

## UMRR Analysis Team FINAL Minutes 10/29/24

### **Webex Webinar**

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Date: Tuesday Oct 29, 2024

Time: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Chair: Matt O'Hara, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

### **1:00-01:15 – Introduction and Roll Call- Matt O'Hara**

calls the meeting to order at 9:03 am. Matt asks everyone to put in name and affiliation in the chat for ease of attendance taking. Matt takes roll of states and all other agencies. Those in attendance include Matt Vitello, Molly Sobotka, Marshall Plumley, Jim Lamer, Scott Gritters, Davi Michl, Dave Bierman, Jim Fischer, Matt O'Hara, Shawn Giblin, Jennifer Dieck, Nate DeJager, Jeff Houser, Laura Talbert, Lane Richter, Kristen Bouska, Kyle Bales, Dave Herzog, Patrick Kelly, Steve Winter, and Seth Fopma

### **1:15-1:30 – Time, place, and type of next meeting and approval of April A-team meeting minutes- Matt O'Hara**

Matt O'Hara recommends having the next A-team meeting in conjunction with MRRC on Tues, April 15, 1-5pm. Danelle Larson reserved the Illinois River Room at the La Crosse Radisson for this meeting. Matt Vitello asked if there was a need to review the FY24 science proposal submissions for funding in FY25 and if so, would we need a virtual meeting in the winter? The A-team

discussed this was probably unnecessary, but Scott Gritters recommends providing a status update at the April A-team meeting at minimum. Jim Fischer notes that USGS also provides LTRM science updates at the coordinating committee, if people are interested in additional science in support of restoration project updates. The A-team decided to forego the winter virtual meeting and ensure the following agenda topics are added to the April 15, 2025, agenda: 2024 science proposal updates and A-team review of the draft UMRR Strategic Plan 2025-2035.

Matt O'Hara sent out the July 2024 meeting notes to all A-Team members in a previous email. Matt O'Hara asks for formal approval of July meeting notes; Scott Gritters motions to approve and Matt Vitello seconds the motion. The minutes are approved. Matt O'Hara will post in the section on the website for all to review. Davi Michl is taking minutes today and will get out ASAP after the conclusion of the meeting. **Feel free to email any agency updates to Matt O'Hara and Davi for inclusion in the minutes.**

**1:30-2:00** – UMRR and LTRM update - Marshall Plumley and Davi Michl

Marshall begins with slides on updates with finance and FY25 plan of work and notes the 2025 Appropriations Bill has not yet been signed. UMRR is operating under a Continuing Resolution at \$55 million again and Marshall presents a tentative FY25 plan of work based on that budget if it is approved. Congress is considering the current draft WRDA which would increase LTRM budget by \$20-25M. This bill has not yet been signed and unlikely to happen until after Nov election.

Marshall reviews progress on District HREPs and notes it is the biggest year they have had for completing studies for the program. The Lower Pool 10 construction contract was awarded recently in St. Paul. In Rock Island, three


HREPs feasibility studies have been signed and will be moving into design in FY25: Green Island, Pool 12 Forestry, and Quincy Bay. Partners had a ribbon cutting at the Beaver Island HREP on October 1, 2024, to celebrate the completion of that HREP, which brings total Program acres of habitat restored to over 120,000. Projects in St. Louis District are also moving along into design and construction. West Alton Islands HREP recently completed feasibility and is moving into design, while Harlow Island HREP moves from design into construction.

The process to identify future HREP project has been ongoing since fall of 2023. By late spring of 2025, projects will be identified and approved by the coordinating committee. River teams have started sending draft fact sheets for review, with a goal to prepare and deliver to the executive policy level groups for their consideration and deliberation in Feb 2025 and then full presentations and endorsement by the coordinating committee in spring of 2025.

UMRR strategic planning team had a workshop in July 2024 to draft strategic goals and objectives and there is an upcoming workshop in Dec 2024 to address strategies and actions to help meet those stated goals. This strategic plan update will incorporate a public review process, likely to include the A-team.


The current strategic plan has been helpful in guiding the program of the last ten years and the update will help guide into the future. Marshall anticipates a draft will be available for review by the A-Team to provide feedback and input on the update of the strategic plan, as part of a public review process. **This update will be included in the April 2025 A-team agenda.**

Marshall mentions the recent outcomes from the Oct 7-10 HQUSACE visit to the Upper Mississippi, noted in the slide below.



**HQUSACE Visit for NESP/UMRR**

**ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT**




**SUMMARY:** 07-10 October 2024, the Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program (NESP) and Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) Program had the pleasure of hosting USACE Headquarters team members across the upper three districts. HQUSACE attendees include Daniela Todesco, AER Business Line Manager, Sharon Sartor, MVD Regional Integration Team Deputy, and Charles Stokes, Jr., BIL Program Manager. The HQUSACE team had the opportunity experience firsthand the regional efforts in delivering the ecosystem restoration mission on the Upper Mississippi River.

**COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES:**

- Provide understanding, appreciation, and an increased awareness of the complementary aspects of the UMRR and NESP Ecosystem Programs.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:**

- HQUSACE visited specific congressional interest projects such as UMRR Quincy Bay HREP, NESP Lock and Dam 22 Fish Passage, and NESP Sny Magill, Effigy Mounds Project.
- State and Federal Agency Partners, UMRBA, NGOs, and USACE collaborated to provide a wide array of activities for the HQUSACE team supported by our regional ecosystem programs. Experiences included helicopter tours, fish tagging, electrofishing demonstration, Tribal Nation Engagement, Partner Engagements, and visiting all three MVD upper districts.



Davi presents the FY25 budget info with a slide for UMRR monitoring and science and discusses an increased total LTRM budget allocation of \$8.5M (\$6.5 million for base monitoring and \$2 million for analysis under base) with an additional \$5.95 million available for “science in support of restoration and management.” In short, there is an increase in base and analysis under base and slight reduction in science in support, for a overall budget increase from \$13.85M to \$14.45M. The current draft LTRM budget (as of 6 Sept 2024) is \$8.93M but does not include federal and state carry-in. Davi notes that salary, supply, maintenance, services, and repair costs rising across the board. The FY25 budget also reflects increasing demands from initiating work on implementation planning info needs and science proposals and research.

Davi presents a slide on Topobathy Updates and slides with added info and details on several acquisition efforts. The FY23-funded Pools 4 & 8 pilot

study to examine the best sensors/techniques/and methods to cost-effectively procure elevation in shallow, vegetated backwaters. Next steps include initial processing of raw sonar data and applying updated data integration methods. The team used several of the FY23 deliverables and lessons learned to inform acquisition in FY24 and awarded 12 task orders with multiple contractors to acquire bathymetric lidar and sonar on the entire Illinois River, portion of the Open River, and extend the pilot study to Lower Pool 13. The team just completed a series of contractor kickoff meetings and are coordinating acquisition activities closely, including area overlap, timelines, and establishing “eyes-on-the-ground” POCs to notify contractors of current conditions. The team is currently awaiting “leaf-off” and aquatic vegetation die-off for the lidar portion. Multi-beam sonar acquisition of deep channels (>6’) has begun. Final deliverables of the systemic acquisition dataset will be valuable resource of high-resolution elevation data to support science, restoration, and management to the partnership. Matt Vitello questions whether pilot studies resulted in any cost-savings on acquisition and Davi explains that overall, we’re seeing cost reduction in hydroacoustics (sonar) by gaining efficiencies of scale with the use of bathymetric lidar (penetrates water column) and flying during low water conditions to maximize ground point classification. In addition, all topobathy contracting is done through the Technical Center of Expertise (TCX) for Photogrammetric Mapping (St. Louis) and the PDT worked closely with them to use pilot study data to develop tighter specs and level of effort needed to negotiate all 12 task orders at or below the government estimate, resulting in ~\$100k acquisition savings in FY24.

**2:00-2:30 – LTRM Science Update- Jeff Houser and Jim Fischer**

Jim presents LTRM Science Highlights and products from the August UMRR CC, including:

- 2020 IWW lock closure paper examining the environmental impacts of traffic reduction (expanded LTRM fisheries sampling in all IWW pools, indicating 33% average decrease in turbidity and significant impacts on sound-sensitive species;
- Reed canary grass effects on forest loss paper evaluating models of forest cover under a range of observed and forecasted hydrological and invasive species presence scenarios. Used RAD framework to assist with restoration/management strategies;
- Large woody debris occurrence and dynamics paper documenting the role, drivers, and implications of wood at system and reach scales and restoration/management implications of this information;
- Round goby paper to gain comprehensive knowledge of round goby invasion/establishment in ILWW pools;
- Small mouth buffalo population trends paper demonstrating downward trends in UMR LTRM trend pools;
- Invasive scud paper in the ILWW evaluating how habitat and water quality variables influence spatial their distribution and abundance; and
- Successful Annual Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) meeting in Madison, WI, 2-7 June 2024. Kathi Jo Jankowski organized a special session exploring the signals and mechanisms of long-term change in river dynamics, which featured several USGS-UMESC staff, component leads, and LTRM Field Station staff.

Jim notes LTRM Management Team has been conducting LTRM Field Station Visits this fall and has visited 4 of 6 stations to date (MN, WI, IA, MO). Planning to visit Alton and IRBS in Nov. Jim also provides updates on status of Implementation Planning information needs.

**2:30 -2:50-** “Investigation of Declines in Burrowing Mayfly Populations in the Upper Mississippi River” – Shawn Giblin gives a slide presentation providing a status update on this important bioindicator of ecosystem health in the UMRS.

**2:50- 3:10** – “Canvasback habitat needs on the UMR NWFR during fall migration”.– Steve Winter gives a slide presentation outlining breeding population surveys of the Refuge system in closed vs. non-closed habitat.

**3:25-3:50** – Agency Updates (Introductions of new hires, transferees, upcoming retirements -group)

USGS Updates: Jeff Houser announced Nicole Buckley hired to work with Kristen on Lower Pool 13 HARP. Floodplain vegetation information need staffed by Matt Trumper/Shelby Weiss (NGRECC); also, short-term hire to assist Molly van Appledorn on her projects.

USACE Updates: No additional updates.

USFWS Updates: Refuge received \$10M award from Inflation Reduction Act to support habitat projects on refuge/state lands and fund research projects; Steve is excited to bring an intern on to investigate secretive marsh bird occurrence in Refuge areas.

Minnesota Updates: not present

Missouri: Hired position with NESP funds; successes with Sustainable Rivers Program (SRP) in lower pools; Dave Herzog: statewide shovelnose

sturgeon sampling, using telemetry, and developing mortality estimates in the UMR pools as well as Missouri River; invasive species removal occurring.

Wisconsin Updates: Shawn Giblin highlighted groundwater work at Trempeleau Lake, laying the groundwork for nitrogen assessment work on the Upper Miss. **Clean Wisconsin and Trout Unlimited hosting Neonic Forum in Madison, WI**, tomorrow on Oct 30. Andy Bartels retires beginning of Nov.

Iowa Updates: Scott Gritters updates that Rebecca Krogman is the new biometrician and now hiring a fisheries research biologist (Ryan Hupfeld's old position). Asian carp got into Fairport fish hatchery during spring flood in FY24. Overwintering sampling occurring at HREPs, including Beaver Island now that project is completed. Dave Bierman noted they are also ramping up Pool 12 Overwintering acoustic telemetry this fall/winter.

Illinois Updates: Matt O'Hara finishing up work in Pool 18. Kevin Irons retires at the end of this year. Jim Lamer reports fish crews finished SRS and finishing fixed sites currently. New staff member, Maddie Roberts, hired to assist with LTRM River Gradients information need.

Macroinverts: All 2024 sampling completed in August for all field stations; doing passive gear comparisons this year to reduce future collection burden on field stations.

UMRBA Updates: No updates to report.

**3:50-** Adjourn. Shawn makes a motion to adjourn and Matt Vitello seconds. Matt O'Hara calls the meeting to a close at 3:50pm.