

**Minutes of the 147<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting  
of the  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**August 14, 2018  
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Rick Pohlman called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Participants were as follows:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

Rick Pohlman	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Loren Wobig	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Tim Hall	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Barb Naramore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Patrick Phenow	Minnesota Department of Transportation
Chris Klenklen	Missouri Department of Agriculture
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Karen Rouse	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Steve Galarneau	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Keith Foye	Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection

Federal UMRBA Liaisons:

Brian Chewning	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Marty Adkins	U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS
Ken Westlake	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (via phone)
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMRS Refuges
Scott Morlock	U.S. Geological Survey, Midwest Region (via phone)

Others in Attendance:

Megan Moore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Brian Stenquist	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Greg Husak	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Randy Schultz	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Dan Baumann	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (via phone)
Steve Buan	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NWS
Corey Loveland	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NWS
MG Richard Kaiser	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD/Mississippi River Commission
Sam Angel	Mississippi River Commission
Rear Admiral Shepard Smith	Mississippi River Commission
Norma Jean Mattei	Mississippi River Commission
Jim Reeder	Mississippi River Commission
Chuck Camillo	Mississippi River Commission
Gabe Harris	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Renee Turner	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD (via phone)
Thatch Shepard	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD

Tom Holden	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Ben Robinson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Justin Lefor	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
MAJ Patrick Sullivan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Judy DesHarnais	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Steve Tapp	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Tom Novak	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Shahin Khazrajafari	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Dennis Hamilton	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Andy Barnes	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Angie Freyermuth	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Sam Heilig	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Adam Ziegler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR (via phone)
Dave Busse	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jasen Brown	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Hal Graef	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Amanda Goltz	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Greg Kohler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Shane Simmons	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Shawn Sullivan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Planning Division North
Nate Richards	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Planning Division North
Mark Gaikowski	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Olivia Dorothy	American Rivers
Brad Walker	Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Nancy Guyton	Neighbors of the Mississippi
Bertha Mae Taylor	Neighbors of the Mississippi
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Tom Boland	Woods Group
Mike Klingner	Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Coulombe	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

### **Minutes**

Barb Naramore moved and Loren Wobig seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 15, 2018 UMRBA quarterly meeting as written. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Executive Director's Report**

*UMRBA staff* – Kirsten Wallace introduced Lauren Salvato, who officially started as UMRBA's Policy and Programs Director on June 4, 2018. Salvato started on a contractual basis in December 2017, working mostly on UMRBA's water level management activities. She will also be primarily involved in the Associations' water quality-related work among other things. UMRBA staff Josh Ney resigned as Policy and Programs Director on August 10, 2018 to take another job opportunity. An announcement for the job opportunity was distributed on July 23, 2018 to UMRBA's distribution list, local nonprofit organization career boards, and universities and colleges throughout the Midwest. Applications are due August 17, 2018.

*UMRS Watershed-Informed Plan* – In response to a June 8, 2018 request from UMRBA, the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division sent a June 13, 2018 email to UMRBA indicating that the Division had delegated the development of the PAS agreement to the Rock Island District. UMRBA and District staff are working together to develop a contractual arrangement to advance these solutions listed in an open, transparent planning process through the planning assistances to the states (PAS) authority. Wallace expressed sincere appreciation to the Corps for its partnership in co-hosting the August 13, 2018 workshop with the goal of developing a communications strategy when developing the UMRS flood, channel management, extended drought planning effort. The workshop was funded through the Corps Integrated Water Resources Management program. Wallace reflected that participants had very thoughtful conversations about how to listen, learn, reflect, and incorporate the perspectives and knowledge of potentially affected interests.

*UMRBA Website Development* – UMRBA has explored several web development firms with six submitting proposals to create a new, modern website for the Association. Questions remain regarding the ultimate website platform, but Wallace explained that the website development cost is quoted at \$35,000. Tim Hall moved and Steve Galarneau seconded a motion to amend the telephone/communications line item in the FY 2019 budget from \$7,500 to \$40,000 for the development of a new UMRBA website and to approve UMRBA to enter into a contract with a website developer not exceeding \$35,000. The Board approved the motion unanimously and directed staff to coordinate with the Board regarding staffs' final recommendation before proceeding with the contract.

*USEPA OPA Grant Agreement* – UMRBA's five-year grant agreement with the USEPA is set to expire at the end of federal FY 2018. USEPA Region 5 has disclosed its funding amount or duration – i.e., one year only or with the option for four additional years. For UMRBA's OPA-related work to continue, UMRBA will require the Board's approval to enter into another agreement to start in federal FY 2019. Loren Wobig moved and Barb Naramore seconded a motion to authorize Kirsten Wallace to execute a contract with the USEPA, under which UMRBA will work with the USEPA, USFWS, states, local emergency responders, and industry to develop hazardous spill response GIS-based maps, tools, and plans. The contract is expected to be 12 months in duration with funding of \$150,000. The contract may include up to four option years at similar funding levels. The motion passed unanimously. Galarneau advised that Wallace encourage USEPA to include the four additional option years.

*Operating Reserves Policy* – UMRBA's auditor suggested that the Board approve a threshold for which the Association maintains unrestricted net assets – i.e., operating reserves. Wallace noted that, in previous discussions, the Board informally agreed upon two years of operating expenses. In response, Wobig moved and Matt Vitello seconded a motion to adopt the Board-designated goal for maintaining two years of unrestricted operating expenses in cash and investment reserves. The amount shall be determined based upon an average of the Association's previous five years' annual operating expenses. The motion passed unanimously.

*Financial Statements* – Wallace pointed to the Association's financial report on pages B-12 to B-19 of the agenda packet, including UMRBA Treasurer Jason Tidemann's review of the financial statement from April 2018 to May 2018. Jim Fischer moved and Tim Hall seconded a motion to approve the Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet dated May 1, 2018. The Board unanimously approved the motion by voice vote.

*UMRBA FY 2020-2021 Dues and WQ Assessment* – Tim Hall explained that August of even numbered years is typically when the Board establishes the UMRBA dues and WQ assessment contributions for the next two fiscal years – i.e., August 2018 is the time to set dues and for FYs 2020 and 2021. The Board has committed to raising the UMRBA dues and WQ assessment more regularly to avoid another significant increase in the future and to keep up with inflation. At an August 7, 2018 conference call, the Board agreed to reference U.S. Department of Labor consumer price index (CPI) percent change

from the preceding calendar year as well as states' base salary increases over the past five years. Naramore requested a specific recommendation informed by those metrics before proceeding with a motion. The Board agreed and Hall volunteered to develop a more detailed recommendation to provide to the Board at its October 30, 2018 meeting.

Wallace welcomed the Mississippi River Commission and expressed sincere appreciation for its partnership.

### **2018-2022 UMRBA Strategic Plan**

Kirsten Wallace provided an overview of the 2018-2022 UMRBA Strategic Plan, noting that the Board has finalized the text. UMRBA staff will work with a graphic designer before publishing. Wallace distributed a summary handout of the Strategic Plan and provided a general explanation of the Association's primary functions, including:

- *Advocates* – Pursue necessary investment and seek solutions to legislative and administration policies to improve federal, state, and local management of the Upper Mississippi River System
- *Catalyst* – Accelerate changes to improve overall river management and advance solutions through integrated, collaborative, science-based approaches
- *Convener* – Foster interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, communication, and coordination
- *Communicator* – Increase awareness and appreciation of the economic and ecological value of the Upper Mississippi River System to decision-makers, river users, and the public
- *Developer* – Create and maintain information or decision-support tools to improve management and knowledge of the Upper Mississippi River System

Typically, the UMRBA Board identified the following focal areas:

- a) *Aquatic Nuisance Species* — UMRBA promotes aquatic nuisance species (ANS) prevention and control that is compatible with the Upper Mississippi's multiple uses and recognizes the ongoing nature of ANS threats.
- b) *Commercial Navigation* — UMRBA furthers the Upper Mississippi's function as a Congressionally-declared "nationally significant commercial navigation system."
- c) *Ecosystem Health* — UMRBA advances the overall health and resilience of the Upper Mississippi as a Congressionally-declared "nationally significant ecosystem."
- d) *Flooding* — UMRBA fosters a collaborative approach to flood risk management on the Upper Mississippi that is systemic, forward-looking, informed, effective, and cost-efficient.
- e) *Hazardous Spills* — UMRBA enhances and facilitates a collaborative approach to hazardous spill planning and response on the Upper Mississippi.
- f) *Clean Water* — UMRBA improves the overall water quality condition in the UMRS watershed, floodplain, and main stem.
- g) *Collaboration* — UMRBA advances multi-purpose management of the Upper Mississippi and works with partners from across the country to promote integrated water resources management.

In response to a question from Hon. Norma Jean Mattei, Wallace explained that UMRBA's plan for a shared water quality assessment of the Upper Mississippi includes a drinking water component.

Reflecting on the Strategic Plan, MG Richard Kaiser observed that UMRBA's strength is its ability to bring together various federal, state, and private interests toward a common vision.

## USFWS Refuge Plan

Sabrina Chandler provided an overview of USFWS Region 3 (i.e., Upper Mississippi Zone), which includes 57 refuges and 12 wetland management districts. Within Region 3, Area 1 encompasses the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers National Wildlife Refuges with 11 refuges located on or nearby the rivers spanning 300,000 acres. The Area 1 Refuges experience over four million visitors annually. The Area 1 Refuge System employs 54 permanent staff and has an estimated total consumable budget of \$8.6 million in FY 2018. Chandler mentioned that Area 3 encompasses Minnesota Valley Refuges as well as other Refuges in western Minnesota.

Chandler explained that the National Wildlife Refuge System is unique from other federally-protected lands in that the Refuges prioritize wildlife only. In creating the Refuge System, Congress proclaimed that “wildlife and wildlife conservation must come first; the Refuge System is to stand as a monument to the science and practice of wildlife management.” Chandler described the following concepts that refuge managers are required to adhere to:

- *Compatibility* – Managers must show that a current or proposed use does not, in their sound professional judgment, materially interfere with or detract from fulfilling the mission of the system or the purpose(s) of the refuge
- *Appropriateness* – Managers have the authority to just say no to uses that are deemed not appropriate given the uniqueness of the refuge, mission, health and safety issues, administrative issues, etc.
- *Jurisdiction* – Managers must have jurisdiction for any actions or public use decisions – e.g., navigable waters, states’ rights
- *Diversity, Integrity, and Environmental Health* – Directs refuges to ensure that the biological diversity, integrity, and environmental health of the refuge system is maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans

Chandler explained that, per a national requirement, Area 1 Refuges and the Minnesota Valley have completed comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs) that prescribe the management direction and priorities for the next 15 years.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (NWFR) is grounded by three major Congressional Acts – i.e., Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge Act of 1924, National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act of 1966, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Chandler noted that the Refuge was purchased with appropriated funds from the land and water conservation account, and no funds are received from the federal duck stamp or hunting and fishing licenses. The Upper Mississippi River NWFR’s CCP was completed in 2006 and includes compatibility determinations for 32 uses. The CCP provides the foundation for more detailed planning documents, such as the visitor services plan, habitat management plan, inventory and monitoring plan, and hunting and fishing plan. Chandler provided an overview of the objectives provided in the CCP for the Upper Mississippi River NWFR, including implementing UMRR habitat projects and pool-wide drawdowns, acquiring land from willing sellers, protection bluffland, among other things.

The Upper Mississippi River NWFR is currently incorporating state and federal comments to its draft Habitat Management Plan, which focuses the Refuge’s priorities based on identified resources of concern (both for individual species as well as habitats). The Plan also describes strategies for achieving various objectives. As a subsequent effort, the Refuge plans to develop an inventory and monitoring plan that will utilize the resources of concern as indicators for assessing the habitat management plan objectives and strategies.

In response to a question from Loren Wobig, Chandler explained that Refuge staff work closely with the USFWS fisheries staff to monitor Asian carp populations and implement reduction strategies. In response to a question from Marty Adkins regarding migratory avian populations, Chandler said the Upper Mississippi River NWR works closely with both sister Refuges throughout the watershed as well as states through migratory bird and private lands programs. These partnerships facilitate information sharing as well as strategy development and implementation.

## **USACE Report**

### *FY 2018 Work Plan and Disaster Supplemental Allocations*

Brian Chewning reported that the Corps is simultaneously executing its FY 2018 program, planning for its FY 2019 program based on likely FY 2019 appropriations and potential additional work plan funding, and formulating its FY 2020 program. Chewning provided an overview of FY 2017 and FY 2018 budget and work plan funding amounts in each of the Corps' major budget categories (i.e., investigations, construction, O&M, and Mississippi Rivers and Tributaries). Noting previous years, Chewning acknowledged that Congress will likely provide significant increases in the FY 2019 work plan funding above the President's budget. Chewning highlighted the following projects funded in the FY 2018 work plan and disaster supplemental:

- UMRR – \$33.17 million
- NESP – \$1.00 million
- La Grange lock rehabilitation – \$10.00 million
- Winona Small Boat Harbor Dredging – \$2.39 million  
[Note: This project did not receive FY 2018 funds. It was completed with FY 2017 allocations.]
- UMRS 9-foot navigation channel O&M – \$256.43 million
- Cedar Rapids flood risk management - \$177.50 million
- Bois Brule flood risk management - \$11.30 million

### *La Grange Lock Rehabilitation*

Adam Ziegler reported that the FY 2018 work plan funding for La Grange will allow the Rock Island District to finalize designs and award a construction contract by the end of this fiscal year. Initial construction work starting in FY 2019 will focus on the I-wall feature. A closure of La Grange lock is planned for FY 2020 for dewatering and rehabilitation of the chamber and land wall. It is anticipated that construction will be complete in FY 2021. The rehabilitation includes the following:

- Horizontal and vertical concrete – precast panels, integrated wall armor, utility trench replacement, and protective concrete piers
- Mechanical systems – Redundant hydraulic power units, high pressure system, miter gate rotary actuators, tainter valve submersible cylinders, and bubbler system replacement
- Electrical systems – Programmable logical controller, fiber optic data system, new generators

Ziegler observed that the La Grange rehabilitation is the single largest effort in terms of coordinating with industry and allocating resources. Other major maintenance work to the Illinois River locks will occur simultaneously, resulting in substantial cost savings to navigation industry. Construction at La Grange is the driving factor of the closure dates. Failure of awarding a construction contract in FY 2018 would result in a delay to the start of the 2020 closure.

MG Kaiser applauded District staff for their efforts in coordinating with industry regarding multiple closures and developing a predictable schedule for closures. This is a unique approach for the Corps and is resulting in a very positive response from industry. In response to a question from Chris Klenklen, Ziegler said the Illinois River closure is scheduled for July 2019 to October 2019. A 120-day closure is planned for La Grange, but it could be complete within 90 days.

Jennie Sauer and Kirsten Wallace explained that resource practitioners have been raising questions about whether it would be feasible and beneficial from an ecological perspective to implement systemic water level management during the planned closure to the navigation system. Wallace said UMRBA is working with federal and state agencies as well as navigation and conservation interests to explore this question and may submit a request to the Corps if water level management is shown to be worthwhile.

### *Minneapolis Locks Disposition Study*

Judy DesHarnais recalled that, in WRRDA 2014, Congress closed the Upper St. Anthony Falls (USAF) L&D to navigation on June 9, 2015. As a result, the Lower St. Anthony Falls (LSAF) L&D and L&D 1 no longer fulfill their respective primary purposes of facilitating the transportation of commodities. In addition to transportation, the USAF lock has a secondary purpose of recreation and is integral to flood damage mitigation, hydropower production, and water supply for Minneapolis. The LSAF L&D and L&D 1 also serve the public by providing recreational opportunities and hydropower production.

DesHarnais explained that Section 216 of the 1970 Flood Control Act authorizes the Corps to conduct studies to re-examine existing projects. Given the removal of the 9-foot navigation purpose for these three locks, the Corps is implementing a disposition study regarding the future use of these sites. Currently, the sites require about \$1.5 million annually to maintain and about \$300,000 annually to dredge up-river of Lock 1. Occasional major maintenance would be required to replace or rehabilitate steel or other concrete structures. DesHarnais explained that the disposition study is limited to two alternatives: no action or disposal. She outlined the study schedule, which includes public outreach that occurred in July 2018, development of the draft disposition study report and associated environmental assessment from August 2018 to March 2019, public review of the draft report in June-July 2019, and report publication in December 2019. DesHarnais explained that, pending approval from MVD, Headquarters would ultimately submit the Corps' recommendation to Congress. Ultimately, Congressional action would be required for any potential deauthorization. Should Congress decide to do so, GSA would be responsible for disposing of property.

DesHarnais invited partners to monitor progress and obtain relevant documents at the following Corps website: <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/MplsLocksDisposition/>.

MG Kaiser reiterated that disposal does not mean removal. DesHarnais clarified that any entity interested in modifying or removing structures would need to employ an environmental impact statement.

In response to a question from Bryan Hopkins about entities potentially interested in restoring rapids for recreation, DesHarnais said Congress would first have to dispose of the locks and suggested that rapids at USAF lock would not provide the right conditions for recreation. USAF dam is privately owned for hydropower and it is not likely that the private owner will select to divest.

Noting that post-disposition action is speculative, Barb Naramore asked how the Corps will determine boundaries for the environmental study. DesHarnais explained that Corps action would only include transferring the property to GSA (i.e., structures will remain unchanged) and therefore is employing an environmental assessment. Any change to the locks and dams would require a more detailed, elaborate environmental impact statement. In response to a question from Megan Moore, DesHarnais said that hydropower companies could potentially purchase the lock and dam.

### *Beneficial Use*

Brian Chewing explained the Section 1122 authority provided in WRDA 2016 that directs the Corps to implement 10 pilot projects for the beneficial use of dredged material. Following a request for proposals process, the Corps convened an interdisciplinary team of federal and state agency partners to evaluate the proposals and make a recommendation to ASA(CW) for consideration. Ultimately, MVD submitted 22 pilot projects to ASA(CW) R.D. James in spring 2018 that included five projects in the St. Paul District, three projects in the Rock Island District, and one project in the St. Louis District. MVD has not yet received the final list of 10 pilot projects from the ASA(CW) office.

In response to a question from MG Kaiser, Chewing explained that the funding account will vary depending on what the project proposal involves.

### **Water Level Management**

Gretchen Benjamin explained that the Corps has been consulting with states and conservation interests over the past 25 years regarding implementation of a more natural hydrograph through dam operation on the Upper Mississippi River. Benjamin discussed the lost habitats as a result of the construction and operation of the 9-foot navigation channel as well as other factors and challenged partners to consider how dams can be better operated to restore natural processes and facilitate aquatic plant recovery.

Dave Busse explained that the Corps' environmental operating principles are meant to foster sustainability as a way of life throughout Corps organization, proactively consider environmental consequences of all Corps activities and act accordingly, and create mutually supporting economic and environmentally sustainable solutions. In the 1980s, state restoration practitioners began asking the St. Louis District water control managers to hold water levels to a half-foot below full pool for at least 30 days during the growing season to facilitate submersed aquatic vegetation to establish and mature. District staff always acknowledge that the drawdown will be canceled if needed to maintain the 9-foot navigation channel. In 1994, the St. Louis District effectively implemented a one-foot drawdown for 40 days in Pool 25 and continued to implement environmental pool management when feasible every year.

Busse recalled that the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) prioritized water level management activities in each District based on feasibility and potential ecological benefit. Busse showed the results of the pools within the Rock Island District jurisdiction and recommended that the NESP report be used as a reference.

Busse acknowledged that environmental pool management has successfully demonstrated the ability to enhance the environment while meeting multiple needs of the Upper Mississippi River. Busse showcased the return of the perennial vegetation such as Arrowhead.

Benjamin provided an overview of water level management successes by pool from 1994 to today, noting that successful drawdowns have been achieved in nearly every year. Benjamin explained that the St. Paul District formed the interagency Water Level Management Task Force in 1995 and conducted three small-scale demonstrations from 1996 to 1999. Since then, the St. Paul District has implemented large-scale drawdowns in Pool 8 in 2001-2002, Pool 5 in 2005-2006, and Pool 6 in 2010.

Looking forward, Benjamin explained that the St. Paul District has found that environmental pool management is feasible at Pool 10 without requiring additional dredging. MVD declined the District's deviation request this summer because the pool's water control plan does not include language explicitly providing for such action. However, Benjamin said partners believe that environmental pool management is within the authority of the Corps.



Additionally, the St. Paul District is evaluating authorities and funding needed for recurring implementation of drawdowns in Pool 8. The Rock Island District's Water Level Management Subcommittee is exploring drawdowns in Pool 13 within the existing band of dam operation. Benjamin reminded that NESP PED funding was used to develop an in-depth analysis of water level management capabilities in Pool 18. The recommended alternative was for a two-foot "hinged" drawdown to expose 1,300 acres.

Benjamin mentioned that the Corps has entered into a planning assistance to the states (PAS) agreement with UMRBA, the five Upper Mississippi River states, American Rivers, Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and Waterways Council. The goals are to:

- Review opportunities and challenges in implementing system-wide water level management
- Identify and resolve policy and implementation issues
- Scope (and potentially employ) a cost-benefit analysis
- Implement opportunistic drawdowns where possible
- Initiate a public outreach campaign

Benjamin concluded that water level management can be done within the existing authorities within the current operating band and with special authorization when operating outside of the operating band, providing environmental benefits while fully supporting the navigation purpose. Pre-planning will minimize or eliminate any potential disruptions to other river users. Public outreach may be extensive but can provide substantial value. Federal-state interagency groups can work collaboratively on these demonstration projects, with the clear understanding that demonstrations can be reversed if necessary. Benjamin also recommended that UMRR provide funding to implement water level management projects over extended timeframes.

Kirsten Wallace noted that UMRBA formed a Water Level Management Regional Coordinating Team to define implementation hurdles and define recommendations for resolution. In response to the recent objection to the Pool 10 deviation request, the System Team has discussed a potential letter to MVD discussing the importance of permanently allowing for the Districts to implement opportunistic drawdowns when the hydrology and hydraulic conditions are ripe. MG Richard Kaiser acknowledged the value of water level management as a restoration tool and directed the Corps to evaluate the potential for UMRR to implement pool-scale drawdowns. Marshall Plumley said that MVD recently approved a fact sheet for Lower Pool 13 as recommended by the UMRR Coordinating Committee that could potentially include a pool-scale drawdown as a project element. Plumley acknowledged that policy issues will likely need to be resolved, but the project will provide context for those issues.

### **Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program**

Scott Whitney reported that the FY 2018 Work Plan includes \$1 million for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). Whitney recalled that NESP was authorized in WRDA 2007 and has been allocated \$65 million for planning, engineering, and design (PED). The program has not been included in a Presidents' budget and, as a result of the ban on earmarks, has not been funded to a substantial effect since 2010. Previous work plans have provided NESP with some funding to answer questions from Congress or the Administration regarding cost estimates. The FY 2018 funding is specific to updating the economic evaluation of the navigation component. District staff are waiting for direction from ASA(CW) regarding the scope and direction of the reevaluation.

In response to a question from Jennie Sauer, Whitney said the economic evaluation looks only at the navigation component and does not consider ecosystem services. In response to a question from Mike Klingner, Whitney said the economic evaluation will narrow to a single cost-benefit ratio rather than developing a range of high and low traffic scenarios.

## **Mississippi River Commission**

MG Richard Kaiser introduced members of the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) present at today's meeting, including Sam Angel, Rear Admiral Shepard Smith, Norma Jean Mattei, and Jim Reeder, as well as its Executive Director Chuck Camillo. MG Kaiser said members MG Mark Toy and BG Paul Owen are currently touring La Grange Lock with ASA(CW) R.D. James.

MG Richard Kaiser recognized that the Mississippi River is an incredible resource, with 41 percent of the country draining through the Mississippi Valley. The river transcends both the upper and lower basins that we conveniently separate for management purposes and acknowledged the tremendous opportunities for the MRC and UMRBA to engage and learn from one another. He reflected on the 1993 Flood, which occurred 25 years ago and overwhelmed the existing systems, and applauded UMRBA for its efforts to bring people together to create a shared vision for flood risk management and comprehensive plan for managing flood events. MG Kaiser said he will attend MVS's commemoration of the flood in late August. He underscored the value of NESP in integrating navigation and the ecosystem. The river uses are not mutually exclusive; innovative, flexible, and thoughtful solutions can improve conditions for both.

MG Kaiser said the MRC was established in 1879 to improve the navigation channel and protect adjacent farms and towns from flooding. While the MRC is primarily focused on those two purposes, the MRC does recognize the inherent value of a healthy river ecosystem. He reported that the MRC's low water inspection tour is scheduled for August 20-24, 2018, starting in Caruthersville, Missouri.

MG Kaiser said the MRC brings regional concerns and ideas for solutions to Congress and encouraged UMRBA to coordinate with the MRC.

Sam Angel said he is happy to be in the Upper Mississippi River basin and encouraged UMRBA and other partners to visit ERDC, particularly to learn about the work it is doing related to invasive species. Norma Jean Mattei expressed appreciation to UMRBA's efforts, noting that the work done in the upper basin certainly affects the lower basin. Mattei noted that recent flood events have demonstrated that a systemic approach can prevent loss of life under extreme events. Rear Admiral Shepard Smith said he is interested in learning more about how we can build consensus and work toward shared solutions.

## **Administrative Issues**

### *Future Meeting Schedule*

October 2018 — Bloomington (MN)

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — October 30
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — October 31

February 2019 — Dubuque

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — February 26
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — February 27

May 2019 — St. Louis

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — May 21
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — May 22

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.