

# **Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Water Quality Task Force (WQTF)**

**January 31 and February 1, 2018**

## **Highlights and Action Items Summary**

### **Approval of the October 4-5, 2017 Meeting Summary**

- The WQTF directed UMRBA staff to develop more concise meeting summaries similar to the summary written for the October 4-5, 2017 meeting. The summaries will highlight major points and takeaways of discussions and agreed upon actions. However, more detailed summaries will be provided for discussions on issues that are more challenging or that involve decision-making, including drawing out individual partner perspectives and context around any final conclusions. As appropriate, summaries will credit WQTF members with their respective perspectives.
- Gregg Good provided changes to the October 4-5, 2017 meeting summary as follows:
  - Revise the second bullet under “USGS Agency Changes” on page A-1 to read “USGS is currently planning to place six supergages on the Mississippi River mainstem and 31 in major tributaries throughout the watershed.”
  - Replace the second major section title on page A-1 with “Harmful Algal Blooms.”

### **UMRBA Staff Announcements**

- Kirsten Mickelsen explained UMRBA’s recent staff changes and the hiring of Mark Ellis, Josh Ney, and Lauren Salvato. Ellis is UMRBA’s Mapping and Spills Program Director and Ney and Salvato both share a title of Policy and Programs Directors. Ney officially started at UMRBA on November 20, 2017. His experience involves communications, advocacy, and federal and state governments. Salvato’s official start date is June 4, 2018 following her completion of her graduate program at Indiana University’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs. She will receive two master’s degrees in public affairs and environmental science. Mickelsen said she believes that the full staff capacity will ultimately make UMRBA a more robust, integrated team.

### **UMRBA Strategic Planning**

- Through a facilitated discussion, the WQTF agreed to a set of five top topical priorities to focus UMRBA’s work over the next five years (aligning with UMRBA’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan) in the near, mid, and long term. The five topical areas are as include the states’ CWA monitoring and assessment, nutrient reduction efforts in the watershed, harmful algal blooms (HABs), chloride, and other emerging contaminants, with the first two areas as the top tier of importance and the latter three areas in a second tier. UMRBA’s role in each of these areas is to facilitate interagency information sharing and planning, advocacy on mutual interests, and external communications among other things.

- The WQTF identified potential actions within each topical priority areas, as follows:

— UMR CWA Monitoring Plan

- Finalize the feasibility evaluation and condition assessment reports for the UMR CWA Monitoring Plan 2016 pilot project in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Shawn Giblin and Joel Chirhart requested comments from WQTF members on the two reports by February 15, 2018. Minnesota and Wisconsin will employ reviews internally within their respective agencies and plan to present a final version of the reports to the WQEC and WQTF at joint June 2018 meeting. (*Near term*)
- Revise the UMR CWA Monitoring Plan considering lessons learned from Minnesota and Wisconsin pilot effort, including feasibility and resource observations. The WQTF agreed to begin revision discussion following completion of the pilot reports, but expressed interest in starting the process at the June or October 2018 meeting. (*Near and mid term*)
- Develop a communications strategy:
  - Provide input on a two-page brochure developed by UMRBA staff of the pilot effort, including cost, time, implementing partners, and the value of a comprehensive monitoring strategy. Minnesota and Wisconsin Task Force members agreed to consult with their communications staff in review of the brochure. (*Near term*)
  - Explore opportunities for a similar pilot effort in the southern portion of the UMR. Implementation questions include which lessons learned from the MN/WI pilot effort to incorporate, funding resources, implementing partners, and geographic scope. (*Near and long term*)

— Nutrient Reduction Strategies (NRS)

- Develop a comparison summary of each state's ongoing NRS efforts and related criteria. (*Near term*)
- Update UMRBA's NRS overview documents, including cost estimates for various management activities. The Task Force requested that future discussions explore resource requirements for implement the states' strategies. (*Near term*)
- Develop a federal advocacy strategy, including a suite of requests to the federal agencies and Congress. UMRBA will begin build relationships and inform Congressional staffers about the states' water quality priorities. (*Near and long term*)

— HAB Occurrence

- Improve knowledge of HAB occurrences, monitoring approaches, and effectiveness of various response measures. (*Long term*)
- Facilitate discussions at WQTF meetings regarding HAB issues and techniques. (*Near and long term*)
- Strengthen relationships with the Hypoxia Task Force (HTF).
  - Request briefings from WQEC members serving on the HTF at the WQEC and WQTF June 2018 joint meeting.

— Chloride

- Develop a comparison summary of each state's protocols for monitoring chloride and reduction. (*Near term*)
- Develop a communications strategy with public outreach (to raise awareness) and education as a central component. (*Near and long term*)

— Emerging Contaminants

- Host a roundtable discussion at a future WQTF meeting focusing on how states monitor aluminum concentrations. (*Near term*)
- Include a presentation on passive sampling technologies (e.g., membrane sampling) as an agenda item for a future WQTF meeting. (*Near term*)

### **USGS Nutrient Pollution Story Map**

- Kelly Warner presented on the USGS Nutrient Pollution Story Map of the Mississippi River Basin ([linked here](#)). WQTF members agreed that, while it is critical to publish the scientific information as soon as possible, it is important that the information is presented in a comprehensive way. The WQTF members agreed to continue exploring similar messaging tools to support NRS priorities.

### **Water Quality Legislation**

- In response to a request from Rep. Ron Kind, UMRBA staff have been consulting with both WQEC and WQTF members regarding potential water quality legislation for the purposes of improving nutrient and sediment monitoring and management actions. Rep. Rodney Davis (IL) is considering co-sponsoring the legislation following consultation with agriculture commodity groups. UMRBA staff will develop draft language and facilitate conversations with affected federal and state agencies as well as stakeholder groups. Any language would first be reviewed by the WQEC and WQTF members before UMRBA release a draft version further. The measure would potentially involve monitoring and research, support for implementing nutrient reduction strategies, and communications and outreach. Mickelsen recognized that the five states, several federal agencies, and private entities all play a direct role in nutrient reduction efforts and monitoring.

### **State of the River Report**

- Lark Weller from the National Park Service presented on the 2016 State of the River Report. Its geographic span is the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. Weller's presentation focused on the logistics for developing the report and its communications strategy, including financial and staffing resources and the final products. She also explained how science and technical staff worked with communications teams to produce the final report that was both factual but also resonated with the interested public.
- WQTF members reflected on the value of the report's ability to trigger action within Minnesota to improve water quality. The report was jargon-free, accessible, and that told a compelling story. The WQTF expressed interest in developing a similar-style product to communicate the results of the UMR CWA Monitoring Plan, including supplemental products such as the teacher's guide. Members identified questions to consider as follows:
  - What is the appropriate scope?

- What resources are required – i.e., staff and funding?
- Who would lead and/or author the report development? WQTF members brainstormed potential lead entities, including UMRBA’s WQEC and WQTF and the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee’s (UMRCC) Tech Section.

### **Future Task Force Meetings**

- The WQTF and WQEC will meet jointly in June 2018. The WQTF will also meet in the fall. Josh Ney will send a doodle poll out to members to select the next meeting dates. The WQTF suggested holding future meetings in Dubuque, IA.

### **Attendance**

Gregg Good	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Matt Short	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Daniel Kendall	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Dana Vanderbosch	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Joel Chirhart	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (via phone)
Robert Voss	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Shawn Giblin	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Gina LaLiberte	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (via phone)
Linda Holst	USEPA, Region 5 (via phone)
Kathy Kowal	USEPA, Region 5 (via phone)
Lark Weller	National Park Service
KathiJo Jankowski	USGS, Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (via phone)
Kelly Warner	USGS, Illinois-Iowa Water Science Center
Albert Ettinger	Mississippi River Collaborative
Ted Kratschmer	National Great Rivers Research and Education Center
Kirsten Mickelsen	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Josh Ney	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association