

## **UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group**

**April 29, 2025**

Tony Falconio called the meeting to order and began introductions.

### State and Partner Updates

#### *Illinois*

Tony Falconio said Illinois EPA has not seen many incidents other than those related to floods. Staffing has been stable and the agency now has ten on-scene coordinators.

#### *Minnesota*

Dorene Fier-Tucker said that Carly McGinty replaces long-time UMR Spills Group participant Mike Rose, who retired in early February. Many new MPCA staff are in the recently established Preparedness Unit, for which hiring is almost complete. MPCA has been emphasizing internal preparedness and compliance. Staff have been busy with a Union Pacific RR exercise in Saint Paul. Over the winter, there was an ethanol spill and fire in Saint Paul Park that discharged to the UMR. Firefighters used PFAS foam that is now being cleaned up.

#### *Wisconsin*

Brenda Kelly noted that the vacant Wisconsin DNR East Central Spill Coordinator position is in the process of being filled. The agency is currently interviewing candidates.

#### *USEPA Region 5*

Andy Maguire said USEPA Region 5 have added several new On-Scene Coordinators following retirements, which included Kevin Turner of Quad Cities sub-area. Mark Durno has replaced Jason El-Zein as the Regional Removal Branch Manager. Corey Peaslee will back up Maguire to support this group. Emily Byrnes will replace Turner to support the Quad Cities Sub-area. Jared Ceplo will back up Adam Vrabec to support the Greater Saint Louis Sub-area. New OSCs will also support other sub-areas in USEPA Region 5. The agency has dealt with many mercury spill cleanups in the last year. Last week Maguire and David Morrison took part in a tabletop exercise with the scenario of an ammonia barge leak at L&D 4 in Alma, Wisconsin. US Coast Guard (USCG), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), County Emergency Management Agencies, and local fire departments took part.

Barbi Lee said the Regional Response Team (RRT) 5 meeting was held on April 15-16, 2025, in Columbus, OH. Presentations from the meeting will be posted to the [rtr5.org](https://rtr5.org) website as

soon as funding for contractors to manage the site becomes available. There were many good presentations about lithium-ion battery fires, the National Pollution Fund Center (NPFC) process, and USCG responses.

David Morrison added that there are many changes and new rules at the federal level. USCG has decommissioned its Homeport website. The website, at <https://www.uscg.mil/Homeport/>, is currently still up and provides links to many alternative and related resources.

### *USEPA Region 7*

Joe Davis said USEPA Region 7 has also lost senior staff recently and more are taking the federal retirement offering. Regions 6 and 7 held a joint RRT meeting on April 2-3, 2025, in Lenexa, KS, which also featured the USCG presentation about the NPFC. The presentations will be posted on the EPA OSC website [www.epaosc.org](http://www.epaosc.org). Last week, Region 7 held an exercise with the Incident Command System (ICS) Incident Management Team to stand up a team to manage the Emergency Support Functions (ESF) 3 (Public Works and Engineering) and 10 (Oil and Hazardous Materials Response) portions of an incident. Designers chose the scenario of a 5.9-magnitude earthquake that damaged facilities and pipelines, and impacted water systems. This latter portion involved agency water teams under ESF 3. Davis added that there may be more significant changes to Waters of the United States (WOTUS) designations under this administration.

### *USACE*

Jeff McCrery said USACE has no updates other than early retirements that should not impact this group directly.

### *USFWS*

Aleshia Kenney said USFWS already went through a round of early retirements. Reena Bowman is no longer with USFWS; Kenney will provide Mark Ellis with a new Minnesota/Wisconsin Field Office contact. There have been major departures from agency leadership that must yet be filled.

### *USCG*

MSTC Danielle Ruelle noted that USCG has personnel changes upcoming with two staff rotations in early summer.

### *Xcel Energy*

Hollie Hannagir said that Xcel Energy has had no incidents and has no staff updates.

### *BNSF Railway*

Paul Hester said BNSF has no exercises planned along the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) this year. However, BNSF will continue to work with local Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) groups as opportunities arise.

### *Illinois American Water*

Ted Kratschmer said that Illinois American Water operates several drinking water intakes along the UMR. A Source Water Protection Program is a new initiative across the company. Spill response is a new part of the job for him. Kratschmer took part in the St. Louis exercise described earlier.

### *Wakota CAER*

Bill Lazarz said Wakota CAER completed its yearly Cold Weather Compliance Training with ice slotting and other cold-weather response techniques in Hastings, MN, on February 11, 2025. Upcoming events include USEPA OSC David Morrison speaking at the annual luncheon on May 13 in Saint Paul, MN. Summer Inland Waterways Spill Responder Training (a.k.a. “Boom School”) will be held in late June, details are pending. Contact Wakota CAER for more information at 651-226-3071.

### Mapping and Planning Updates

#### *Regional Response Team 5 - Jurisdictional Boundaries*

Barbi Lee said USEPA Region 5 has been working along the rivers to make jurisdictional boundaries data. There are specific details with text from the Area Contingency Plan to clarify who has jurisdiction in an incident. Mark Ellis of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) said the USCG jurisdiction along the inland rivers is conditional, which has made it hard to depict geographically. Along with the polygons, the data has points for each county with text from the USEPA-USCG Memorandum of Agreement for an OSC or a dispatcher to clarify who has initial command or federal oversight.

#### *Inland Sensitivity Atlas (ISA)*

Mark Ellis of UMRBA said the latest quarterly ISA update has been submitted to USEPA Region 5, who have pushed the data to the state viewers. He then shared a state viewer with the group. Ellis then gave an overview of the Region 5 Regional Response Team website (link: <https://rrt5.org>) and highlighted content that may be helpful to the many new UMR Spills Group participants as they get familiar with the available resources, including the Region 5 Area Contingency Plan, the map viewers, sub-area and other response plans, a response library, and response tools.

Ellis said the ISA once again includes sensitive species data. The old data had been compiled in 2013 but the data license expired in 2019. New species data have been added for Illinois and Wisconsin; Minnesota data is being processed and will be included in the next quarterly update. This data is essential for anyone who must develop a response plan and list potentially impacted resources at risk. USEPA Region 5 intends to acquire data updates from the states annually or biannually, depending on license agreements.

#### *Greater St. Louis Sub-area*

Joe Krauska presented a summary of Greater St. Louis Sub-area activities. Staff received 48 National Response Center calls in the last six months, including 21 for OPA and five for CERCLA. USEPA Region 7 did not lead on any of the OPA- or CERCLA-related incidents. Instead, staff supported state responses, including a fuel spill in St. Louis.

The agency held a Joint EPA/DOI training in Wood River, IL on April 8-10, 2025. The event included Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Techniques (SCAT) training and site visits, ICS training, and a tabletop exercise. Krauska witnessed much free discussion by local participants, along with the agenda topics, on all three days. The SCAT training included a field visit to the Phillips 66 Refinery dock to see the barge offloading process. USDA APHIS Wildlife Services then used Lewis and Clark Park to demonstrate wildlife hazing and exclusion techniques. Phillips 66 took a leading role in the scenario. Participants talked about region-specific scenarios that could be helpful for this area. The event was useful to fill many gaps on participant contacts lists. There was a lot of interest in the Mississippi River Viewer, an ArcGIS Online tool for river response and planning. Krauska said he hopes to develop an August training for this data viewer.

#### *Great Rivers Sub-area*

Sharon Kennedy said the Great Rivers Sub-area also has a map viewer on the EPA OSC website, see [https://response.epa.gov/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=8554](https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=8554). River reconnaissance for site-specific response strategies was completed last year and will be added to the viewer. An oil response training held in Cape Girardeau, MO, on March 26, 2025, was attended by USCG, state agencies, local firefighters, and industry. The morning session covered safety and response techniques. In the afternoon, participants built a weir dam and a water gate and deployed a skimmer.

#### *Minneapolis/St. Paul Sub-area*

David Morrison said the Minneapolis/St. Paul Sub-area was historically the 7-county metro area, but it has expanded greatly to include the Source Water Protection Areas of the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Cloud public water supply intakes. It also includes the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Spill Response Plan and Incident Action Plan (IAP) to

respond on the St. Croix River, a national scenic river. Enbridge exercised the plan with the Lac Court Oreilles Band of Ojibwe last year. Morrison is reaching out to the newly added counties to share information. He also wants to focus on developing response strategies for the Minnesota River, which has pipelines crossing upstream of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge but no response strategies.

The last area plan meeting was held jointly with the local Area Maritime Security Council, which Morrison said may not have been the best audience despite some overlap of responsibilities. There are many Geographic Response Plans in this area; planners must identify the high priority sites to put on a practice schedule. Morrison also wants to revisit the approach of open water recovery of oil for those areas with poor access. The next meeting will be on June 17, details are pending. Contact Morrison or Mark Ellis if you are interested in taking part.

#### *Quad Cities Sub-area*

Joe Davis has been busy with a pesticide facility cleanup and wildfire deployment for the last year, so Quad Cities response planning has been on hold during that time. The sub-area web page [https://response.epa.gov/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=11807](https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=11807) includes the plan, contacts, and associated documents. The plan was last updated in August 2024. The restricted version of the plan is available via email as found on the web page. Davis added that this was one of the first sub-area plans developed.

#### *UMR Spills Group Activities*

Mark Ellis gave a brief overview of the UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group Strategic Plan for the new members of the group. He then recapped 2024 activities. With the support of CPKC Railway and Safety Training and Response Strategies (STARS), Ellis held river reconnaissance in Pool 15 in the Quad Cities in July 2024. Then in October 2024, USEPA, Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, and local agencies visited draft response strategy sites in Pool 14. These response strategies are now available in the Illinois state viewer on the RRT5 website, which Ellis showed. He noted that the map viewers still need to change how sites are displayed because they leave out the sites across the Mississippi River in Iowa and Missouri.

Ellis said that response planning gaps exist along the Mississippi River in Pools 3 and 4, Pools 16 through 18, Pool 22, and the lower Minnesota River. He suggested aiming to develop response strategies and IAPs for two of these areas in 2025.

Dorene Fier-Tucker and Colin Heintzeman of MPCA are interested in moving forward with planning in Minnesota. Andy Maguire of USEPA Region 5 noted that the resources needed are mostly boats and people; USFWS or USACE have supported such work before. Crews

typically pair a responder with a resource specialist who can identify sensitive areas. Crews use Esri Survey123 forms to capture data in the field.

Brenda Kelly of Wisconsin DNR said this work may fall under the duties of Wisconsin DNR's Integrated River Team (IRT) as resource trustees. Ellis will include them in talks about UMR planning work. Kelly said staff have been involved in past incidents along the UMR and are responsive to those areas with high sensitivity. Lake Pepin is included in habitat projects, including two construction sites at Upper Mississippi River Restoration program's Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Projects; see

<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/missions/environmental-stewardship/upper-mississippi-river-restoration/habitat-restoration/> for information. The IRT has boats and staff to support this work. Kelly suggested to also include the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance in the planning process. Connecting this government work to a local group could have good benefits for community engagement and awareness. She added that Red Wing, Bay City, and Lake City are high use recreation areas.

Andy Maguire suggested trying the open water response tactics mentioned earlier by David Morrison. Paul Hester said BNSF may be interested in testing strategies in this area. Hollie Hannagir said Red Wing CAER may be interested in doing an on-water training that could be tied to this planning.

#### Other Business

Tony Falconio noted that the only business to attend to is the Chair transition and scheduling the next meeting. Mark Ellis nominated Kurt Levetzow of Iowa DNR as the next chair. Levetzow had agreed to take the position but was unable to attend today. Given today's absences and new staff, we will ask for someone to volunteer to be vice chair at the fall meeting. Ellis thanked Falconio for serving as Chair for the last two years.

After some discussion, the group agreed to hold the next meeting virtually on November 4, 2025. Ellis will send a hold-the-date calendar invite to the broader group soon.

Attendees:

Tony Falconio	Illinois EPA
Tyler Boley	Minnesota PCA
Dorene Fier-Tucker	Minnesota PCA
Dustin Helbling	Minnesota PCA
Colin Heintzeman	Minnesota PCA
Holly Lantz	Minnesota PCA
Janice Maine	Minnesota PCA
Carly McGinty	Minnesota PCA
Jason Moran	Minnesota PCA
David Satzke	Minnesota PCA
Jayson Schrank	Minnesota PCA
Ryan Stafne	Minnesota PCA
Kory Wiech	Minnesota PCA
Chris Wiedenmeyer	Minnesota PCA
Brenda Kelly	Wisconsin DNR
Darin Gudgeon	Wisconsin Emergency Management
Lisa Olson-McDonald	Wisconsin Emergency Management
Jeff McCrery	USACE Rock Island District
MSTC Danielle Ruelle	USCG MSD Saint Paul
Emily Byrnes	USEPA Region 5
Jared Ceplo	USEPA Region 5
Barbi Lee	USEPA Region 5
Andy Maguire	USEPA Region 5
David Morrison	USEPA Region 5
Corey Peaslee	USEPA Region 5
Adam Vrabec	USEPA Region 5
Joe Davis	USEPA Region 7
Sharon Kennedy	USEPA Region 7
Joe Krauska	USEPA Region 7
Ed Karecki	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Aleshia Kenney	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Paul Hester	BNSF
Ted Kratschmer	Illinois American Water
Nick Goeke	Tetra Tech
Bill Lazarz	West Central Environmental
Hollie Hennagir	Xcel Energy
Mark Ellis	UMRBA
Kirsten Wallace	UMRBA