

**A-Team Meeting – May 12, 2021
Webex Webinar**

Attendance:

A-Team Reps:

Nick Schlessler (Chair and MN Rep)
Shawn Giblin (WI Rep)
Scott Gritters (IA Rep)
Matt O'Hara (IL Rep)
Matt Vitello (MO Rep)
Steve Winter (USFWS Rep)

USGS:

Jeff Houser
Jennie Sauer
Nate De Jager
Jennifer Dieck
Kristen Bouska
Danelle Larson

USACE:

Karen Hagerty
Marshall Plumley
Davi Michl
Eric Hanson
Jon Hendrickson
Kat McCain
Dave Potter

UMRBA:

Andrew Stephenson

MN:

Megan Moore

WI:

Deanne Drake

IA:

Dave Bierman

IL:

John Chick
Jim Lamer

MO:

Dave Herzog
Molly Sobotka

USFWS:

Neal Jackson

Introduction and Roll Call, Nick Schlessner

Time, place, and type of next meeting and approval of January 2021 A-Team meeting minutes

- Strike - "AG asked coordinating committee to endorse in Oct 2020" from draft minutes (meaning unclear)

Motion to approve minutes made by Scott Gritters and Matt Vitello (second) passed with unanimous approval. Next meeting will be webinar held before UMRR CC meeting Aug 11th with date determined by Doodle Poll set up by either Jennie Sauer or Karen Hagerty as Scott Gritters cannot use Doodle.

Charter

Nick Schlessner – Reviewed current status of the charter review

- Draft of the charter approved at Jan 25th 2021 A-Team meeting and transmitted to the UMRR CC
- UMRR CC reviewed the draft and returned two suggestions for areas that needed clarification
 1. Remove the line "e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale" from the A-Team's responsibility #7, as additional conversations are needed regarding how the program will define adaptive management prior to operationalizing.
 2. A potential rewording for Role #3 was suggested as "3. Advise the UMRR CC regarding the technical implications of decisions affecting LTRM, including policy, programmatic, and budget matters."
- I distributed suggestions to the A-Team representatives and received push back from some representatives related to suggestion #1 from the UMRR CC above and related to specific responsibility #6 that Wisconsin thought was limiting the A-Team from bringing forward the perspectives of representatives stakeholders.
- This left me with three areas that needed addressing and I put together a proposal for all three areas (Excerpted text from my e-mail to the A-Team below #s 1-3) for A-Team representatives and representatives from UMESC and the US ACE to review.
 1. The perceived conflict between the last sentence of the introductory paragraph (specifically the highlighted section), with role and responsibility #3.

"The A-Team serves as an advisory body to the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Coordinating Committee (UMRR CC) and advises the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on technical issues that do not raise policy or budgetary concerns."

“3. Advise the UMRR CC regarding the technical implications of policy, programmatic, and budget decisions affecting LTRM.”

I think the current language has a subtle but important difference in meaning where the first paragraph implied that the role of the A-Team is not to initiate changes requiring policy or budget changes while #3 implies that we are tasked with relaying potential implications of such changes if they were to occur. That being said one potential solution would be to end the introductory paragraph at technical issues such that it would read:

“The A-Team serves as an advisory body to the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Coordinating Committee (UMRR CC) and advises the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on technical issues.”

2. Wisconsin has raised a concern about specific responsibility #6:

“6. Ensure that perspectives of interested stakeholders and members of the public are considered by the team at its regularly scheduled meetings, as directed by the UMRR CC.”

In particular they worry that the highlighted section implies a lack of independence to bring forward perspectives from stakeholders separate from UMRRCC direction. As I recall this was language added to relieve the A-Team from a prior responsibility to address stakeholders and the public at regularly scheduled meetings. Again this concern could likely be addressed by striking the highlighted language above. This would in no way limit the UMRR CC from passing on concerns from the public and could alleviate concerns Wisconsin has about the independence of the A-Team in the charter language.

3. Expressed by the UMRR CC (green text below) the third issue revolves around specific responsibility #7:

“7. Promote integration of HREP and LTRM. e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale.”

UMRR CC comment:

“Remove the line “e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale” from the A-Team’s responsibility #7, as additional conversations are needed regarding how the program will define adaptive management prior to operationalizing.”

Again this issue can be addressed by striking the highlighted text above. No concerns were voiced by any state/agency representative about this last change so I will plan to present that change on Wednesday.

- It was decided that final approval could wait until the May meeting which brings us to our present situation.

Steve Winter – Your proposed solution #2 of striking “, as directed by the UMRR CC” puts the resulting text back at odds with the position of FWS -leadership expressed in my e-mail included in the January meeting minutes. The FWS feel the system should be hierarchical with an appropriate chain-of-command and the A-Team is not the appropriate place for public input to occur.

Nick Schlessler - Thanks for catching that Steve, I hadn't noticed.

Karen Hagerty – Could we add “as appropriate” to the end?

Steve Winter – FWS leadership sees it as a chain of command there. UMRR CC should be taking public input.

Karen Hagerty – appropriate if some of us in everyday work come across concern (e.g., bowfishing tournament) – we may raise it and then elevate to UMRR Coordinating Committee. Also includes “stakeholders” in the role.

Steve Winter – If we struck the highlighted text, as Nick shows, FWS leadership would think we were right back at the starting point.

Shawn Giblin – what's the consternation – couldn't concerned individuals express things to A-team members?

Steve Winter – Anyone could approach an A-Team member and raise a concern – similar to me when I get approached by the public about higher level issues, I bump it up to FWS leadership. Ultimately, decisions on those comments about actions to take or not are determined by leadership. They are wary of language that makes anyone – public, stakeholders, or A-Team, think the A-Team should be working on stuff or engaging in decisions before the UMRR CC has the opportunity to determine if the A-Team is the appropriate body to address the concern.

Karen Hagerty – Any language that would require decisions would be elevated to UMRR CC. We could add a clarifying statement laying that out.

Megan Moore – As written, this has nothing to do with actions, just perspectives. If someone said they were concerned about high sedimentation, etc.... that perspective is being brought in for consideration.

Steve Winter – Don't' necessarily disagree, but know that my FWS leadership's reading of it raised this concern and they wanted me to address it in this way.

Karen Hagerty – We could leave it as Nick has it written – with striking “as directed” – and bring up for consideration at the Coordinating Committee.

Nick Schlessler – This was an issue raised by WI – What’s the reason for need to strike that? Where is Shawn coming from – concerned about independence?

Shawn Giblin – Largely an independence issue. What Megan Moore articulated – these are perspectives – doesn’t say anything about actions. I would be curious to see if wording as is would stand at UMRR CC meeting.

Karen Hagerty – Could we add – any actions would be coordinated by the coordinating committee.

Steve Winter – We could try to wordsmith to resolve it, but I would not be able to vote on it until leadership has approved.

Scott Gritters – If you have to go back to leadership for perspective, seems like micromanaging?

Jennie Sauer – I was on a call when it was being discussed, and Sabrina and Tim had some concerns about that one. Understand having to take it up to leadership and don’t think it is micromanaging.

Karen Hagerty – Propose adding “Any specific actions will be coordinated with and directed by the UMRR CC.”

Proposed change:

- representatives and other interested parties upon request.
6. Ensure that perspectives of interested stakeholders and members of the public are considered by the team at its regularly scheduled meetings. ~~Any specific actions will be coordinated with and directed by the UMRR CC.~~ ~~as directed by the UMRR CC.~~
 7. Promote integration of HREP and LTRM. ~~e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale.~~
- ~~8.7.~~

Nick Schlessler – would you be able to vote on language if it was kept as is (Not striking “,as directed by the UMRR CC”).

Steve Winter – Yes, because it was approved for sending to UMRR CC previously – now coming back to us. Wordsmithing that is being considered now may work, but I just need to run it by FWS leadership.

Shawn Giblin – Karen’s proposed modification seems reasonable – suggest running up to UMRR CC for approval.

Nick Schlessler – what about the other representatives from other states – any issues with this section? Or acceptable to IL, MO, IA to send as modified?

Scott Gritters – any version is acceptable. Expected to bring perspective of people we represent to these meetings.

Matt Vitello – No concerns.

Matt O'Hara – Looks fine. Good to send.

Nick Schlessner – Question to Karen and Jennie – given that, do we call for a vote – get the approval votes from the states and leave final vote to be cast at the UMRR CC meeting by the higher ups or do we turn something around internally?

Jennie Sauer – Don't see that there is a rush for the A-Team to do this before the meeting. Don't know if the other Charters will be done at that time. Don't want to see a vote where Steve Winter can't vote. If done by email, might work. Could put forward to the UMRR CC. Karen and Marshall could have more input on when to see this finalized.

Karen Hagerty – When Nick or Scott present to CC – voted on it,

Andrew Stephenson – Coordinating Committee did not comment on this one.

Nick Schlessner – Correct this was brought up by WI potentially because it was right above one of the comments from the UMRR CC

Nick Schlessner – Steve, any idea on turnaround time from Refuge leadership on this language?

Steve Winter – I expect it to be quick.

Nick Schlessner – I will have all the documents if you get a response I could put together a quick email vote to beat the deadline.

Karen Hagerty – Read a-heads are due this Friday. Could add a highlight bullet to say it is being coordinated internally still.

Nick Schlessner – I can clarify whether it was or was not approved. I can mention that during the presentation and if it needs to be discussed at UMRR CC level – they can do it.

Karen Hagerty – Seems like a reasonable path forward.

Nick Schlessner – The last of the three issues was Bullet point 7 – some concern about using example of operationalization of adaptive management. UMRR CC suggested striking. DO any of the representatives have any concerns about that?

WI, USFWS, MN, IL, MO, IA – good.

Nick Schlessner – I will get a version ready to be included as a read ahead and will indicate additional discussion is underway if the final version with approvals from USFWS and the state reps has not been voted on. (Update final version with suggested language was turned around by the USFWS by May 14th and final approval votes (unanimous approval) were received May 17th)

Andrew Stephenson – I have the Charter modifications packaged – can help finalize the read ahead.

Scott Gritters – I'm gone next week, will you be seeing this issue through.

Nick Schlessler – Matt Vitello took care of it for me last time. I can present for you. Hopefully this gets resolved at this meeting.

 A-Team UMRR
Overview 12 May 20.
UMRR Update – Marshall Plumley

- Program for states, USFWS, Corps – social media campaign – 11 days of posts across various platforms. Shared good information.
- Program is right where anticipated at this point in fiscal year and expenditures.
- Highlights on HREPs in feasibility
 1. Reno Bottoms site visit occurred with PDT and partners.
 2. Quincy Bay HREP, which is one of 16 identified last year as planning and sequencing process will begin at end of fiscal year – standing up team now.
 3. MVS – Yorkinut Slough – meetings with sponsor and PDT – going through data and validation.
 4. Oakwood Bottoms feasibility was submitted to MVD – once approved, can move into design.
- Harpers Slough finished physical construction a couple years ago – but following flood events occurred before veg could establish caused damage. Are able to address through program – have advertised construction contract – received bids – looking to award in early June.
- Construction on McGregor Lake and Conway Lake are resuming following winter demobilization.
- Contractors placing material for mussel substrate/habitat at Beaver Island – first time in MVR.
- Vegetation planting at Huron Island.
- Work continues at Clarence Cannon pump stations.
- Design work on Piasa and Eagles nest is proceeding.

Karen Hagerty LTRM Update

- All of our LTRM scopes are fully funded and underway
- Base monitoring, analysis under base, science in support of restoration, Illinois waterways closure monitoring.
- For LTMR Implementation planning – have a scoping group meeting next Friday to discuss.
- LC/LU has been part of LTRM since inception, but it is much more these days with advancement of GIS abilities.

- Nate De Jager is leading that now – want to determine how to make this component on par with the others – pull in bathymetry, LIDAR, monitoring.
- Will be a way for USGS, USACE to coordinate efforts – avoid duplication on bathymetry.
- Just started to ID small group to start brainstorming

Nate De Jager – Outlined SOW for this year – how that component would be structured and funded. Longer-term details are being sorted out still.

- Analysis we were doing was funded through landscape patterns research framework – have accomplished most of tasks identified in that. Now, want to better integrate research within component and data more similarly to research frameworks of other components.

Shawn Giblin – Any plans to do additional bathymetry analysis or update soon?

Nate De Jager – Jayme Strange is working on that this year. With a river system this large – there are questions about priority areas for updating. She has a list of areas that are clearly in need of updating or where holes in LIDAR may exist. There are also many other data collection efforts underway – trying to determine what may be complementary to our efforts or lead to efficiencies in process. Purpose is important, given the amount of money that may be needed. We are thinking a lot of what the purpose of LIDAR and bathymetry data is to best guide that.

Karen Hagerty – The Corps districts – channel maintenance survey capabilities have really improved in the last 10 years. That needs to be part of the conversation as welland may be complementary to our efforts.

Nate De Jager – Are they only in the main channel?

Karen Hagerty – May be available to do backwaters if they are in the area and time permits. How to leverage that is something to consider.

Nate De Jager – I can imagine a number of ways to approach – if an HREP is going in, would need updated bathymetry – would be targeted acquisition.

Karen Hagerty – They often collect LIDAR too.

Nate De Jager – Right, if you have a vegetation or restoration project. Have some other interest in monitoring changes in a particular backwater area. Also, could think about developing a systemic data set like LC/LU – but may be cost-prohibited. Have also considered the patchwork systemic data set – you could download a snapshot of a survey from 1989 for a place – date all info – but the amount of processing that information will need is something to consider as it gets expensive depending on purpose.

Karen Hagerty – Systemic collection may be something to think about under LTRM implementation planning.

Shawn Giblin – Public doesn't always weigh in on data and science, but I'm hearing it – particularly in last 6 months – and high flow in the past.

Nate De Jager – Is it that people want to understand how the river is changing in specific places or do they want data to look at a place? Do they want data everywhere or to understand overall changes?

Shawn Giblin – Both – informational maps – or scoping projects in Pool 7 – working with local government to establish goals – finding out how dated the bathymetry data is – makes difficult to scope.

Nate De Jager – Pre-project phase – don't really know what the problem is or can't quantify without data.

Shawn Giblin – Interested in rate of change – projections into the future.

Nate De Jager – We are talking about a formal process to help prioritize new data collections etc. Information needs assessment – something more formalized so it's not hearsay, but documented and quantified in context of all the other data users and river science community to determine all priorities for consideration to avoid chasing a few loud voices instead of community overall.

Shawn Giblin – P7 is unique in that it has pretty involved and relevant public members – not a loud voice, but more effective stakeholders from a science and river health perspective. Will go through this as we prioritize next levels of work – but see it as a theme.

Jeff Houser – Injecting realism – does anyone have cost estimate and time requirement for systemic bathymetry? Might help focus minds on where we really need it. Is it obtainable? Is it realistic to talk about redoing bathymetry every few years?

Jennifer Dieck – Landcover takes about 5 years. Lidar to create topobathy – another 5 years. If landcover is 2020-2025 – topobathy could be 2025-30 – there is some staff overlaps there.

Jeff Houser – You think it's possible to collect bathymetry data in similar time frame?

Jennifer Dieck – Lidar sensor in the airplane could be done with land cover aerial images.

Jeff Houser – Lidar methodologies currently available can get bathymetry in a river like the Mississippi – with depth and turbidity?

Jennifer Dieck – No, probably not.

Karen Hagerty – Last time, (late 2000s) had stimulus money - \$4 million – took 3-4 years to do all of it. Can't fly LIDAR at same time as LCLU – because you need leaf off, no ice, etc.

Jeff Houser – Used existing bathymetry data when we did that. Didn't capture new data?

Karen Hagerty – Used existing in trend pools, but captured new data in rest of system.

Jeff Houser – So rest of system has relatively new data?

Karen Hagerty – Were supposed to capture before peak aquatic biomass, but that was not done. Some other places were not reachable. 1989 is just trend pools, the rest are newer.

Jennifer Dieck – will have this on our agenda to talk about this. Processing piece over 4-5 years, Jayme estimated \$1.5M and then collection cost. Suspect collection cost would be less today than previously.

Karen Hagerty – Yes, technology has improved a lot and should explore more with LTRM implementation planning.

Back to Marshalls update


Marshall Plumley - Thanks that was a great discussion.

- Reno Bottoms site visit – big issue there that project will tackle is tree mortality and condition of the forest. 14,000 acres included in the project area.
- Huron Island project – close to wrapping up – some work next year possibly – aquatic planting occurred.
- Beaver Island – placement of substrate material for mussel habitat completed a couple weeks ago.
- Clarence Cannon – pump station – continues to make progress. Will take some more work though. Crains Island had a lot of earth work – getting ready for summer construction.
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- 35th Anniversary of UMRR – mentioned social media campaign for Earth Day. Wonderful series of posts put out as a partnership – highlighting all aspects of program – LTRM and specific projects. Reached between 40-50K people with posts. Corps put basic structure together, but Upper Miss Refuge took own information and created their own and states created own or shared posts. Had a lot of partners involved. 40-50K was just tracking within the Corps. This is probably the most people we have touched and reached out to and interacted with in this fashion in one focused effort in history of program. Pleased with how quickly it came together and pleased with how well the partnership worked on this effort.

Think we'll be applying similar strategy to future efforts
Marshall Plumley - Partnership Engagement

- Report to Congress scoping team has finalized
- Did some writing assignments last week – will reach out to those folks soon. Planning to pull that together soon and socializing report in later part of calendar year and early next year. Want it to speak with one voice as a program, partnership, region. It's a great opportunity to talk about the good things the program does and

that you all do and where the program is headed over the next 5-10 years. Will be a big focus at program level for the next 1.5 years.

- Communication and Outreach Team has been meeting regularly – put together social media campaign. Program’s 2-page flyer is being updated and modernizing. Have an almost final product for UMRR CC review at next meeting – plan to have available this summer for partners to use as resource.
- UMRR CC meeting upcoming on May 26. Also, will discuss LTMR Implementation Planning – in light of changes in UMRR authorization from WRDA 2020. How the UMRR program and LTRM can  more fully identify and prioritize information needs.

Jennie Sauer – Any information on the FY 21 Presidents budget at all? Broad brush was released a few weeks ago.

Marshall Plumley – Corps’ big number came out, but no details. Have heard it may come this month. They have not identified a release date, but have heard May. Hope to have before UMRR CC meeting. Think we’re within a month of knowing the numbers.

Macroinvertebrate Update – Shawn Giblin

Shawn Giblin –

- Since 1st meeting – reached out to various subgroup members, it was suggested for the subgroup to develop a proposal.
- Subgroup felt we came up with straight forward recommendations that should be acted on, but might be more appropriate for LTRM staff at UMESC to move it forward. At the point now, feel we could have an A-Team vote on the recommendations
- Two recommendations to vote on:
 - Reinstate LTRM macroinvertebrate monitoring in 2022.
 - Develop a new research focal area related to macroinvertebrates.

Karen Hagerty – So you are asking the A-Team to vote on these two things?

Shawn Giblin – Seems like a good way to move it forward. There was some pushback on the subgroup to develop a proposal, but after further discussion, feel it is appropriate to vote.

Nick Schlessor – My concern is that without the proposal process, we don’t have a good way to show our work on how we are prioritizing things from a funding standpoint. Without a budget, I don’t know how we could approve something.

Shawn Giblin – At the last meeting, there were estimates of what it would cost that were probably higher than what it would cost. Have a sense for what the price tag would be. Feeling of subgroup was that it isn’t a proposal, but a reinstatement of a lost component. To put it through a process where it could be selected one year and not the next is counterintuitive to reinstating a long-term monitoring component.

Karen Hagerty – A-Team can recommend that the macroinvertebrate component be reinstated, but without a budget, or detailed methods, or staffing, or without PI – which are all things discussed last time – difficult to see a path forward. Jeff Houser agreed to include macroinvertebrates as a focal area already

Shawn Giblin – Vote on recommendation to formalize it.

Jennie Sauer – Until someone makes a motion and I hear exactly what it is, but I could understand it being difficult for anyone to vote to move forward to reinstate it. You didn't want to do what was done before with the component, there were additional items to consider and what the questions would be. That's what we were hoping to see out of the subgroup. It can be part of the science planning group – or LTRM implementation planning – two routes for how it could be reinstated. Don't think we have enough information from the subgroup about what is trying to be achieved with reinstatement.

Shawn Giblin – Same method as prior to 2004 – with some minor changes – site allocation for open river to account for sites that would not have benthic invertebrate detection and the second was to retain mayflies. Those two items won't affect the budget in any material way. Quite a few members of the group thought that it wouldn't require a slated PI to do this, it could be getting the group together and get on same page for methods.

Jennie Sauer – Think that's what we need to see – who's going to lead the effort, who will oversee data QAQC, money for Ben to get the app ready again and get the data online. QAQC through field stations – who will analyze data, who will write reports?

Shawn Giblin – We have people paid within the program to do that work.

Jennie Sauer – We don't have anyone paid to do Macroinvertebrate component at this time. Everyone at UMESC and field stations are at full capacity. I need to keep staffing in mind with modifications to LTRM. Would like to see a plan about how that would occur to move forward.

Karen Hagerty – I concur with Jennie. Right now, there's no money left this fiscal year. You're asking us to make decisions without enough information and without staffing and budget and responsibilities. Don't see how we could without that information. To address concern over funding one year and not another, believe there would be a time frame committed to with selection of a proposal – 3 years minimum probably.

Shawn Giblin – 5 years would be initial recommendation.

Scott Gritters – Appreciate discussion. Think obviously it is a priority and will be a priority no matter what position we're in. Push hard enough to get this accomplished. However it can be mobilized the quickest is the right path forward – appreciate any guidance to get up and running soon. We should prepare that it will occur one way or another. In discussion Shawn Giblin led – field stations were involved – was almost unanimous among folks on the call.

However we can best move it forward quickly, appreciate thoughts, but suggest preparing for it.

Jennie Sauer – At the last A-Team, came up with a plan for how to move forward – wanted to get a proposal in a format similar to science meeting.

Scott Gritters – This was a monitoring component. Not a science proposal. It was a component of LTRM before, should be again. It's not a proposal for science, but just monitoring. If that is the right way to go we, can prepare.

Shawn Giblin – Maybe I spoke a little out of turn at the last meeting about developing a proposal – thought the group would want to go that route too. But the subgroup members suggested making the recommendations and the proposal was probably beyond what that group would do.

Nick Schlessler – MN perspective – Would want to see the plan. Even if it's not considered a proposal, it will still displace some other efforts. May lead to a smaller pie for science proposals. Think MN is generally supportive, but need specifics to put forward.

Dave Herzog -- I think we're skipping step: jumping straight to a component. We need the science side to inform that development. Just my opinion.

Matt O'Hara – IL is definitely interested in reinstating macroinvertebrate component at some level – some concerns from John and Jim about site allocation, but largely in favor of restoring for a period of time to evaluate current macroinvertebrates with past data. Looking to move it forward.

John Chick – there's going to be some equipment modifications – some boat modifications at our field station to do the sampling. Have the old crane, but need to modify boat to attach it. All is doable, but not free.

Jim Lamer – Between Illinois Waterway and Science in Support – submitted three proposals – I could draw that up and pass around if that would be helpful.

Shawn Giblin – Reasonable path forward.

Matt Vitello – Sounds like there are two separate but related proposals.

- Science to do a deep dive into existing data so that as we move toward potentially reinstating monitoring component that would be ready to be compared.
- Separate proposal to reestablish monitoring component outside of science process. LTRM implementation planning is timely – suggest developing for that conversation.

Shawn Giblin – If thought is to develop a proposal to move to the next level, reasonable path forward if Jim Lamer is willing to take it on.

Jim Lamer – I can do a first draft.

Karen Hagerty – Agree it is high priority, but do have to weigh against other things – would take precedent over existing work that would need to be identified. Equipment needs would also need to be addressed.

Jeff Houser -- Just as an example, Bathymetry was also identified as a high priority. Which is a higher priority? It may depend who you ask. Those are the kinds of tradeoffs that need to be thought through.

Scott Gritters - High priority for Iowa. Partnership discussion still seemed a high priority. When my supervisors want me to do something, they just tell me to do it, then you make it work. We reshuffle the deck.

Karen Hagerty – Not necessarily how we work. Scott indicated macroinvertebrates would take precedent over other work and what that is needs to be identified.

Shawn Giblin – Agree with Scott, that’s how our world works – don’t have time or money, but still need to get them done.

Karen Hagerty – Additional expenditures will need to be coordinated through UMRR CC – we need to know exactly what is being asked before we can approve it.

Shawn Giblin – Appreciate Jim volunteering to take first pass. Field stations may have equipment to use – could reduce costs.

Matt O’Hara – Can we see an old budget for component when it was running? Will need to do some modifications to that, but Field stations could provide supplemental budgets to get this running. Estimate costs of rigging up a boat.

Shawn Giblin – Previously was \$210,000 before, with inflation - \$290,000.

Karen Hagerty – Ben’s time and web app needs to be included as well.

Matt O’Hara – May be able to reduce some costs... Maybe there are some efficiencies at this point since most people are rigged up with old equipment. Figure into budget.

Nick Schlessner – So Jim will take a first pass at proposal. Will Shawn G still be A-Team’s point person?

Shawn Giblin – Will reach out to Jim and let A-Team know what plan is.

Nick Schlessner – Scott Gritters will be chair after this meeting, so keep him in the loop.

Shawn Giblin – If group feels budget is needed to move forward that’s what we’ll do.

Jeff Houser – Hard to hear comments that UMESC people aren’t willing to do extra work.

- We are already doing extra work. Need to think through how to prioritize all the existing things that are stretching people beyond what is expected already.

- Need to understand UMESC is not in a position to be able to pick up work at will with no planning or prioritization.
- Need to clarify that it's not a lot of people sitting around or working on things that can be shelved to adopt a particular thing that some people are advocating for.
- Lots of reasons to think through this with information beyond what we received today.

Nick Schlessler – That's a large part of why I have concerns. Recognize that workloads expand, but reality is that needs to be balanced at some point. Need to put those expectations and prioritization choices as as close to the front of the process as possible.

Shawn Giblin – Did not mean to imply people were sitting around. When there are recommendations like this, may need a better process for recommending changes. This isn't the last time recommendations will be made for changes.

COVID Updates

Minnesota

Nick Schlessler – Fair amount of vaccination has occurred since the last meeting.

- MN still can't travel across state lines – used to be able to within 3 miles. Now have to seek approval to launch from WI side of river.
- Have been told we will be able to do a number of activities that were prohibited last year – including trawling and other activities that required closer contact in boats.
- As vaccines seek formal approval instead of emergency use authorization I have a question. My understanding is that one caveat of full approval is the ability of some employers to require vaccination (schools, hospitals, etc.). Don't anticipate that being something state of MN will do, but may change how we can prioritize work. Something we are not allowed to do now because of privacy rules is ask people if they have been vaccinated. Not sure if changes there will lead to changes in prioritization of work.

Megan Moore – Nick and I work under different divisions within DNR –he has gotten some different information than what I have. I have been pushing hard to have 3 people in a boat – have not made headway there yet, but hopeful to hear more. Have hired one of two interns – would like to get a second. No travel yet out of state.

Nick Schlessler – Are you only able to use MN boat ramps?

Megan Moore – Refusing to acknowledge that has been indicated at all – we have

Wisconsin

- Largely unchanged from last meeting. Field work – go into office and calibrate. Then out to field. Office days – still working from home. There is a process to apply to go

back to the office. People that made those requests are awaiting determination on requests.

Deanne Drake – One recent change – if we are vaccinated and out 2 weeks from full vaccination – can go back to more normal field work – without a mask and in same car. Can't travel out of state – except to access boat ramps and can't stay overnight. It has been a more normal field season.

Iowa

Scott Gritters

- Largely unchanged. Most are working from home -some hybrid, some in office.
- Had a director go through last year, sped up a lot of DNR processes last year. Got through permits last year. Correspondence with public – every metric we could mention was more efficient – no rush to change things back.
- Huge shift in work environment, but also in output. Instead of traveling to sites, monitoring cameras at a lot of sites.
- State is not in a huge hurry to change how we are working. Stayed in pods last year, not forced to work in any situation you are uncomfortable with, but if comfortable – can launch from other state.

Dave Bierman – nothing to add. Moving forward same as last year. Wearing masks when close to each other in the office or cars. The stations have not had a lot of guidance the whole time. Moving forward as planned with workload and anticipated personnel.

Karen Hagerty – How are you coming with new hires for Mel and Kyle?

Dave Bierman – Travis Kieter moved over to fisheries technician position and replacing Mel. Kyle's position was filled and person is starting on Monday. Now have a WQ position open. Travis did all the work last year when Mel was working from home, so good fit. Will let everyone know when we begin interviews for new position. I may help do some WQ work in the meantime. Seth Fopma is new veg person – Iowa native, but has not worked full time in Iowa. From Central Iowa, and worked a lot in South Dakota at SDSU – in Black Hills. Seth is currently working on Pallid Sturgeon recovery team in Nebraska – very interested in coming back to Iowa and to work on the Mississippi River.

Illinois

Matt O'Hara – Illinois is opening a bit. But still in a hybrid work situation. Illinois is able to accept volunteers to help with fieldwork.

Jim Lamer – notified today that travel restrictions have been lifted. Last year had to use separate vehicles but this year vaccinated people can ride in same vehicles. Overnight travel allowed – out of state included. Are allowed to ask if someone is vaccinated – they don't have

to tell us, but does help with planning for vehicle use. Vaccinated people still have to wear masks in boats and vehicles, but good news – helps logistically.

John Chick – Don't anticipate renting a vehicle this year, which is good. Field Station will be able to use the existing LTRM vehicles.

Missouri

Matt Vitello – Back to business as pre-covid next Monday. Not sure about out of state travel yet. Otherwise, have been told to report back to offices next Monday and everything will proceed as it had previously.

Dave Herzog – Will have some vaccine reluctant folks, may need to address that logistically.

USFWS

- Relaxing somewhat on restrictions for traveling to field sites – not overnight. Occupying boats as well, but still advised to be as safe as possible – practice social distancing. Still a federal mandate on wearing masks and social distancing on federal lands.

USACE

- MVR – 50% occupancy in building. Proposing to go back to full occupancy in July. Think federal mandate applies to us as well – masked and socially distant on federal property.
- Kat McCain – similar in MVS – max telework, but people can come to the office as needed. July 4 – going back to the office – Monday and Friday telework.
- *from David Potter to everyone via chat: 2:44 PM*
 - *MVP remains at HPCON C since last fall, meaning our office currently has a about a 25% maximum cap for in-office staffing on any given day. We may transition to HPCON B around July 4th, meaning capacity in the office is up to 50%.*

UMESC

Jennie Sauer - Same guidelines as previous. The Station is at 25% occupancy. Trainings can happen, but have to go through risk assessment. Have to request access to center to go in. Still have to ask permission for day and overnight travel. Talk of things happening though.

Nick Schlessor – So in the past you said WQ was the-only folks going in? Other people as well?

Jennie Sauer – WI DNR has access as well – field and lab work mostly, some special projects, otherwise max telework.

Nick Schlessor – We text supervisors for going to office. May have a survey to take on whether to work from home or not.

Wrap-up

Andrew Stephenson – I want to revisit macroinvertebrates quickly. Do the changes in COVID regulations affect abilities for field stations to do macro sampling?

Shawn Giblin – Spoke with Steve DeLain – thought it would take a day to get field crews together on methods.

Jim Lamer – Reached out initially to get a sense about what field stations had and would need early on in the process. Believe that would be a part of it and get input from field stations about needs and ability.

Shawn Giblin – Last survey – IL might need a sluice table, but other field station needs unknown.

Nick Schlessler – Needs were covered in some of the meeting minutes from last meeting, but not a complete list.

John Chick – I think sluice table is my field station. Then need to modify a boat a little bit.

Deanne Drake – Same with us. No sieves around, but some equipment is.

Dave Herzog -- Sluice table? Assuming ponar.

Megan Moore -- Yes - mini ponar, dredge, mesh screens, and sluice tray

Transfer Chair

Nick Schlessler – Thanks to everyone for all the help with notes and the other efforts we have tackled in the last several years. The chair will transfer to Iowa (Scott Gritters)

Karen Hagerty -- Nick, thanks for your outstanding leadership of the A-Team. Your proposal ranking spreadsheet really changed things for the better. Thank you!!

Scott Gritters –

- Have a dime following a dollar in leadership now. Great job Nick. Will rely on you for template on science projects – don't want to redo that, but did have some small edits.
- Jennie and Karen, I'll reach out to you all for assistance as well. Have served as Chair before – struggle with me with planning – I don't like it. See it as a hindrance to progress – understand it as well though. More nuts and bolts of management on the river, but can provide perspectives as well.
- Invite anyone with ideas about A-Team meetings to contact me – I'm and open book.
- What I would like, is that every A-Team meeting, would like a different Field station to introduce their staff and say a bit about what they are working on. Very easy to do, if held virtually.

- This program is made up of people. It's an excellent program, I fight hard for it because of the people, but we do have new faces from time to time.
- Will likely start with team leaders and start with those I don't know as well – those on the IL River. Ask you to introduce your component specialists – want to make that connection across all our people.

Davi Michl – Great idea Scottie!

Dave Bierman – Thanks Nick, you did an awesome job as chair.

Matt O'Hara – Thank you Nick for your leadership!

Motion to adjourn – Nick Schlessner, Second, Matt O'Hara. Unanimous approval.