

**Minutes of the
Upper Mississippi River System
Environmental Management Program
Coordinating Committee**

**May 20, 1999
Spring Quarterly Meeting**

**Holiday Inn Select International Airport Hotel
Bloomington, Minnesota**

Dusty Rhodes of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. on Thursday, May 20, 1999. Other EMP-CC members present were Matt Kerschbaum (USFWS), Leslie Holland-Bartels (USGS), Marvin Hubbell (IL DNR), Kevin Szcodronski (IA DNR), Steve Johnson (MN DNR), Gordon Farabee (MO DOC), Terry Moe (WI DNR), and Dave Carvey (NRCS). A complete list of attendees is attached.

Minutes of the February Meeting

Terry Moe moved and Steve Johnson seconded approval of the minutes of the February 18, 1999 meeting as written. The motion was adopted unanimously. Moe requested updates on two items discussed at the February meeting — i.e., the status of the joint A-Team/EMP-CC charter and the potential to award Habitat Needs Assessment (HNA) contracts to the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (UMESC). Barb Naramore said that both of these issues would be addressed under the existing meeting agenda.

Program Management

FY 99 Fiscal Performance/FY 00 Budget Outlook

Leo Foley reported that EMP expenditures through March 31, 1999 totaled \$9.007 million, or approximately 49 percent of the \$18.371 million in total scheduled expenditures for FY 99. The \$18.371 million in total scheduled expenditures is the sum of the FY 99 appropriation of \$18.955, less savings and slippage, and carry-in of \$796,000 from FY 98. Foley characterized the expenditure rate as quite good, particularly since the summer construction season remains ahead. Foley urged USGS and the states to submit billings promptly. In response to a question from Terry Moe, Foley explained that the HNA assessment is taken off the top of the EMP allocation, before the money is allocated to HREPs and LTRMP. This results in a proportional assessment of HNA costs to the two components, though the assessments are not reflected under the HREP and LTRMP portions of the spreadsheet.

Foley noted that the FY 00 appropriation amount and savings and slippage rate remain to be determined. He explained that the current spreadsheet reflects the president's FY 00 budget request of \$18.955 million. Foley said the Administration is still in the process of preparing its FY 01 budget request, but noted that funding is looking quite tight for Corps construction projects.

Program Implementation Modifications

Foley reported that the three districts and MVD are in the process of exploring several of the proposed administrative changes included in the partnership's Report to Congress recommendations. Responsibility for following up on these recommendations has been divided as follows:

- Habitat Needs Assessment — MVS
- Delegate approval authority for HREPs < \$1 million to the District Commanders — MVS
- Delegate approval authority for HREPs < \$5 million to the Division Commander — MVD
- Real estate acquisition (credit for lands purchased prior to execution of a project cooperation agreement (PCA)) — MVR
- Upland sediment control as part of HREPs under appropriate conditions — MVS
- HREP/LTRMP integration — MVR/MVP
- Use of natural processes and innovative measures in HREPs — MVP/MVS
- Address limitations imposed by current policy and guidance — MVR
- Develop charters for the A-Team and EMP-CC — MVD
- Enhance public involvement — MVP

Foley noted that the HNA is well underway, while the other recommendations are at various stages of consideration. He explained that the districts are in the process of preparing issue papers on several of the recommended changes to facilitate consideration by higher authority.

Holly Stoerker observed that the land acquisition issue raised in the Report to Congress involved more than the timing of the purchase relative to the PCA. She explained that the partners were anxious to clarify that land acquisition is an acceptable part of HREPs. Marv Hubbell said the states are not interested in pursuing acquisition-only projects under the EMP, but do want to ensure that they receive credit for real estate costs incurred as part of HREPs. Dusty Rhodes asked Foley to ensure that the districts share draft copies of their issue papers with UMRBA staff before submitting the papers to MVD.

Rhodes noted that the issue of delegated authority to approve project decision documents and cost share agreements is currently under discussion at Corps headquarters and the Assistant Secretary's office. These issues are being considered on a Corps-wide basis, but have potential implications for the EMP. Moe thanked Rhodes and others in the Corps for following up on the Report to Congress recommendations for administrative changes.

In answer to a question from Ken Lubinski, Foley said he does not expect the spring high water at several HREP sites to impinge upon the habitat program's ability to fully expend its FY 99 funds.

Corps' Interpretation of Current Funding Authorization

In response to a request from the February meeting, Rhodes distributed a memo setting forth the Corps' interpretation of the current EMP funding authorization. The memo provided the following explanation:

The authorized annual funding limit for the UMRS-EMP is clearly established by the legislative wording that authorized the program. Each portion of the program was separately described in the legislation, and distinct authorized annual funding levels were established for each. These are \$13.0 million for HREP, \$5.08 million for LTRM, and \$0.875 million for CIA, and \$0.5 million for recreation projects, which adds up to a total of \$19.455 million. The Corps' interpretation is that funds authorized to be appropriated for recreation projects cannot be used for other program elements such as habitat projects. This reduces the total available funding per FY to \$18.955 million.

Steve Johnson observed that the Corps did not follow this interpretation in several prior years. Rhodes acknowledged this, but emphasized MVD's confidence in the above interpretation.

Status of Joint EMP-CC/A-Team Charter

Barb Naramore reported that UMRBA staff distributed a revised draft of the charter for the A-Team and EMP-CC on February 19, 1999. The revisions reflected changes discussed at the February 18 EMP-CC meeting. The state EMP-CC members proposed these changes in response to the A-Team's February 9 letter of comment. In follow-up, the state members of the EMP-CC and A-Team met on March 10 to discuss the revised charter. The result of that meeting was a recommendation from the states to table the charter for the time being. This recommendation, which was conveyed in a March 16 letter to Dusty Rhodes, was based on the states' belief that the partnership needed to concentrate its current efforts on LTRMP restructuring. Naramore noted that she had not received comments from any of the other EMP partners on the February 19 revised draft. She said that, barring some expression to the contrary, she would assume that all the partner agencies concur with the states' recommendation to delay development of the charter.

Rhodes said MVD is prepared to sign the February 19 charter as drafted, but said he is also willing to defer action. Kevin Szcodronski said he envisions resuming work on the charter shortly after the LTRMP restructuring issues are resolved. Terry Moe said the Corps' status on the A-Team remains an outstanding issue, noting that the other A-Team members have expressed a clear preference for having the Corps function as a full member of the team. Rhodes said the Corps would be willing to serve as a full member of the A-Team in deference to the other partners' wishes. He said someone from the Rock Island District would likely be named to represent the Corps on the A-Team.

Rhodes reported that MVD will be relying increasingly on MVR as EMP program manager. He explained that, with six districts and a declining staff size, MVD is necessarily limited in the amount of time it can devote to managing the program. Rhodes emphasized that MVD will continue to exercise command and control over the EMP and will continue to co-chair the EMP-CC meetings. However, the Rock Island District will be assuming more responsibility for day-to-day program decisions.

Reauthorization Update

Dusty Rhodes reported that the Assistant Secretary has forwarded his report to Congress on the EMP. Rhodes said there were no major changes from the Chief of Engineers' recommendations, though the Assistant Secretary did modify the proposed two-tier HREP program somewhat. As proposed by the Assistant Secretary, 50 to 70 percent of HREP funds would be available for projects under the 1986 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) §906(e) cost sharing provisions (i.e., the current cost sharing arrangement). The remaining 30 to 50 of HREP funding would go to projects with a 35 percent non-federal cost-share. Rhodes noted that the House and Senate have each passed an EMP reauthorization provision as part of their WRDA 99 bill. Neither the House nor the Senate measure would establish a two-tier HREP program. Rhodes said copies of the Assistant Secretary's report were provided to the five Governors.

Holly Stoerker noted that there are several differences between the House- and Senate-passed EMP measures (H.R. 1480 and S. 507). Committee staff have reportedly started working informally to reconcile the House and Senate bills, but conferees have not yet been named. Stoerker reported that the UMRBA has submitted comments regarding four points of difference between the House and Senate EMP provisions:

- Program duration — S. 507 would reauthorize the EMP for 10 years while H.R. 1480 would establish a continuing authority for the EMP — the UMRBA's comments support a continuing authority
- HREP cost-share — S. 507 would increase the non-federal share to 35 percent while H.R. 1480 would not make any changes in the current formula — the states recommend retaining the current §906(e) cost-sharing requirements
- Technical advisory committee — both H.R. 1480 and S. 507 would establish a technical advisory committee, with some subtle differences between the two measures — while the states have not promoted the idea of a technical advisory committee, the UMRBA's comments to the conferees are confined to addressing how such a committee might best be implemented, including recommendations that the committee should not have approval authority, should be integrated with the existing program, and should look at the entire EMP
- Project requirements and criteria — S. 507 includes language that would require each HREP to simulate natural river processes to the maximum extent practicable and to include an outreach and education component, while H.R. 1480 contains no such provisions — the states' comments acknowledge the value of simulating natural processes and engaging in public outreach, but suggest that the Senate bill's specific requirements are neither prudent nor necessary.

In response to a question from Marv Hubbell, Stoerker explained that the states concluded there would be little value in advocating elimination of the technical advisory committee language, given that both S. 507 and H.R. 1480 include such a provision. Instead, the states confined themselves to clarifying their understanding of how such a committee should function and suggesting modifications to improve the legislative language. Rhodes said the Corps opposes

the technical advisory committee, noting that he is not aware of any precedent for taking money from a Corps program and paying outside advisers. Hubbell expressed the opinion that \$350,000 per year would be far too much for an EMP advisory committee.

HREP District Updates

Mike Thompson reported that the Stump Lake project is virtually complete. The St. Louis District plans to hold a dedication ceremony for Stump Lake in July. Thompson said there have been some delays at Swan Lake due to high water. The Cuivre Island project is scheduled for completion once the high water recedes. MVS will be meeting with the Illinois DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to resolve issues related to the Phase II and III scopes for the Batchtown project. As reported previously, the district resubmitted the fact sheet for Calhoun Point. The district recently received verbal approval of the fact sheet and will be initiating plans and specifications for Calhoun Point in FY 99. The fact sheet for Pools 25 and 26 has been approved and the St. Louis District will start work on the definite project report (DPR) during FY 99. Thompson also reported that the Missouri Department of Conservation has identified a new project opportunity on the Open River, Schenimann Chute. MVS has forwarded a fact sheet to MVD for approval. If the fact sheet is approved, the district plans to convene a meeting to revisit the district's HREP priority list.

Leo Foley reported that the Rock Island District expects to award the well contract for Spring Lake, Illinois within a couple of weeks. Other than the well construction and a few punch list items, the Spring Lake project is complete. The district is planning a dedication ceremony for Spring Lake in July. Dedication ceremonies are also planned for the Princeton and Lake Chautauqua projects, with the Lake Chautauqua ceremony already scheduled for July 7. Foley said MVR expects to award the Stage II contract for Banner Marsh in July. The draft DPR for Pool 11 Islands is currently under review by project sponsors, and public review of the DPR is scheduled for August. Foley noted that the Pool 11 Islands DPR calls for the project to be broken into three phases. Rock Island awarded the mast tree planting contract for Cottonwood Island in April. This is the final contract for Cottonwood.

Gordon Farabee corrected MVR's activity report, which indicates that the district is working with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to resolve issues regarding operation of the Bay Island project. Farabee noted that the Missouri Department of Conservation, not Natural Resources, operates the project and is working with the district.

Marv Hubbell reported that Illinois has been consulting with the Corps, including General Anderson, regarding issues with several projects the state is cost sharing under the EMP and other Corps programs. Hubbell said Illinois is correcting some of its own procedures on cost-shared projects as well as recommending some changes to the Corps. Illinois plans to hold a workshop in July or August that will address the state's participation in such projects. The Rock Island and St. Louis Districts will be invited to participate in the workshop.

Keith Beseke said that the Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with the Corps for eight or nine months to resolve punch list items on the Spring Lake, Illinois project. Beseke said the Rock Island District and the Service have agreed upon a list of items that must be addressed, but the district has not informed the Service how these problems will be resolved. Beseke expressed dissatisfaction with the contractor's repeated delays on the project, stating that the

contract should have been completed two and one-half years ago. Foley said MVR is working hard to resolve problems with the contractor and will provide a formal response to the Service. Foley acknowledged that the contractor is definitely behind schedule under the terms of the contract, but said the delay is not as great as Beseke indicated.

Don Powell reported the St. Paul District plans to award the Polander Lake island construction contract in late June. Construction could start as early as July. Powell explained that the island construction is being done in conjunction with the unloading of the Wilds Bend dredged material placement site. The Trempealeau Refuge project is substantially complete, with the pumps scheduled for start-up in June. Remaining work also includes repairing some ice damage to rock groins. MVP is planning a dedication ceremony for Trempealeau in conjunction with the *M/V Mississippi's* low water inspection trip in August. The start of construction for the final site of the Mississippi River Bank Stabilization project has been delayed due to eagle nesting in the area. Construction will probably start in July. In response to a question from Terry Moe, Powell said there are additional opportunities for bank stabilization work in the district as part of the EMP, but noted that these additional sites are not part of the current HREP. The district expects Pool 8 Islands to be completed this summer and hopes to hold a dedication ceremony in August or September. Powell reported that the St. Paul District originally planned the Long Lake HREP as a §8(a) set aside project. The bid was significantly higher than the district anticipated and the §8(a) solicitation was subsequently canceled. The district then opened the project to competitive bidding. The low bid for the project, which involves excavating a channel and installing a control structure, came in at approximately \$350,000, about half of the §8(a) bid. The district anticipates awarding the contract and starting construction on Long Lake this summer. In response to a question from Moe, Powell said the draft DPR for Ambrough Slough is likely to be completed in August or September. As such, Powell said it is quite possible that the PCA for Ambrough Slough will be completed under the reauthorized EMP.

Powell also reported that the St. Paul District will be hosting an HREP engineering, design, and construction workshop on June 17 in La Crosse. The workshop will address a range of topics, including design standards, construction techniques, and operation and maintenance practices. The workshop will be open to all interested participants and will include representatives of the Corps, Fish and Wildlife Service, and states. In response to a question from Matt Kerschbaum, Powell said there will be a record of the workshop. Holly Stoerker asked whether issues addressed at the workshop will include the Report to Congress' recommended policy changes that Foley highlighted earlier. Powell said the purpose of the workshop is for participants to share experiences and learn how things are being done elsewhere. He said the workshop is not designed to focus on the issue paper topics, but said some of these items may come up during the course of the workshop. Farabee encouraged MVP to invite staff from the Corps' Missouri River districts to participate in the workshop. Dusty Rhodes concurred with Farabee's recommendation and asked Powell to ensure that such invitations are extended.

Habitat Needs Assessment

Mike Thompson reported that the HNA scope of work is complete. He characterized as minor the revisions from the previous draft. The HNA Technical Team is scheduled to meet in mid-June to finalize work plans for several of the technical tasks. The project management plan (PMP) will be revised to reflect those work plans and will then be distributed to the EMP partners by the end of June. As a dynamic document, the PMP will continue to change as the

HNA progresses. Thompson expressed appreciation for USGS's willingness to initiate several of the technical tasks while the cost estimates for those tasks are still being developed. He attributed the fact that the HNA is currently on schedule, in part, to USGS's flexibility on this matter.

As part of its HNA public involvement efforts, the Corps participated in a series of public meetings this spring sponsored by the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee and the National Audubon Society. Thompson noted that Bruce Carlson is leaving the St. Paul District, but said the lead for HNA public involvement will likely remain with St. Paul.

Thompson reported that cost estimates have been developed for the various HNA tasks and the Technical Team is currently in the process of negotiating those costs. The current task estimates total \$935,000, leaving only a modest contingency given the HNA's \$1 million cap. Current plans call for allocating the funds as follows:

USGS	\$285,000
MVS	\$230,000
MVP	\$200,000
MVR	\$160,000
<u>FWS</u>	<u>\$60,000</u>
Total	\$935,000

Marv Hubbell noted that the states are contributing substantial staff time, travel expenses, and other resources to the HNA effort and asked whether the federal agency partners are making similar in-kind contributions. Gordon Farabee concurred with Hubbell, emphasizing that the states are contributing significant amounts of staff time to the assessment. Thompson said the money allocated to each district includes funding to cover staff time and other HNA expenses. Leslie Holland-Bartels indicated that all money transferred to USGS will pay for the execution of specific tasks. Thompson expressed a willingness to document the states' in-kind contributions to the HNA if the states provide him with the necessary information. Farabee said he was not seeking to create additional bookkeeping demands and said he was simply asking to have the states' contributions acknowledged.

Thompson said the next steps for the HNA include:

- finalizing work plans for the technical tasks and coordinating the public involvement work plans,
- updating the HNA web site and using it to distribute information,
- completing the HNA working cost estimate,
- completing the GIS query tool in August or September (a USGS task), and
- distributing the revised PMP by the end of June.

Jeff Janvrin expressed skepticism that the HNA schedule can be met. As the basis for his concern, Janvrin noted that contracts have not been let for some of the key technical tasks and that the HNA is heavily dependent on products from the Navigation Study that may not fully meet the HNA's needs. Thompson said he would look into Janvrin's concerns.

Terry Moe asked whether UMESC will get HNA contracts at least equal to the amount the LTRMP is being assessed for the HNA. Thompson said the LTRMP will be assessed a total of \$310,000 (31 percent of \$1 million) for the HNA and UMESC is currently scheduled to receive \$285,000 to perform various HNA tasks. Thompson noted that UMESC will receive the preponderance of this money in FY 99. Leo Foley emphasized that the Corps never said UMESC's contracts for HNA tasks would equal the LTRMP's HNA assessment. Foley stressed that the assessment was determined proportionately and that the project management team is responsible for determining how best to accomplish the HNA tasks. Holland-Bartels noted that the project management team rejected some USGS proposals for HNA work. Holland-Bartels said she understands the unsuccessful proposals, including one to develop species-specific models, were rejected based on cost considerations. Thompson concurred with Holland-Bartels' description.

Moe said he understands there are potential problems with using the Navigation Study's without project predictions in the HNA. He asked whether HNA funds have been budgeted to revise this study if needed. Thompson said no HNA money will be available to refine the Navigation Study's without project predictions. Thompson said the project management team anticipates using this information as it comes out of the Navigation Study. If there are questions about the validity of the product, Thompson said those concerns will be noted and some risk analyses will be done in applying the results to the HNA. Moe expressed concern that HNA funds will be used to refine the information coming out of the Navigation Study. Farabee said he understands Moe's concern, but assured Moe that HNA funds would not be expended in this manner. Rhodes said the Corps would review plans for using information from the Navigation Study in the HNA.

Steve Johnson asked whether recommendations to include pre-impoundment conditions in the assessment had been adopted. Farabee said this is not being done to the extent many partners would like, due to lack of available information in useable formats. However, he said the technical team is trying to use as much pre-impoundment information as possible. As an example, he noted that the assessment will use a study funded by Missouri on the history of the lower river.

Hubbell asked whether there would be a summary of the recent public meetings. Thompson said he would distribute an overview of the meetings prepared by Bruce Carlson. Hubbell asked whether the meetings provided useable information about the public's desired future conditions for the river system. Thompson said Carlson has indicated that the meetings were successful in this regard.

Rhodes expressed concern that delays in finalizing the budget estimates have delayed transfer of funds to USGS for HNA tasks. Thompson said he anticipates completing the paperwork necessary to transfer funds to USGS by early June. Holland-Bartels said this would be adequate.

Long Term Resource Monitoring Program

A-Team Report

John Wetzel said the pending Information Needs Assessment (INA) will be key to restructuring the LTRMP. He emphasized that the Analysis Team is committed to a long term restructuring of the LTRMP based on sound science and insight into the partners' information needs. He expressed confidence that the data analysis and INA, in combination, will provide a sound basis for restructuring the LTRMP. Wetzel urged the program partners to remember that there may be components that should be added to the reauthorized monitoring program, noting that several components that were part of the original program recommendation were eliminated due to cost constraints.

Data Analysis

Leslie Holland-Bartels reported that USGS has completed a preliminary analysis of the LTRMP data. This first-cut effort reviewed the current data collection protocols, examining what changes the current protocols can detect and then considering the impacts of doubling and halving the current level of effort. Holland-Bartels noted that, over time, monitoring costs have come to dominate the LTRMP budget, leaving few resources for analysis and studies. She highlighted the following perspective regarding monitoring:

- Biota lag and integrate physical-chemical conditions — as a result, physical-chemical causes should be monitored more continuously and at higher resolution than biological effects.
- Monitoring must be coupled with focused studies to explore fine-scale issues and cause-effect relationships.
- Scale is critically important to monitoring design and interpretation — i.e., a long period of record does not compensate for low spatial resolution, nor *vice versa*.
- Resource managers are interested in multiple scales, both spatially and temporally.

Holland-Bartels explained that the year-to-year data analyses are necessarily conservative at this point. As we better understand the underlying cycles and functions, the same data will provide an increased level of confidence. She presented an analysis of the fish monitoring component, concluding that the level of effort under the current protocol could be reduced by half without significantly undermining the data. Specifically, the current level of effort permits detection of a 20 percent change in population with 70 percent confidence for 41 species, including all 14 target species of prime interest to river managers. Halving the level of effort would allow detection of a 20 percent change with 70 percent confidence for 25 species, including 13 of the 14 target species. Such a reduction would not significantly diminish the already low ability to detect trends in rare, endangered, and exotic species. As an alternative to simply reducing all gears by half, Holland-Bartels noted that specific gears could be eliminated or the sampling periods could be cut. The specific impacts of such options would be varied. Holland-Bartels said she would be comfortable reducing the overall level of effort in the fish monitoring component by half, but urged that the technical experts be allowed to determine precisely how to implement such a reduction. In response to a question from Terry Moe, Holland-Bartels

explained that the 20 percent change and 70 percent confidence level figures were selected in consultation with the A-Team. The A-Team was also consulted regarding the change and confidence level figures used in analyzing the other components.

Holland-Bartels said the current macroinvertebrate sampling design allows detection of a 30 percent change with 70 percent probability in Pools 4, 8 and 13. In contrast, the current protocol has less than a 50 percent chance of detecting a 30 percent change in Pool 26, the Open River, and the La Grange Pool. If the current effort were reduced by one-half, the ability to detect a 20 to 30 percent change would drop below 50 percent for all of the monitoring areas. Holland-Bartels advised against eliminating annual macroinvertebrate sampling, at least until a longer baseline data set is established. Instead, she recommended eliminating or reducing the macroinvertebrate component on the three lower reaches, where it is currently ineffective. In those study areas where monitoring continues, Holland-Bartels suggested eliminating some sampling strata. She noted that some of the savings from these changes could be applied to pilot projects designed to develop a more appropriate sampling design to capture information about the important macroinvertebrates in Pool 26, the Open River, and the La Grange Pool.

According to Holland-Bartels, the current water quality sampling protocol is generally adequate to detect a 20 percent change in annual or seasonal means. The confidence level varies with the parameter, ranging from a low of 53 percent to a high of 97 percent. The stratified random sampling (SRS) protocol is also generally able to detect changes in relatively common off-channel conditions, but is considerably less effective in detecting rare events (i.e., those combinations that are < 10 percent in areal extent). The USGS analysis indicates that doubling the level of effort in water quality monitoring would increase the probability of detecting a 20 percent change in the various parameters by from 1 to 14 percent. By contrast, reducing the level of effort by half would reduce the power to detect a 20 percent change in seasonal or annual means by up to 15 percent; but the probability of detecting such changes would remain above 50 percent for most parameters. Holland-Bartels said the greatest impact of such a reduction would be on the ability to detect changes in relatively rare habitat conditions. Changes in conditions that represent < 30 percent areal extent would be undetectable. She concluded that the water quality monitoring effort could reasonably be reduced by half, but urged that the technical experts be allowed to determine how to achieve such a reduction. She specifically advised against eliminating sampling parameters. Observing that a 50 percent reduction would essentially eliminate the ability to detect rare occurrences, Holland-Bartels said this loss could be addressed in part through targeted studies.

Holland-Bartels noted that the stratified random sampling has been employed in the vegetation component only since 1998. The previous transect protocol has also been continued to provide a transition period. Describing the two methodologies, she noted that the transect approach provides specific information about the backwaters selected for monitoring while SRS, which randomly samples in all shallow aquatic areas of the study areas, significantly enhances the spatial coverage of the monitoring. At the community level, the SRS approach can detect a 50 percent change in the mean with greater than 70 percent probability in all five study areas. It can also detect a 50 percent change in all species monitored. If the SRS were reduced by half, the ability to detect a 50 percent change in the mean with a 70 percent probability would be reduced from five to three pools and from 100 percent to 73 percent of the species. Holland-Bartels recommended against any reductions in vegetation monitoring at present. If the 1999 and 2000 sampling efforts show similar results with the stratified random sampling, she said she

would recommend eliminating the transect monitoring and redirecting those resources toward an increased spatial scale and special studies.

Moe expressed concern that some of the rare events we would lose the ability to detect under Holland-Bartels' recommendations could be quite significant. Holland-Bartels observed that we would not need to change the protocols in precisely the same way in each study area, but cautioned that we must be thoughtful about the changes that are made. In answer to a question from Dave Carvey, Holland-Bartels said the monitoring changes she is recommending would not provide significant money for special studies. Instead, these savings would be used to address the budget shortfall and do additional data analysis.

Moe asked Holland-Bartels whether she concurs with the A-Team's May 12, 1999 letter outlining its LTRMP restructuring recommendations. Holland-Bartels said she agrees with the need to make cuts, but said she would be quite disappointed if the bathymetry and sediment survey efforts were eliminated.

Kevin Szcodronski observed that, given the small size of the field station teams, cutting a monitoring component by half would not necessarily translate into a 50 percent reduction in the staff and equipment involved in that component. Holland-Bartels agreed, emphasizing that she was presenting recommendations based on the data analysis only. She said the management question of how to implement such reductions is a separate issue.

Szcodronski observed that the USGS data analysis did not appear to identify any obvious redundancy or wasteful effort. He said cuts can be made if necessary, but observed that it will be a matter of trying to find the least damaging cuts, given that there are no easy cuts to make. Holland-Bartels said she generally agrees with Szcodronski's observations, with the exception of invertebrate sampling in the lower three study areas. Szcodronski cautioned against eliminating invertebrate monitoring in these areas just because invertebrates are not currently present, noting that HREPs and other efforts could improve conditions for invertebrates. Holland-Bartels said that special studies, rather than routine trend monitoring, would be the best way of capturing any such changes. Gordon Farabee said invertebrates are not entirely lacking on the lower portions of the system. Instead, they are relatively rare and the current protocol cannot detect trends in their populations. Holland-Bartels concurred, noting that numerically rare events are not effectively captured with this type of monitoring. She said such events must be studied in another way if they are important.

Information Needs Assessment

Jerry Skalak reported that the INA is on hold pending the LTRMP restructuring and a determination on how to implement the INA. He said the Corps envisions a process somewhat similar to that being used for the HNA. Dusty Rhodes said one of the implementation issues remaining to be resolved is determination of which district will serve as lead for the INA. Rhodes said he expects Colonel Mudd will recommend a lead district for the INA in his response to General Anderson's LTRMP restructuring directive. John Wetzel observed that the INA will need to address important spatial scale questions.

Presentation of Restructuring Alternatives

Leo Foley identified the following factors as reasons to restructure the LTRMP:

- Current funding projections will not support the *status quo*.
- Greater emphasis on data analysis is needed.
- Savings and slippage will be applied to the LTRMP consistent with other Corps construction projects.
- The LTRMP needs flexibility to handle budget deviations.

Foley then presented three budget shortfall scenarios, each of which assumes three percent inflation but which vary in their assumptions about the savings and slippage rate and the annual appropriations level. Under the scenario that assumes three percent inflation, 15 percent savings and slippage, and annual appropriations of \$18.955 million, the projected shortfalls are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Projected Shortfall</u>
FY 00	\$1.0507 million
FY 01	\$1.0744 million
FY 02	\$1.2585 million

Foley described this as the most likely of the three scenarios. He said eliminating the shortfalls projected under this set of assumptions would provide the program with increased flexibility while not requiring as much disruption as would the more pessimistic scenario, which assumes both savings and slippage of 15 percent and EMP funding of only \$13.0 million in FY 01 and 02. He said using the scenario that assumes full funding and savings and slippage of only seven percent would be unworkable because it would leave the program with no flexibility. Foley said MVR consulted with the USGS, Fish and Wildlife Service, A-Team, and Priority Team in exploring alternative plans for addressing the projected shortfalls. In considering these options, Foley said MVR assumed that the LTRMP will continue beyond FY 02 and that the program's funding level will be higher in the future. Given these assumptions, Foley said it was important to develop a restructuring plan that leaves the LTRMP as well positioned as possible to grow in the future.

Foley said the magnitude of the projected shortfalls is such that all of the viable restructuring alternatives involve layoffs. He outlined the following basic restructuring alternatives:

- reduce the components monitored;
- reduce the amount of monitoring by adjusting the spatial or temporal extent; or
- increase funding by, for example, transferring money from the HREP program, restoring savings and slippage, or using the direct Treasury transfer form.

Foley said the Corps did not explore options to increase funding because they all involve factors outside of the program managers' control. Among the specific options the Corps and others did

evaluate were completely eliminating one or more components, eliminating two or three field stations, sampling components on a cyclical schedule, and doing selected across-the-board cuts. While a final recommendation has not been issued, Foley said MVR is likely to recommend the following when Colonel Mudd responds to General Anderson's directive:

- reduce field station costs by \$300,000 per year, which translates to approximately \$50,000 per field station;
- achieve associated savings of \$482,000 at UMESC; and
- reduce overall LTRMP costs by an additional \$476,000, using information from the data analysis to help determine how to make these additional cuts.

Foley said the \$300,000 in field station cuts would preserve the basic structure and core personnel of the current field stations. The \$482,000 in UMESC cuts would be achieved through across-the-board cuts affecting most of the Center's LTRMP operations. Candidates for the \$476,000 in additional cuts include reducing vegetation monitoring, reducing macroinvertebrate monitoring, eliminating the bathymetric survey work, and eliminating the sediment survey effort. Foley noted that MVR staff have expressed strong support for continuing the bathymetric work and have urged that cuts be made elsewhere.

Foley said the Rock Island District anticipates submitting its LTRMP restructuring recommendations to MVD within a couple of weeks and will consult with USGS and the states as appropriate in developing these recommendations. Specific measures for achieving the \$476,000 in additional cuts will be included in the district's recommendations. Foley identified the following as key next steps in the LTRMP restructuring:

- submit Colonel Mudd's restructuring recommendations to General Anderson (within c. 2 weeks),
- develop a detailed plan for how the restructuring changes will be implemented at each field station and UMESC (within c. 2 weeks),
- draft scopes of work for all work items under the restructured LTRMP (9/99), and
- optimize the monitoring efforts based on the INA and data analysis.

Discussion of Restructuring Alternatives

Dusty Rhodes reported that MVD has challenged all of its districts to reduce management costs as much as possible. Toward this end, Rhodes asked EMP-CC members to consider the frequency of various EMP coordination meetings. He noted that the EMP receives considerable management time and attention relative to many other established Corps projects and programs and questioned whether this is necessary. Rhodes said Buddy Arnold will be pursuing options for reducing EMP management costs and increasing the money available to construct HREPs and conduct LTRMP monitoring and studies. Rhodes invited input from the other EMP partners on these issues.

Rhodes expressed appreciation for the A-Team's willingness to work with the Corps and USGS in exploring how best to make difficult changes in the LTRMP. Gordon Farabee presented Rhodes with a letter from the Missouri Department of Conservation endorsing the A-Team's May 12, 1999 LTRMP restructuring recommendations. John Wetzel summarized the A-Team's recommendations as follows:

- The A-Team would obviously far prefer not to have to make LTRMP cuts.
- If the program must be restructured to address the projected shortfall, the savings should include a \$300,000 annual reduction from the field stations; \$482,000 in annual savings at UMESC; and cessation of the bathymetric and sediment work for \$260,000 and \$100,000 in annual savings, respectively.

According to Wetzel, the A-Team strongly supports the bathymetric and sediment work but believes curtailing these two items is preferable to making additional monitoring cuts. He noted that the bathymetric and sediment work could be resumed in two or three years with less disruption, emphasizing that dropping a monitoring component or eliminating a field station would result in far more significant gaps. Wetzel also reiterated Kevin Szcodronski's observation that reducing the effort for a given monitoring theme by half would not result in a 50 percent reduction in costs for that component. He said the field stations will definitely lose staff under a \$300,000 annual reduction. Such a cut would be implemented by combining and reducing water quality and fish sampling, with the states examining the data analysis closely and working with USGS to determine precisely how to absorb these cuts. Wetzel emphasized that any further reductions in field station funding would require dropping a component entirely. He acknowledged that the A-Team's restructuring proposal does not fully meet the shortfall projected for FY 02.

Tom Boland thanked Leslie Holland-Bartels for her presentation of the data analysis and urged that the A-Team hold a meeting to discuss the analysis and its implications for LTRMP restructuring. Holland-Bartels said the program partners need first to agree on the target reductions and then determine how best to implement those cuts. She said that USGS will be able to describe within approximately two weeks how it would absorb \$482,000 in annual reductions at UMESC. She said a reduction of this magnitude would involve cuts in all areas of UMESC activities.

Terry Moe asked Foley to elaborate on Rock Island District staff's reluctance to suspend the bathymetric and sediment work. Foley said the data are quite important to the district and are being collected very efficiently by the current team. Moe said the same holds true for the field station monitoring work. Foley acknowledged this and said he was simply informing the other program partners of MVR's inclination on the matter. Holland-Bartels concurred with Moe that the bathymetric work can be deferred but said she would strongly oppose eliminating the item indefinitely.

In response to a question from Marv Hubbell, Rhodes explained that there is no strict formula for determining which projects and programs are successful in recovering savings and slippage money. Rhodes said that any project or program that can demonstrate the ability to expend additional funds can submit a request to recover savings and slippage. It is then a matter of management judgment to determine how to allocate the available funds. He emphasized that it

is essential for any program receiving restored savings and slippage to ensure that it expends that money by the close of the fiscal year.

Szcodronski highlighted the following with regard to restructuring:

- In restructuring the LTRMP, we should look at what can be deferred with the least long-term disruption to the program.
- Personnel cuts will result in the loss of significant river expertise that has considerable value.
- Personnel cuts may present potential safety issues if the field sampling crews are too small or inexperienced.
- Field station managers need the flexibility to determine how best to implement the target reductions while maintaining the necessary consistency and quality standards.

Rhodes said he understands the cost of losing personnel with expertise and experience, noting that this has been a significant issue for the Corps as it has reduced its staff size over the past several years.

In its management role, Rhodes said the Rock Island District will be requiring clearly defined scopes of work for the various LTRMP tasks. These scopes will specify deliverables and costs, but will leave determination of the implementation details to USGS. Rhodes stressed that the Corps is not interested in micro-managing the LTRMP.

Matt Kerschbaum said the Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes the need to address the projected budget shortfalls while maintaining the LTRMP's overall integrity as much as possible. Kerschbaum agreed with others' observation regarding the importance of flexibility in implementing the restructuring.

Rhodes stressed the importance of making the restructuring decisions soon, noting the partners' previous requests for as much advance notice as possible regarding cuts. Rhodes said Colonel Mudd will forward his recommendations to General Anderson within a couple of weeks and asked Foley to ensure that the partners receive a copy of those recommendations. Rhodes estimated that General Anderson would issue his response within approximately two weeks of receiving Colonel Mudd's recommendations. Moe reiterated his concern that the proposed cuts are unnecessary and urged consideration of management alternatives that would alleviate the projected shortfall without restructuring the LTRMP. Szcodronski acknowledged the recurring LTRMP budget problems, but expressed frustration that, just as the program is beginning to produce results, we are faced with making cuts to address what is likely to be a temporary problem.

In response to several questions regarding how MVR plans to consult with the program partners in developing its recommendations to MVD, Rhodes said this would be for the district to decide. Rhodes said a fairly general restructuring plan from MVR could comply with General Anderson's three principles, while leaving the district with the flexibility to work with the program partners in developing the implementation details. Rhodes said program partners will have an opportunity to offer comments to General Anderson regarding Colonel Mudd's

recommended restructuring plan. Holland-Bartels said she does not expect to be directing the field stations how to implement specific work items with the available funding and does not anticipate that level of direction from MVR to USGS. She said it will be largely up to UMESC and the field stations to determine the specifics of the FY 00 program given the level of available funds.

Marv Hubbell noted that the restructuring discussion so far has focused on what must be done to address the near term projected shortfalls in accordance with General Anderson's directive. Hubbell said the partners have yet to address the longer term questions of how to modify the program for its future under reauthorization. Among the key questions for this long term restructuring, according to Hubbell, is how to integrate special studies with the routine monitoring efforts.

Szcodronski asked how quickly the Corps might reflect increased authorization levels in its budget requests, assuming the EMP is reauthorized in WRDA 99. Rhodes said the Corps has already submitted its FY 01 request to the Office of Management and Budget, while Congress is currently working on the FY 00 appropriations bills. He said the reaction to increased authorization levels would depend on a variety of factors, noting that increased funding in FY 00 would be a theoretical possibility but cautioning that there will be substantial competition for any additional money available in FY 00.

Moe asked whether there might be an opportunity for the Corps to contract with the USGS bathymetric survey team to do other bathymetric work. This would permit USGS to retain the expert personnel in anticipation that the LTRMP's bathymetric work will be resumed within a few years. Jim Fisher suggested that the crew might also be used to obtain bathymetric data for HREPs. Rhodes and Foley said they would explore these ideas, but cautioned that funding for the Corps' operation and maintenance work is extremely tight in all three districts.

Steve Johnson asked how the scopes of work referenced by Rhodes and Foley relate to the LTRMP annual work plans and UMESC strategic plan. Holland-Bartels said USGS has not prepared annual work plans in recent years. She said UMESC will resume doing the annual plans.

Other Business

Holly Stoerker announced that the summer EMP-CC meeting will be held August 19 in Rock Island. The fall meeting is scheduled for November 18 in St. Louis. Meetings of the Governors Liaison Committee and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association will precede both EMP-CC meetings.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.