

Meeting notes from the August 27, 2012 A-Team Conference call:

People on the conference call:

Dave Herzog, Kathryn McCain, Karen Hagerty, Marvin Hubbel, Chuck Theiling, Ken Barr, Walt Popp, Heidi Lanrehr, Jennie Sauer, Nerissa Michaels, John Chick, Dave Potter, Steve Winter.

1. Next A-team meeting

A general consensus was to hold the next A-team meeting as a face to face meeting in Havana, Illinois. This would give A-team members a chance to visit a LTRMP field station and converse with field station staff. Some members expressed concern for travel as budgets are tight. It was decided that the Chair would work with John Chick to attempt a face to face at Havana but would fall back to a conference call if needed.

The meeting would be held if possible mid to late October to give the discussion items some time to be vetted with other entities such as the COE.

Action item: Chair will set up next meeting in mid to late October. Chair will “troll” for other agenda items such as “fish habitat index” from Chuck Theiling.

2. Research frameworks:

The A-team has endorsed three research frameworks (Mussels, Landscape pattern and Vegetation) but two more are waiting. The indicators report is a “different animal” in that it is a report from the A-team. This indicators report needs to be vetted through the A-team especially with all the new members and determine if this report can now be used as the base for a future “status and trends” report. The chair will gather all comments and this will be discussed at length in our next meeting. Ken Lubinski will be contacted about the floodplain framework and generally where they are at with that extensive research framework.

Action item: Chair will gather comments; all members will review the Indicators Report sent out by Karen. Do we feel these indicators are still appropriate? It will be vetted at the next A-team meeting for endorsement?

3. A team roles and responsibility:

At the April 25, 2012 meeting some issues and concerns with the A-team’s roles and responsibilities were identified. Some of the simple issues such as A-team chair order have been cleaned up. We still need to make some more contacts with the EPA and NRCS to determine if they do want to have representation on the A-team.

Action item: Marv will make contact with the EMP-CC reps for the NRCS and EPA to determine if they do want to have a presence on the A-team.

4. Science Plan and SOW:

It has been noted in our previous minutes that A-team members and the EMP-CC wants the A-team to follow the progress of the Science Plan and the role that plan will take in analysis of LTRMP data and for the priorities of the program. A-team supports the science plan but we have to be cognizant of the 4% or 9% budget cut scenario's that will greatly limit this program. It was decided that in future A-team meetings and conference calls the A-team will be updated on the progress of the science plan and have the ability to insert comments and vetting during these meetings.

Action item: None really identified, just a continual vetting at each meeting with the A-team.

5. Funding:

Even with a status quo budget we are "losing ground" as inflation keep eating away at bottom line. Discussion ensued on such questions (issues) as:

- "Will LTRMP become a data rich program and information poor"?
- "Can we balance data collection/analysis/support of HREP's"?
- "Once we lose data collection, we cannot go back and get it"

An Ad-Hoc team has been formed out the EMP-CC with recommendations for 2013 has been set up to deal with questions of low budget. This team will report to the EMP-CC and UMBRA at the annual meetings.

Action item: Continual updating and vetting at each meeting with the A-team. Chair of A-team and other A-team members will sit on the EMP-CC ad hoc budget team.

6. House cleaning approvals of conference calls and A-team meetings.

We have several meeting notes to be approved: February conference call, April face to face meeting and this log of the September conference call. Only comments received has been Karen's minor changes to the April meeting draft notes.

Action item: We will have Jennie post the notes of all our DRAFT meetings on the A-team corner of the LTRMP web site. All will be listed as draft and approved at October meeting.

7. Field Station reports:

Iowa:

Karen Osterkamp has had surgery on her hip but should be back to work shortly. The Guttenberg Field Station is doing LTRMP style electrofishing at random sites on Pool 9 and Pool 10. They are also investigating different type of fish habitat placement in backwater lakes. Fairport Fisheries Station has been alternating years of LTRMP style electrofishing on Pools 16 and 18 and Pools 17 and 19. Bellevue Research continues its work on walleye and determining the impacts of the slot limit of 20-27 inches. They began new projects with northern pike and determining the habitat usage of pike in Pools 10 and 13. They are using radio telemetry and floy tagging pike. Bellevue management organized the "sturgeon rodeo" this spring on the Cedar River and tagged 1500 pike. Gene continues to work on commercial fishing laws and regulations. Scott organized the Iowa mussel "Blitz" which conducted mussel surveys with a partnership of various agencies and volunteers. This year we surveyed sites on five different river reaches.

Wisconsin Field Station Report:

We have purchased two new boats – electrofishing and water quality – to replace our ~20 year old boats. Despite two years of high water, aquatic macrophytes are doing very well in Pool 8 – in particular wild celery and wild rice.

COE Report from Dave Potter:

- 1) Steve Clark has been appointed as Section Chief for the Environmental Compliance Section in St. Paul (previously held by Dennis Anderson). Brian Johnson (St. Louis District) has been appointed as the new Branch Chief for the Environmental Compliance Branch for the region (previously held by Tom Kevin).
- 2) Good progress continues on Capoli HREP Stage 1. For the most part, Islands A, B, D1, D2, L, and K have been completed. We anticipate a new solicitation for Stage 2 in the next month or two.
- 3) We will be starting work on the North and Sturgeon Lake HREPs.
- 4) We are coordinating with UMESC on the beta version of the updated Wind/Wave tool for ArcGIS version 10. Harpers HREP will be a good pilot study for this. We anticipate the tool and manual will be available by the end of the year.
- 5) A VE study was recently completed for the Harpers HREP as part of a VE course held in the district. We will be considering some of the recommendations from this study.
- 6) In the next two months, we will be organizing our monitoring activities on HREPS for next year.

USGS:

UMESC Dedication Ceremony for New Wing Addition and Related Facility Projects August 24, 2012.

Participants included:

Congressman Ron Kind – Wisconsin 3rd District
John Tubbs – DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water & Science
Suzette Kimball – USGS Deputy Director
Leon Carl – USGS Midwest Area Regional Executive
John Medinger – U.S. Senator Herb Kohl
Jill Grennan – U.S. Senator Ron Johnson
Jennifer Schilling – Wisconsin State Senator
Jill Billings – Wisconsin State Representative
Tara Johnson – La Crosse County Board Chair
Scott Gunderson – Wisconsin DNR, Secretary's office
Bob Adair – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
Col. Mark Deschenes – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District
Colonel Price - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul

UMESC Open House, Saturday September 8, 2012

Participation by UMESC staff at the 2012 AFS 142nd Annual Meeting specifically the seminar "Upper Mississippi River Restoration: Combining Habitat Rehabilitation, Monitoring, and Research to Enhance Fish Communities.

FWS:

The Refuge continues to develop its Habitat Management Plan, a step-down plan identified in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Current efforts include the identification of Refuge Resources of Concern – plant and animal species, species groups, or communities specifically identified in Refuge purposes, USFWS mission, or international, national, regional, state or ecosystem conservation plans. The Refuge is seeking the assistance of its partner agencies and organizations in refining its Resources of Concern lists. Any questions about the Habitat Management Planning process can be directed to Steve Winter.

Two relatively new employees have been added to the Refuge roster: Rich King, formerly a Wildlife Biologist at Necedah NWR is now the McGregor District Manager; and Wendy Woyczik, formerly a Wildlife Biologist at Horicon NWR, is now a Wildlife Biologist in the La Crosse District.

The new La Crosse District Visitor Center is now open (located at N 5727 County Road Z, Onalaska) to the public.