

**Minutes of the 151st Quarterly Meeting
of the
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

**August 20, 2019
La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Rick Pohlman called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. Participants were as follows:

UMRBA Representatives and Alternates:

Rick Pohlman	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Tim Hall	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Jake Hansen	Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Barb Naramore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Whitney Place	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Chris Klenklen	Missouri Department of Agriculture
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Steve Galarneau	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Federal UMRBA Liaisons:

Brian Chewning	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Robert Mier	U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS (on behalf of Kevin Wickey)
Ken Westlake	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (via phone)
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
JC Nelson	U.S. Geological Survey, Midwest Region (on behalf of Mark Gaikowski)

Others in Attendance:

Dave Glover	Illinois Department of Natural Resources (via phone)
Randy Schultz	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Megan Moore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Kevin Stauffer	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Patrick Phenow	Minnesota Department of Transportation (via phone)
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Tom Horton	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Dan Baumann	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Mike Halsted	Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Corey Loveland	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NWS
Mike Welvart	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NWS
John Wetenkamp	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NWS
LeeAnn Riggs	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Ben Robinson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Kevin Wilson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Chris Erickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Steve Tapp	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Col. Steve Sattinger	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR

Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Scott Whitney	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Andrew Goodall	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR (via phone)
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Steve Price	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Nate Richards	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR (via phone)
Dave Reynolds	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Paul St. Louis	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Lance Engle	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS (via phone)
Hal Graef	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Greg Kohler	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Andy Schimpf	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS (via phone)
Shawn Sullivan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kat McCain	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, RPEDN
Neal Jackson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMRCC
Jennifer Dieck	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Danelle Larson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Tom Boland	AMEC Foster Wheeler
Olivia Dorothy	American Rivers
Gretchen Benjamin	The Nature Conservancy
Paul Rohde	Waterways Council Inc. (via phone)
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Andrew Stephenson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Minutes

Steve Galarneau moved and Tim Hall seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the May 21, 2019 UMRBA quarterly meeting as written. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Kirsten Wallace expanded on her written Executive Director's report as follows:

- UMRBA was joined by The Nature Conservancy and Waterways Council Inc. in meetings with the Office of Management and Budget and ASA(CW) Office staff on August 1, 2019 as well as with USACE Headquarters on August 2, 2019. The meetings focused on funding for UMRR, NESP, and UMRBA's proposed Section 729 planning effort to address flood, sediment, and drought management. Overall, the feedback was relatively positive.
- UMRBA participated in Rep. Angie Craig's August 15, 2019 roundtable in Hastings, Minnesota. Participants also included Minnesota DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen and DoA Commissioner Thom Petersen. The conversation about 2019 flooding and emergency channel conditions occurring at the time pointed to watershed conservation efforts. UMRBA raised its efforts to improve management of floods, sediment, and drought in the floodplain and increase investment and federal-state coordination in implementing the states' nutrient reduction strategies.
- UMRBA sent a July 19, 2019 letter to ASA(CW) R.D. James requesting a briefing on NESP's 2019 economic update and seeking a partnership communications strategy. The letter is provided on page B-5 of the agenda packet.

- Secretary Sonny Perdue plans to host a town hall at Mel Price L&D on August 28, 2019 alongside ASA(CW) R.D. James. It is anticipated that they will speak to NESP.

Wallace pointed to the Association's financial report on pages B-6 to B-14 of the agenda packet, including UMRBA Treasurer Jason Tidemann's review of the financial statement from May 2019 to July 2019. Steve Galarneau moved and Dru Buntin seconded a motion to approve the FY 2019 and FY 2020 Profit and Loss Statements and Balance Sheets dated August 7, 2019. The Board unanimously approved the motion by voice vote.

Dru Buntin moved and Steve Galarneau seconded to authorize Wallace to transition UMRBA's banking services from Wells Fargo to HomeTown Bank based on the availability of public fund accounts and other financial services. Tim Hall noted that the UMRBA Board has had several discussions regarding the Association's banking needs. Wallace said Wells Fargo disabled its public funds accounts and does not offer many services that other banks do to accounts that organizations like UMRBA hold. That triggered a review of alternative banking options.

UMRS Flood, Sediment, Drought Open Sessions

Kirsten Wallace explained that UMRBA has been advocating for a partnership agreement with the Corps to pursue a long term, integrated planning effort under the Section 729 planning authority since 2016. The purpose is to improve management of high and low water conditions as well as excessive sedimentation. At UMRBA's 2017 UMRS Flood and Sediment Management Summit, participants shared in their ask for a system plan, a regional coordinating forum (governance body), resolution to policy impediments and financial resources needs, and improve and better utilize knowledge.

As a first step in changing the conversational dynamic around managing floods, sediment, and drought, UMRBA and USACE are in the process of convening six local open sessions that focus on how local action can affect a systemic plan and vice versa. These open sessions are a means of both seeking input into a longer term UMRS floodplain resilience plan and building trust, transparency, and ultimately buy-in into the objectives.

Wallace explained that the structure and facilitation method is built from what is called "open space events," where participants bring forward conversation ideas of interest to them that they would facilitate. The discussion topics would center around the question of "how can all of us do a better job addressing three key issues on the Upper Mississippi River: sediment/channel maintenance, flood risk reduction, and preparation for extended droughts?"

Brian Stenquist of Minnesota DNR serves as the event facilitator, working with participants to organize the "marketplace" of conversation sessions. Each of the workshops has up to fifteen different conversations, with no more than five conversations occurring concurrently for an hour. Participants can pick which conversations to attend and can decide to leave and move to another conversation as desired. The conversation lead is responsible for taking notes, which are distributed to all meeting participants at the end of the workshop and then posted on UMRBA's website. Wallace explained that this approach advances UMRBA's goal of utilizing the method of systematically developing informed consent (SDIC), so that the process, outcomes, and key actors are well understood and enjoy regional agreement. She requested that UMRBA Board members, federal liaisons, and partners serve as a network and help to disseminate workshop announcements and subsequent products and news. Wallace said MVR is also hosting a webpage devoted to this effort that includes an opportunity for input from stakeholders unable to participate in a session.

Wallace reported that UMRBA and USACE hosted four meetings thus far, including in Hannibal on July 14, 2019, Muscatine on July 20, 2019, Dubuque on July 27, 2019, and Winona on August 3, 2019.

Sessions are scheduled for August 24, 2019 in Godfrey and September 7, 2019 in Cape Girardeau. Wallace summarized common themes of the session conversations as follows:

- The river has changed over the past five years, in particular, and over a longer duration.
- The economic and ecological uses and values of the river intersect and are important.
- Solutions will be complex, requiring consideration of the many uses and values of the river system.
- Flooding, low water/drought, and sedimentation are interrelated – i.e., sedimentation filling in backwaters affects conveyance of flood waters and flooding increases sedimentation rates – and all affect habitat quality and quantity.
- The velocity of water moving through the system is fast and solutions should “slow the water” or “make room for the river” but solutions for doing so are mixed, including creating spillways, restoring floodplain forests, investing in agriculture conservation practices in the watershed, setting back levees, and more.

Many participants questioned who is responsible for managing the river, and for what? How is it regulated and why and by whom? There were some common misunderstandings about the lock and dam system and whether there is some control over the flooding conditions, in particular. There was a common articulation that the status quo is not acceptable and that some sort of system plan is needed. Participants often raised the question of who should have decision-making authority – i.e., who has trust among stakeholders and the ability to enforce rules?

Participants overwhelmingly expressed appreciation for the forum and requested more meetings with a similar format. However, turnout was relatively low at the Muscatine, Dubuque, and Winona locations. That is likely due to a number of factors, including competition with other scheduled events and summer vacations, advertising and marketing, and trust and expectations for public meetings and this meeting’s unusual format.

Wallace explained that next steps include forming teams to develop a report within the next year that will provide five to seven actions/solutions that are high-leverage and enjoy regional consent as well as three to five questions and issues that need further exploration or consent-building. Part of the report will offer a communications strategy considering the “systematic development of informed consent” principles and a scope for using the Corps’ Section 729 planning authority.

Jim Fischer said he attended the Winona open session. Fischer said that, while skeptical about the format, he found that it was highly productive at engaging participants and earnestly listening to them. It was an intimate session that gave ownership to the people who attended. Dru Buntin echoed Fischer’s comment, acknowledging that the discussions were far more effective than giving the typical PowerPoint presentations. Buntin recalled that it was hard not to interject during discussions at the Hannibal meeting related to flooding but that it was helpful to let the conversation unfold.

Olivia Dorothy said she attended several of the open sessions. Dorothy reflected that many participants also raised the root problem as climate change and how that might shape the future as well as how we need to think about the river’s resilience. In response to a question from Neal Jackson, Wallace said participants have included a relatively diverse range of stakeholder interests – i.e., levee districts, farmers, conservationists/environmentalists, recreators, commercial fisheries, community/landowners, and reporters. The Dubuque and Winona meetings had the least amount of diversity among stakeholder groups, primarily including conservationists/recreationists. In response to a question from Karen Hagerty, Wallace said there were about 30 people at the Hannibal meeting and 15 people at the other three sessions.

Regarding the sentiment expressed of the river changing, Ken Westlake asked if participants pointed to UMRR or climate change. Wallace explained that descriptions of the changing river condition mostly involved altered hydrology and sediment. At the Muscatine and Dubuque meetings, participants did compare areas of healthier habitat to areas where there had been no restoration activities but without knowing that the quality of habitat was because of UMRR. Participants at the Winona meeting mostly raised beneficial use and work in the watershed as solutions.

9-Foot Navigation Channel Management

USACE Report

St. Paul District

Steve Tapp provided a report of the St. Paul District channel management in 2019 thus far. Tapp said the District's annual dredging season typically extends from May to November, with averaged dredged amounts of 980 cubic yards per year using both government and contracted equipment. Trends are increasing in water volume and dredging needs. Comparing conditions 1971 to 1990 with that 1991 to 2010, the average annual flows has increased 68 percent in the Minnesota River and 24 percent in the Mississippi River. Additionally, dredging volumes have increased 904,000 cubic yard per year on average from 1985 to today and by 1,058,000 cubic years per year in the past 10 years.

Tapp reported that the 2019 dredging season started on April 29, 2019. There were a significant number of channel issues reported early in the season, with a majority of the surveys showing closures or significant channel restrictions. The District has used eight dredge plants this year with six operating simultaneously. The Dredge Goetz was delayed by high water on May 24 and was sent to the Rock Island District on June 29, 2019 for emergency dredging along with the Government Mechanical Plant.

About 900,000 cubic yards was scheduled to be dredged this season. The District has dredged an additional unscheduled 1.3 million cubic yards. To be most cost-effective, the District decided to reduce dredging depth to 11 feet and channel width where possible, essentially creating pilot channels. The District also provided AIS Aids to help navigation avoid dredging. Tapp said about 50 percent of the channel was considered critical on May 3, 2019 and 36 percent of the channel was considered an area of concern. By June 28, 2019, the critical areas decreased to about 43 percent of the District's responsible portion of the navigation system and the areas of concern was at 39 percent. The area of no concern had increased from 14 percent from May 3 to 18 percent on June 28. On August 16, the critical area decreased to 12 percent with the area of concern at 63 percent while the area of no concern increased to 25 percent.

Tapp said capacity issues remain challenging at existing dredged material disposal sites. Eagle nesting and bank swallows also presented issues for work at the disposal sites. The District is developing dredged material management plans for Pools 2, 4, 5, and 6. Planning will next move to Pools 3, 9, and 10. The District completed dredged material unloading at Lost Island in Pool 5, plans to complete unloading at Corps Island in Pool 3, and complete partial unloading at Above West Newton in Pool 5.

Tapp said planned 2019 dredging funding needed was \$10.3 million but actual need was \$13.6 million. Reflecting on the dredging season in 2019 and over the past several years, Tapp said temporary sites are filling faster and new permanent sites are located further from the river. Dredging volumes are increasing at a higher initial cost for management. The Corps' real estate process is often slow and policies tend to restrict abilities to be opportunistic.

Rock Island District

Dave Reynolds showed a graph illustrating the reduced dredging completed in a season by comparing dredging volumes from time periods between the 1940s and mid 1970s and then to today. Funding is typically the limiting factor for the amount of dredging that occurs, but there are other reasons affecting dredging completed in a given year. Over the past 20 years, the Rock Island District has averaged dredging 394,234 cubic yards per year with 17.9 jobs per year.

Reynolds pointed to the 2019 season as somewhat of an anomaly. The dredged amount thus far is nearly 1.5 million cubic yards. The Corps is currently dredging at six sites and expending about \$1 million per week. With most of the District's channel management budget used within the first quarter, it estimates about \$11 million needed to maintain the channel through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Reynolds acknowledged that the "just in time" dredging approach is not sustainable for maintaining a safe and reliable 9-foot navigation channel. The approach results in a backlog of project needs with large gaps in project planning and implementation.

Reynolds said the Corps acquired two Mississippi River sites in 2017 in Pools 18 and 19 and three sites in 2018 in Pools 11, 20, and 22. The Rock Island District is currently exploring the use of a rock structure in Pool 11. On the Illinois River, the District is awaiting acquisition funding for an additional placement site on the Mackinaw River in the La Grange Pool that has a capacity for 2.4 million cubic yards. The Corps is in the planning phase for potentially acquiring a new placement site in the Bulls Island Reach. The existing site in the area has reached capacity. The tentatively selected plan has identified 48 acres that would accommodate up to 530,000 cubic yards.

Reynolds reported that the Corps budgeted \$3.1 million for dredging on the Mississippi River and \$3.0 million on the Illinois River. The District received an additional \$5.8 million for dredging on the Mississippi River and no additional funding for the Illinois River. Expended funds on the Mississippi River through September 9, 2019 are anticipated to total \$7 million, with a shortfall of \$5.5 million. The District spent its total budget on the Illinois Waterways (i.e., \$3.0 million) and is awaiting additional funding to address the \$4 million shortfall. Reynolds reiterated that additional funding is needed for maintaining an open channel on both the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

Reynolds said the Rock Island District has received some funding from the St. Louis District on August 16, 2019 that will allow for dredging to continue over the next few weeks. The District will still need some additional funds to continue work through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Reynolds said the District is securing four new survey vessels with multi-beam technology, plans to integrate marine LiDAR with ADCP, is in the process of hiring a dredged material management planning project manager, and is creating a land use coordinator position. These efforts should increase the District's efficiency and effectiveness in managing the channel in future years.

In response to a question from Jim Fischer, Reynolds said the new dredged material management planning coordinator will work on securing new permanent upland placement sites. In response to a question from Buntin, Reynolds explained that the Rock Island District planned to send the Dredge Goetz back to St. Paul on August 14; however, the St. Louis District transferred funds that allowed the Rock Island District to keep the Dredge Goetz and maintain the channel. In response to a question from Kirsten Wallace, Tapp said it is unknown when the Corps will release its master plan for spending monies appropriated via the FY 2019 Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act. Corps Headquarters will submit its ranking of dredging needs nation-wide to OMB for its consideration.

St. Louis District

Lance Engle said the St. Louis District has experienced high water conditions since September 2018 with the major flood event of 2019 acting similarly to the 1993 flood event. The District did not begin dredging until summer 2019 due to high water. Starting on July 22, 2019, the Corps' Pathfinder was used to identify areas of shoaling and set buoys. Two contractors surveyed the channel to assess conditions. Expenditures needed to maintain the navigation channels located within the St. Louis District this fiscal year will likely exceed \$3 million, which is about double or triple the annual average costs for dredging.

Engle said the St. Louis District convenes weekly PDT meetings regarding water control management, dredge operations, activities of the Dredge Potter Master, engineering hydraulics, and engineering data management. The District also participates on MVD's shallow draft bi-weekly meetings.

Engle said the District anticipates receiving the Dredge Goetz in October 2019, and that there will be a lot of channel management needs to address in FY 2020. The Corps is working hard to anticipate and address any problem areas.

States' Perspectives

Megan Moore provided Minnesota DNR's perspective of working with the St. Paul District in channel management planning. Moore acknowledged that this year's conditions were the product of over eight months of high water. The river is experiencing the impacts of hydrologic changes due to climate change and chronic changes in land use. But this year's channel management emergency response also is the result of a lack of dredging plans and the practice of "just in time" dredging, which is not sustainable. Moore said numerous in-person, on-site meetings, and conference calls with partners have required staff to rearrange schedules to meet urgent timelines. It creates significant time demands and disruptions to staff workflow. Moore recommended that the Corps incorporate new sediment, hydrologic, climate, and land use information into planning efforts to avoid being unprepared in the future.

Moore referenced a proposal from the St. Paul District received in late May or early June for a definition request in Pool 2 above the normal operating band to temporarily provide a functional navigation channel until dredging could be completed. Minnesota DNR's response is that the timing would add significant strain to the floodplain forest and increase erosion along shorelines. This would be worsened by recreational boating. Ultimately, the Corps did not advance the proposal because high water remained high long enough for the navigation channel to be sufficiently dredged. In deliberations about the proposed deviation request, partners questioned the legal definition of "emergency" as the situation did not concern the loss of life or property. In closing, Moore stated that a deviation request as proposed by the Corps should not be used as an option for maintaining the navigation channel.

Moore explained that the Corps proposed changing the definition of an "emergency" situation to include dredging required "to remove natural shoals in the channel arising from weather-related events and that prevent safe vessel passage." This proposal is likely in response to the 2019 emergency dredging and/or to Minnesota DNR's request for the Corps legal definition of emergency.

Moore also raised the issue of using the "contractor selected offload" method. The St. Paul District said it would only use this option sparingly and that it is not meant to set a precedent. However, there are now three occasions where this method has been implemented within the District. In one instance the Corps lost complete control of where the sand would be placed and many local governments were unhappy with increased truck traffic and the site location. Most of the challenges result from lack of communication and coordination between the sponsor, the Corps, and states as well as other

stakeholders. In another instance, a contractor had placed hydraulic pumps and pipes that blocked a popular boat landing.

Jim Fischer reflected that emergency channel management is not a new issue that is just starting in 2019. The states, through UMRBA, have been vocal about the need for strategic planning focused on channel management issues since 2012. Fischer mentioned that Wisconsin DNR works with two Districts with respect to managing the navigation channel. The agency engages in many ways, such as serving on-site inspection teams, District-based coordinating teams, and through MOUs. While District staff work extremely hard within the funding and policy constraints, there is no time and resources available for long term planning. The consequence is additional stress to fish and wildlife habitat with streambank and island erosion and backwaters becoming shallow. Fischer said he anticipates these challenges to continue and grow as we feel the impacts of climate change and increased hydrology.

Fischer said the Districts need to increase its flexibility to manage the channel, including through increased capacity at placement sites, contracting, and additional mechanical crews. The Corps' real estate policy precludes the agency from moving quickly on various opportunities. Sustained increased funding is needed for developing long-term proactive plans, exploring and establishing new markets, expanding staff, and keeping pace with increasing costs of managing the channel.

Matt Vitello said Missouri DoC works with both the St. Louis and Rock Island Districts. Vitello expressed appreciation for the communication that occurs through the District-based river teams and on-site inspection teams. He emphasized the importance of advanced communication and planning to allow Missouri DoC to provide quality input into channel management activities.

Olivia Dorothy said there should be some sort of oversight regarding contractors' techniques and placement sites. Dorothy expressed concerns with the placement of dredged material behind levees without the approval of a Section 404 permit. Shawn Sullivan clarified that the St. Louis District does not do land placement of dredged material.

Scott Whitney observed that the river navigation system was closed for over 180 days due to flooding and now tows are dealing with constructions due to sedimentation. Whitney said the river cannot just be managed at the end of a pipe and called on the states to keep sediment on the landscape. Barb Naramore said the states are certainly aware of the stress in the agriculture economy right now and have not expressed anything that should suggest otherwise. The states have provided a clear articulation for what is required to be good partners to find near term solutions to long term problems. Naramore stressed that we cannot and will not only remain solely focused on near-term, reactive management. Work is needed to address issues in the watershed as well as policy and fiscal constraints in managing the 9-foot navigation channel. The states are seeking to be partners in long term planning so we are not caught dealing with repetitive issues year-after-year.

In response to a question from Neal Jackson, Jim Fischer explained that UMRBA's Water Quality Executive Committee and Water Quality Task Force have intentionally made a pivot to focusing on the source issues in the watershed. That work is intended to make a difference in the river floodplain. Wallace clarified that UMRBA's proposed Section 729 planning effort would focus on the 9-foot navigation channel project in a watershed context. Karen Hagerty mentioned that UMRR is exploring its ability to make connections to individuals and organizations in the watershed that can influence the river's ecosystem. UMRR is starting with a pilot communications effort on the lower Illinois River related to sedimentation. Dorothy observed that federal agencies are not very involved in planning on the main stem, such as NRCS and USEPA but that there is a lot of potential to utilize programs and projects on the river. Dorothy suggested exploring the possibilities to use those other opportunities.

Recreation Challenges on the UMRS

Kevin Stauffer explained that there has been a fast growing use of shallow drive watercraft mostly resulting from the increasing popularity of bowfishing but also related to duck hunting, trapping, and ice fishing. Resulting concerns include conflicts among river users and residents and disturbances to vegetation, resting wildlife and waterfowl, and fish spawning areas. Bowfishing is mostly unregulated, and therefore, the impacts are more substantial.

Minnesota statute allows for bowfishing of “rough fish,” which include carp, buffalo, sucker, sheepshead, bowfin, burbot, cisco, gar, goldeye, and bullhead except for any fish species listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. This includes many ecologically significant, native species. Regulations restrict bowfishing within 300 feet of a campsite or within 150 feet of an occupied structure from sunset to sunrise. Noise cannot exceed 65 decibels on the “A” scale measured 50 feet from the boat while fishing. The noise limit is 82 decibels for boats under power. Caught fish cannot be thrown back into the river and cannot be left on the bank of any waterway, access, or otherwise illegally disposed of. There is no limit on the season for bowfishing from a boat. Bowfishing tournaments can be held without a permit if limited to rough fish.

Minnesota DNR staff attended a June 29-30, 2019 tournament hosted by the Bowfishing Association of America (BAA), mostly to ensure that any invasive carp were transferred to the DNR for processing. Staff attempted to quantify the number of fish taken by species, interact with bowfishers and learn more about the sport, and to provide information on native and invasive fish species. Stauffer said 104 teams of two to four individuals participated in the tournament, which included people from more than 12 states. The tournament was “launched” in Winona at 6:45 p.m. and concluded at 8 a.m. Participants could fish anywhere in Pools 3 to 9 except where classified as “red” – i.e., areas classified as sensitive.

Stauffer said the first place team caught 440 fish, which equates to about 44 fish per hour over 10 hours. The BAA estimates that the total weight of fish taken was between 25,000 pounds and 35,000 pounds. Common carp and longnose gar were the most common species. Only one grass carp was brought to the weigh-in; no bighead or silver carp. Two silver carp were taken during scouting the week prior.

Stauffer said the tournament was well organized. The BAA tried to be proactive on noise and other disturbance complaints. Fish were taken to a local farm to compost. Participants were generally younger, very polite, and knowledgeable about the fish and their respective habitats. The boats and equipment were powerful and expensive. This was the first tournament the Minnesota DNR monitored, but staff learned a lot about the sport. However, there is little known information about the impacts of every day bowfishing pressures and harvest. In summary, Stauffer said it is difficult to quantify the issues (i.e., level of disturbance), but that the sport is growing extremely fast.

In response to a question from Mark Ellis, Stauffer said Minnesota DNR staff did not ask for participants’ locations but that about 30 percent of the teams were located at Weaver Bottoms and Pool 4.

Gretchen Benjamin said the term “rough fish” is archaic and should be reconsidered given the impact to native species. Stauffer agreed, and said any changes would most likely occur incrementally.

Sabrina Chandler said bowfishing is typically a southern sport, but its popularity is spreading north. Bowfishing associations are self-regulating. The sport is part of a larger issue with “fast and loud” watercraft, which is a big concern from the Refuge’s perspective, related ecological resources, and safety of other recreators. Chandler said Refuge staff receive numerous complaints of noise in the backwaters. Stauffer added that air boats used during winter break up ice.

Randy Schultz noted that recent studies have shown that buffalo live long lives and suggested that bowfishing could have a big impact on their populations. Karen Hagerty suggested evaluating LTRM data to evaluate any impacts from bowfishing. Neal Jackson said the UMRCC will discuss the issues at its fall meeting.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

Andrew Goodall reported that the Corps finalized the six elements of the 2019 NESP economic update scope of work as follows:

1. Engineering reliability
2. Forecasted barge traffic demands
3. Barge transportation demand elasticity
4. Transportation rates
5. Lock performance characteristics
6. Cost estimates and laydown

Goodall said the Corps' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division spent the last two months performing the agency technical review of the economic update. The next step includes employing quality control that will take a few weeks. Following that, District staff will prepare the draft NESP economic update with all the associated appendices to submit to MVD and ultimately for ASA(CW) R.D. James.

Goodall clarified that the report's ultimate distribution will be at the discretion of ASA(CW) James. District staff have requested that UMRBA has advance notice of the economic results prior to its public distribution. Kirsten Wallace pointed to page B-5 of the agenda packet. On July 19, 2019, UMRBA Chair Rick Pohlman sent a letter to ASA(CW) James on behalf of the Board requesting the advanced briefing of NESP's economic report as well as a partnership in orchestrating a communications strategy of the results – i.e., what they mean and what other economic information provides context. Additionally, during visits on August 1, 2019, ASA(CW) Principal Deputy Assistant Ryan Fischer seemed very responsive to UMRBA's request for an advanced briefing. Scott Whitney said a formal response to UMRBA's letter is currently being developed and should be sent shortly.

Whitney explained that the Corps employed a very thorough development process and took a very conservative approach regarding assumptions. The analysis should be highly defensible. Goodall said this NESP economic analysis is highly tied with forecasts of future trends. The biggest benefits seem to result from having a second chamber to increase reliability of the navigation system due to the aging infrastructure.

Olivia Dorothy asked if the Corps plans to address comments submitted by the Nicollet Island Coalition regarding the NESP economic update. Whitney said the District has not yet received any guidance or funds to do the additional work requested. Dorothy said NESP's problem statement was based on the expectation of increased navigation traffic. However, the Corps is now claiming that reliability is the basis for justifying NESP. Whitney said the Corps has continued to develop its operational condition assessment database to improve analyses. The Corps is striving to use the best available information. Empirically evidence shows that recurrent unscheduled and scheduled outages on the Upper Mississippi River have had a negative impact on the transportation industry. The Corps has consulted experts to develop a more accurate estimate of benefits. Dorothy contested the continued use of the feasibility study's problem statement of increased traffic. Whitney said that statement is still relevant to use.

In response to a question from Ken Westlake, Goodall said ASA(CW) James has not yet provided his intent for releasing the economic update once it is finalized and/or what his next steps might be. Whitney said the big question will be whether the economic update surpasses OMB's budgetability threshold of 2.5 benefit-to-cost ratio. If not, the question will be whether Congress decides to appropriate funds to the program.

Department of Interior Reorganization

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Update

Sabrina Chandler reported that the Department of Interior (DOI) approved its new "watershed-based" boundaries on August 22, 2018 that took effect on July 1, 2019. The previous bureau regions no longer exist. The process and current status of the reorganization is different within each DOI agency. In lieu of regional directors, the DOI has decided to appoint a field special assistant for each region that will be responsible for addressing stakeholder concerns and developing resolution. The positions will be rotating on a one- or two-year assignment. The Field Special Assistant for the Great Lakes Region (i.e., Region 3) is Tony Sullins who is employed by the Office of the Solicitor and for the Mississippi Basin Region (i.e., Region 4) is Lars Herbst who is employed by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. Sullins is located in Minnesota and Herbst is located in Louisiana. [Note: Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin sit in the Great Lakes Region and Iowa and Missouri sit in the Mississippi Basin Region.]

Regarding USFWS's chain of command, Chandler said USFWS is currently operating as it had before the reorganization took effect. The Upper Mississippi River NWR extends across Regions 3 and 4. The ultimate working operations in terms of reporting and other administrative matters within USFWS, and specifically the Refuge, have yet to be determined.

Dru Buntin expressed frustration with the new boundaries and coordination points, particularly since the reorganization was prompted by issues specific to western states. Chandler said USFWS is thankful for UMRBA serving as a regional coordinating forum, where issues can raise and resolve issues in a collective and coordinated way. She assured that the Service is committed to remaining engaged in UMRBA regardless of how it is represented.

U.S. Geological Survey Update

On behalf of Scott Morlock, JC Nelson said Morlock will continue to serve as the USGS federal liaison to UMRBA. USGS has merged the management of several of its new DOI boundaries. The new Midcontinent Region combines two DOI regions and includes 11 states from the Great Lakes to the Montana, and includes the UMR states of Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The new Southeast Region combines three DOI regions and includes 15 states or territories, extending from Texas to North Carolina and Florida and including the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. This region includes the UMR states of Iowa and Missouri.

Nelson said USGS is considering creating an Upper and Lower Mississippi River science coordinator position. The agency is committed to continuing its level of services related to science and partnerships. USGS has requested that Sullins attend the October 29, 2019 UMRBA quarterly meeting.

Nelson reported that USGS proposed in its FY 2020 budget a restructuring of its water mission area. The proposal would eliminate the Water Resources Research Act Program and create two new programs: 1) the Water Resources Availability Program and 2) the Water Observing Systems Program, which would combine the current Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program. NAQWA will be

sunsetting in FY 2021 with biological sampling ending at the end of 2019. USGS is also undertaking a major modernization of its National Water Information System (NWIS).

Administrative Issues

Future Meeting Schedule

October 2019 — St. Paul

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — October 29
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — October 30

February 2020 — Moline

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — February 25
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — February 26

May 2020 — St. Louis

- UMRBA quarterly meeting — May 19
- UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting — May 20

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:19 p.m.