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Janet Sternburg	Missouri Department of Conservation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bill Franz	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5

Others in Attendance

Steve Ashby	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ERDC
Jeff DeZellar	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jon Hendrickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Scott Whitney	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Mark Cornish	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Leo Keller	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Nate Richards	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Chuck Theiling	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marvin Hubbell	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Jeff Stamper	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Ken Cook	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kat McCain	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Todd Strole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS/The Nature Conservancy
Jon Duyvejonck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RIFO
Rick Frietsche	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuge
Rick Mollahan	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Pat Boddy	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
John Barko	Barko Environmental
Brad Walker	Izaak Walton League
Laura Kammin	Prairie Rivers Network
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Paul Rohde	Waterways Council, Inc.
Claude Strauser	
Barb Naramore	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association