

UMRR Analysis Team Minutes 07/26/24

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Date: Friday July 26th, 2024

Time: 9:00 pm – 2:00 pm

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

9:00-09:15 – 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 are:

9:15-09:30 – Time, place, and type of next meeting and approval of April A-team meeting minutes- Matt O'Hara will put out a poll for October timeframe for the next meeting. Matt is unavailable Oct. 4-12 so the meeting will need to be before or after that. Davi indicates October is full so may want to potentially extend into first week of November for options for folks. The coordinating committee meeting is Nov. 18 so need to get A-Team meeting scheduled prior to that. Matt will give a wide range of dates and options for the next meeting in late October or early November.

Matt sent out the April 2024 meeting notes to all A-Team members in a previous email. Matt asks for formal approval of April meeting notes. Scott motions to approve April meeting notes, and Steve seconds the motion. The

minutes are approved. Matt will post in the section on the website for all to review. April is taking minutes at July meeting and will get out ASAP after the conclusion of the meeting.

9:30-10:00 – UMRR and LTRM update - Marshall Plumley and Davi Michl.

Marshall begins with slides on updates with finance and FY24 plan of work and indicates they are halfway obligated at this point. UMRR may be funded at \$55 million again and Marshall present a tentative FY25 plan of work based on that budget if it is approved. Congress is considering the WRDA which would increase LTRM budget and Congress continues to be supportive of the program, should see something within 60 days on this. Six feasibility reports on HREPs and is the biggest year they have had for completing studies for the program. Big Lake study moving to design shortly. In Rock Island, three projects are going to wrapping up into late fall. Beaver Island is complete and ribbon cutting is being planned for early October to celebrate the completion of that HREP. Projects in St. Louis District are also moving along into design and construction.

Currently going through process to identify future HREP project has been ongoing since last fall. By late spring of 2025 projects will be identified and approved by the coordinating committee. Teams have been hosting workshops to identify projects. Had a recent meeting to gauge initial project lists, and putting together draft fact sheets with a goal to prepare and deliver to the executive policy level groups for their consideration and deliberation and for a future full presentations and approvals spring of 2025. As fact sheets are drafted the USACE will provide info and guidance on how to develop the projects.

UMRR strategic planning, has started with information gathering and understanding strategic issues. Worked with coordinating committee to do a SWAT analysis to get a sense of the coordinating committee members understanding of the themes. Marshall presents a slide with the SWAP analysis bullet items. In May they held a partnership workshop to provide additional time to talk about these items and Marshall presents slide with UMRR workshop results.

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. After the first of next year, the plan will be available to be reviewed by the A-Team to provide feedback and input on the update of the strategic plan. Marshall will update as a draft comes together later this year.

Marshall mentions the cultural resource programmatic agreement that is developing with the five states and tribes in the areas where work is being done. The agreement has been executed and is in place and is an excellent tool to utilize with projects, states, tribes, and cultural requirements surrounding the projects.

Matt mentions confusion on projects and rankings on projects and better organized for evaluation and decisions. When coordinating committee chairs met, the lists that were presented had been identified and categorized and they are working out how they fit into project homes in programs. Marshall indicates they are coming up with a transparent process on how decisions are made and rankings of projects. Matt indicates there is uncertainty and that things are sometimes not clear on how projects fit into categories and how the decisions are made. Marshall indicates they will

provide information on projects that are still in the grey area of where they fit into the program.

Andrew Stevenson with UMRBA, introduces Laura Talbert with UMRBA and she introduces herself to the group. Andrew also speaks that today is his last day and is transitioning to new position, and expresses his gratitude to the group during his tenure and bids farewell.

Davi presents the budget info with a slide for UMRB monitoring and science budget and discusses individual line items in the budget and any changes. Davi presents a slide on Topobathy Updates and slide with added info and details. They will be doing more large-scale acquisition on the Illinois and the Open River with valuable deliverables that will be valuable to the team. Shawn Giblin inquires about funding and Davi will make a note but has heard nothing to date on installing as permanent funding.

10:00-10:15 – 2024 Science meeting and project rankings wrap up discussion- Matt opens the floor for a group discussion on the process and how it was handled.

Shawn Giblin would like to start the process earlier in the future to allow the groups to form and felt the last timeline was too tight but indicated he felt it went well for the project development. Matt agrees that a longer timeline would help with project ideas and development. Davi commented that there was an impressive amount of quality proposals that will likely be funded next year. It was a successful science meeting and there is a good set of projects to move forward on in the future. Matt agrees and feels that the unfunded projects could be slightly tweaked and will be in the top next go around and that most of the projects were all worthy of funding.

Danelle Larson comments that she was happy to present three proposals with her team and she received fabulous feedback from all of the projects and was pleased with the helpful feedback on projects that were and were not funded.

Matt indicates that all the projects that were submitted were outstanding and worthy of funding and appreciates the work that PIs put into the proposals.

Scott Gritters comments that the process went well and smoothly. Keeping everyone involved in the timeline so they are aware of it and can adjust. Asks Davi if unfunded projects will automatically go forward for reconsideration and if they can begin working on those now to tweak and prep for the next science proposals. Scott would like to do this much earlier or as early as possible especially for projects that will be coming back for a second round of consideration and close to being in the top tier with some tweaking.

Matt acknowledged Nick for the work done on the ranking sheet and how it improved the process and streamlined it when choosing proposals. If others have additional thoughts, A-Team please share feedback on the process of ranking and development and funding.

Jeff Houser joins the meeting.

10:00-10:10- Break

10:10 –10:40- “What’s Eating the Trempealeau Lakes: The Case for Controlling Nitrogen Loading” – Shawn Giblin gives slide presentation which was followed by questions.

10:44-10:55 –LTRM Science Update- Jeff Houser and Jim Fischer

Jeff plans to give a more in-depth science update at the next A Team meeting. This is the first year of field work for lower Pool 13 HREP. They are trying to hire a scientist, but the first search was unsuccessful, and they are starting a second try. Kristin Bouska is filling in and assisting with that now until a hire is made. For implementation planning, Jeff discusses the funding for those, and geomorphology search was unsuccessful, and the river gradients position is also being readvertised with a plan B.

2024 funded was floodplain forest vegetation project, NGRREC staff will be involved in doing a lot of that work and people are available to begin this fall. Lower trophic levels information need, things are happening and moving forward, and progress is being made to get folks on board in the next 6-8 months.

Jeff distributed all comments on projects that came in and provided to all PIs for each of the projects that were and were not funded. The ASLO meeting was in Madison in June and there was nice LTRM representation there by UMESC and LTRM field station staff. Jeff gives brief overview of LTRM and UMESC updates.

Jennifer Dieck indicated that a GS11 biologist position was just readvertised.

Davi linked canal project in the chat.

10:55- 11:00 – Mississippi River flood update and field sampling- Field station updates. Matt is curious of field sampling challenges with the flooding this summer.

Minnesota wasn't able to start field work until July 15th but sampling is going very well and rapidly and packed in most of the sampling in the second

half of July to finish period 1. Veg was able to start earlier but they had to choose sites differently due to flooding.

Nick Schlessner explains difficulties and the way sampling has ran behind due to the high water. Contaminant sampling has been done in pools 3-9 by the end of spring, and processing may be done with 3M settlement funds, but samples have been turned in for processing.

Wisconsin's boat access was closed at most ramps, but they were able to get on the water in alternative places. Fish sampling lost about 2.5 weeks, but a lot will be made up in the last few weeks of Period 1. Some EF runs will be missed. Veg was similar and the team targeted areas that were easier to reach due to high water. Macro work is happening and some rock bags are buried under deep sand.

Shaun indicates they have charged ahead but questions some of the validity of data collected during this time.

Iowa – Dave Bierman reports that the crest there was July 7th. Did some selective sampling due to access by boat. Veg updates. Fish crew just began this week – third week of July. Will miss a handful of EF runs and wingdam sampling will not happen. Will still get bulk of period 1 sampling done. They will pull Hester Dendy rock bags next week and see how things go and how many will be retrieved.

GRFS – Chick doesn't have a lot of info from staff regarding sampling. Macroinvert sampling is happening, and normal fish sampling is happening.

Missouri Open River – No one on.

IRBS – Jim Lamer indicates we had some high water on the Illinois and crews were able to access some areas we normally cannot. All LTRM work

has continued normally with higher water in the La Grange reach. Routine monitoring and sampling continued as normal.

Nicole Ward commented of the mild winter and early drought and then a lot rain came in and they experienced a later than normal flood.

11:10- 11:50 – *Tundra Swans (and Trumpeters) of the Upper Mississippi River NWFR.*– Steve Winter gives a slide presentation.

11:50-12:00 – Introductions of new hires, transferees, upcoming retirements -group

Laura Talbert UMRBA new hire introduced herself. Nick says for Minnesota he took over area supervisor duties, and Large Lake position is open and will be posted soon. Nicole reported that the LTRM group hired two new positions.

Jim Lamer reported that Rob Mooney just started at IRBS as the quantitative ecologist using monitoring data to make sport fish management decisions.

Steve Winter will share an article on budget and staffing with the group in the meeting notes.

Jeff Houser adds that Jennie Sauer will be coming back to help with some things at UMESC part time helping to get some things organized.

12:00-1:00 – Agency Updates

USGS Updates: Jim Fischer reports that the team leaders are familiar with the topic of component and all hands meetings. Will likely have both component and all hands meetings again. All hands would be in Muscatine. Asks for input to finalize decisions on budgets related to these meetings. Danelle speaks to the timing of the veg field practicum and meetings. She would prefer to keep the all hands meeting and the field practicum separate.

Nicole will ask her team and get feedback and give Jim some insight later through email. Open question on meetings and timing – feel free to send input to Jim Fischer.

USACE Updates: Davi updates that topobathy draft scopes are rotating for review and they are on track to meet contract award deadlines in August for that.

USFWS Updates: No additional updates beyond the presentation and article he will share.

Minnesota Updates: Getting started on large lake work and normal projects.

Wisconsin Updates: Base work is happening as well as Trampleau Lakes work and they are doing WQ evaluations. They finalized the Clean Water Act Report to Congress and Shawn will share the link for that with the group.

Iowa Updates: Scott says things are finally drying out and fishing is picking up on the river. Fisheries dept is celebrating their 150th anniversary and do weekly updates with info and will hope to present some of that or share with the group. Interesting history on the management.

Illinois Updates: Jim Lamer reports Sara Sawicki in the throws of SRS Water quality sampling. She worked with NGRREC to obtain a GREON PISCES buoy that we deployed in Flag Lake in the Emiquon Preserve as a way to track there increasing turbidity and decreasing SAV issues.

Fish crews base monitoring time period 1 is finished except last trawling run.

No yoy captures in the gear, but last week small yoy were dipped in flooded terrestrial and we expect those to recruit to the gear likely in TP2 We captured a juvenile lake sturgeon (350 FL) in tp 1 in Treadway Lake in a fyke net - Sangamon, Mackinaw and Vermillion - only 1 in LTRM dataset caught in 2005 (310 mm FL)

We borrowed PIT tag readers from IDNR and our crews are now carrying these around since there is chances of us encountering these now along with stocked alligator gar.

Macroinverts: Manisha is out this week, but all our sampling is complete and rock bag/hester dandy's - (only 3 unrecovered) were just finished up yesterday. That includes ponar, rock bags/hd, and suction dredging for contaminants. Contaminant analysis from 2023 have been completed at end of May - Shawn Giblin has started to explore that data. Manisha has a 2023 ponar sampling report draft ready to send to Jeff and Jim for review and includes breakdown of ponar results per time period - many of those are broken down by family, but also genus at times. Mayflies showing declines in all reaches above historic means in all reaches except Pool 4 and La Grange The report also describes the unique, non-native species she encountered in the La Grange Reach, the polychaete *Laonome xeprovala* - 40 individual polychaetes 4 sites.

Zack Witzel has left our carp management crew in the upper Miss for Minnesota and we will have 2 positions opening likely this week, so please pass on to interested parties.

John Chick has nothing to add from Illinois.

UMRBA Updates: quarterly meetings will be coming up soon, and they have moved so be sure to join at the new office location.

12:24- Adjourn. Shawn makes a motion to adjourn and Nick seconds. Matt O'Hara calls the meeting to a close at 12:24pm.