

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

**November 16, 1999
Fall Quarterly Meeting**

**Airport Hilton
St. Louis, Missouri**

Dusty Rhodes of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 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), Dave Carvey (NRCS), and Bob Goodwin (MARAD). A complete list of attendees is attached.

Minutes of the August Meeting

Referencing page four of the August meeting minutes, Terry Moe asked if the Corps had determined whether the HNA must be ready to submit to Congress by September 30, 2000. Leo Foley said this issue would be addressed later in the meeting. Terry Moe moved and Kevin Szcodronski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 1999 EMP-CC meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

Program Management

FY 99 Fiscal Performance Wrap-Up

Leo Foley distributed a program spreadsheet. He apologized for not providing the spreadsheet in advance of the meeting. Foley explained that MVR had only recently filled the vacant EMP budget analyst position and was thus unable to complete the spreadsheet in time to include in the agenda packet.

Foley reported that FY 99 EMP expenditures totaled \$17.612 million, or 96 percent of the \$18.371 million FY 99 allocation. Foley attributed the \$759,000 in carry-over primarily to unfinished work under some HREP contracts.

FY 00 Budget Allocation

Foley reported that the EMP's FY 00 appropriation was \$18.955 million. Prior to allocating funds between HREPs and the LTRMP, the total was reduced by \$2.699 million (14.2 percent) for savings and slippage; \$110,000 for program administration; and \$500,000 for the habitat needs assessment (HNA). Of the remaining \$15.646 million, \$4.913 million (31.4 percent) was allocated to the LTRMP and \$10.733 million (68.6 percent) was allocated to HREPs.

The \$10.733 million HREP amount was divided among the districts as follows: MVP - \$3.757 million (35 percent), MVR - \$4.293 million (40 percent), and MVS - \$2.683 million (25 percent). (A summary of these FY 00 allocation figures is attached to these minutes.)

Terry Moe said he has seen several different figures for the FY 00 LTRMP allocation. Foley acknowledged that there have been some slight adjustments due to differences in rounding and calculation of savings and slippage. Jerry Skalak observed that the \$4.913 million figure is correct and is slightly higher than the number in the Corps' FY 00 letter of intent to USGS.

Dusty Rhodes noted that the increased EMP authority will allow the EMP to compete for overtarget funding in FY 00. Rhodes said MVD will actively seek overtarget money for the EMP, but emphasized that there are no guarantees of success. In response to a question from Moe, Rhodes explained that the EMP is not limited to recovering the FY 00 savings and slippage amount (\$2.699 million), but is restricted to a percentage of the Congressional appropriation unless the Appropriations Committees approve a reprogramming request. Moe asked whether overtarget funding for the EMP might come at the expense of other Corps projects and programs. Rhodes stressed that MVD would not jeopardize another Corps project in seeking to recover money for the EMP. He explained that MVD will restrict its search for overtarget funds to projects with a clear excess of money in FY 00. It is typically February or March before such opportunities are identified. Kevin Szcodronski asked whether the EMP would have to repay any FY 00 overtarget funds next fiscal year. Rhodes said this would depend on the source of the funds. For example, money from a project that came in under budget would not need to be repaid. Conversely, money from a project that encounters a delay but needs the money next year would likely need to be repaid. Rhodes said he is reluctant to essentially borrow money that will have to be repaid. As a result, MVD will focus on finding surplus project funds for EMP.

Program Changes

Implementation Guidance

Leo Foley reported that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (ASA) has directed MVD to propose implementation guidance for the reauthorized EMP. MVR is slated to submit recommendations regarding this guidance to MVD by December 15, 1999. Foley said the recommendations to the ASA will likely include the following:

- In crediting the non-federal HREP sponsor for land acquisition, provide credit regardless of whether the acquisition comes before or after execution of the project cooperation agreement (PCA). This is the approach used in the Corps' continuing authorities program (CAP).
- Allow the non-federal sponsor to satisfy up to 80 percent of the HREP cost share with in-kind services.
- Delegate approval authority for HREPs less than \$5 million to the division. Delegation of authority to the district level will likely not be pursued at this time.
- Allow upland sediment control features as part of HREPs so long as the upland components produce direct floodplain benefits.

Foley said the proposal will also report progress on administrative change recommendations from the Report to Congress including integrating the HREPs and LTRMP, pursuing habitat projects that use innovative measures and natural processes, and enhancing public involvement. Foley reported that sponsors of the Dubuque Ice Harbor Museum are seeking EMP funding for a 1.5 acre wetland demonstration area. He said Colonel Mudd is enthused with the project's potential to educate the public and enhance the EMP's visibility. Project costs are estimated at \$3.5 million.

In response to a question from Gordon Farabee, Foley said he expects MVD will forward the proposed guidance to the ASA shortly after receiving MVR's recommendations. He said the timeline for action by the ASA is less certain.

Holly Stoerker asked for clarification regarding the land acquisition recommendation. Foley explained that existing policy clearly establishes land acquisition as an acceptable part of HREPs, with the restriction that a project cannot consist solely of acquisition. The proposed guidance would achieve consistency with other Corps programs by granting credit for lands acquired prior to the PCA. Farabee said this change would benefit Missouri, which wants to pursue an HREP on land it has already acquired in the Columbia Bottoms area.

Terry Moe asked whether there is a similar timing issue related to credit for in-kind services. Rhodes said that credit is only provided for work after execution of the PCA. This is true under both the EMP and CAP. Foley said that §1135 sponsors who want credit for work in the plans and specifications stage must sign a PCA earlier in the process. Rhodes explained that the Corps must be careful when granting in-kind credit not to undermine the authority of Congressional appropriators. In addition, Rhodes stressed the Corps' commitment to being a construction, not a grant-making, agency.

In response to a question from Jeff Stein, Rhodes said MVD has not decided whether it will seek guidance on the independent technical advisory committee provision in the 1999 Water Resources Development Act. Rhodes said he anticipates the program partners will support the recommendations being developed by MVR and MVD. He said the partners will have an opportunity to review the proposal before General Anderson submits it to the ASA.

Steve Johnson asked what the guidance proposal is likely to say regarding public involvement. Foley said MVD will probably simply report to the ASA on increased public involvement efforts, such as the recent dedication ceremonies. Johnson observed that there is a difference between public involvement and public information, describing the dedication ceremonies and the proposed demonstration project as public information, not involvement, efforts. Johnson cautioned that using EMP money for the wetland demonstration area in Dubuque would open the door to similar proposals from other museums and visitor centers. He noted that Minnesota alone has at least four similar potential projects.

Rhodes observed that the dedication ceremonies have been very useful in publicizing projects and demonstrating public interest in the program. Rhodes said MVD's implementation recommendations to the Assistant Secretary would probably not address public involvement. Regarding the proposed Dubuque project, Rhodes said the Corps initially thought that a modest investment could result in a useful means of increasing the EMP's public profile. However, the

large amount of money being sought, combined with concerns about setting precedents for the EMP, have left MVD less inclined to consider the proposal favorably.

Johnson emphasized that his opposition to using EMP money to fund the Dubuque wetland demonstration area should not be interpreted as opposition to the project itself. Nor does he oppose using some EMP money to build public awareness of the program, but he emphasized that this must be done in a cost-effective manner that is consistent with the EMP's fundamental purpose and process. Johnson reiterated his concerns with the precedent that would be set by using EMP money to fund a museum demonstration area with minimal habitat value. Terry Moe concurred with Johnson, noting that supporters of a similar project proposed for La Crosse would also be very interested in EMP funding. With LTRMP budget constraints resulting in layoffs and other difficult decisions, Moe said he does not see how the program could consider funding a project that does not meet the basic criteria for an HREP. In response to a question from Rhodes, Johnson and Moe said their opposition to providing EMP funds to the Dubuque project would remain regardless of the amount of money under consideration. Marvin Hubbell and Gordon Farabee agreed with Moe and Johnson. Farabee said advocates of similar projects under development in Missouri would also like to obtain EMP funding.

Matt Kerschbaum questioned the value of interpreting the entire EMP at a single site. He said dedication ceremonies and modest efforts at individual HREP sites are likely to be far more effective. Holly Stoerker said providing HREP money for an outreach effort in Dubuque or elsewhere does not seem to be consistent with the partnership's stated commitment to a more systemic and scientific HREP selection process. Dan McGuinness suggested the six field stations as possible locations for public information and outreach efforts. However, he noted that the field stations would need additional resources before they could take on such a role. Moe emphasized the importance of involving the public in all phases of developing HREPs. He observed that the St. Paul District has a very effective public involvement process.

Ramp-Up Strategies/Capabilities

Foley said the Corps is exploring several modifications designed to enhance program efficiency and facilitate expansion of the program under the increased authorized funding levels. These changes include the following:

- HREP
 - streamline the process from concept to construction, using the continuing authorities program (§1135 and 206) process for HREPs less than \$2 million
 - delegation of authority
 - use job order contracts (i.e., standing construction contracts for common project elements)
 - use pool plan definite project reports (DPRs) where appropriate for backwater dredging, island protection, bank stabilization, etc.
- LTRMP
 - develop scopes of work for additional funding
 - initiate information needs assessment (INA) to detail future system needs and develop cost estimates for specific products

Foley emphasized that the higher authorized funding levels do not guarantee any particular level of future appropriations. He said the Corps remains committed to maintaining flexibility within the program to respond to budget fluctuations.

Hubbell asked why the streamlined CAP process would be used only for HREPs under \$2 million, noting that the ceiling for CAP projects is \$5 million. Foley explained that CAP projects are limited to \$5 million, but that the streamlined process is only used for projects costing less than \$300,000. Thus, the proposal to use the streamlined CAP process for HREPs up to \$2 million would actually be a substantial expansion of the project size limit used under the CAP itself. Rhodes observed that MVD will seek delegated authority to approve HREPs up to \$5 million. He said it would make sense to use this same \$5 million cap as the cut-off for the streamlined project process.

Noting that the Corps has a wide range of environmental restoration authorities, Hubbell said Illinois appreciates the opportunities that these programs afford. However, he emphasized that the state has a limited ability to partner with the Corps in these programs and observed that the districts also have a limited capacity to execute projects under the different programs. As a result, Hubbell said Illinois is struggling with how to integrate these different programs and prioritize the projects it pursues. He suggested discussing these challenges at the February EMP-CC meeting.

Rhodes noted that the Corps executed over 90 percent of its budget last year and said the districts' ability to execute is not a limiting factor. Rhodes said the biggest challenge with both the CAP and the EMP is uncertainty regarding annual funding levels, explaining that uncertainty over out-year funding makes it very difficult to allocate the current year's funding between construction and future project planning. Rhodes said individual states need to assess factors such as the likelihood of future funding, consistency with program authority, and the project approval process in selecting among different potential programs for a project. He said this should be done in consultation with the individual district involved. Rhodes said he did not see any benefit to weighing these issues in a broader regional context and urged the states to discuss their concerns directly with the appropriate districts.

Moe said he sees potential to use pool plan DPRs for relatively simple projects, such as placing riprap, but cautioned that bigger, more complex projects, such as the Pool 8 Islands project, should be phased with separate DPRs. Foley assured Moe that the Corps only anticipates employing the pool plan DPR for relatively small projects. He explained that with smaller projects like MVP's bank stabilization project, the pool plan DPR approach is quite flexible, enabling the district to fund individual components of the project as money becomes available. Rhodes said the Corps is committed to doing more building and less planning under the habitat program, but emphasized that streamlining the planning process will require the cooperation of all the program partners.

Dick Steinbach expressed support for the Corps' efforts to streamline the HREP process. Bob Clevestine asked whether the Corps is considering developing a programmatic document for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. Foley observed that there are many hurdles to a programmatic NEPA document, but said the Corps would explore the possibility. Rhodes encouraged the Fish and Wildlife Service to suggest an approach to MVR. Tom Pullen said there is no reason to limit the streamlining effort to NEPA and urged the states to identify

ways of simplifying water quality certification under §401 of the Clean Water Act. Moe said there are too many variables even among fundamentally similar types of projects for Wisconsin to consider granting a generic §401 certification for common HREP components. Kevin Szcodronski said he sees potential to develop generic certifications for some types of work, such as placing rock, but not others, such as backwater dredging.

EMP Meetings and Coordination

Foley said the Corps wants to ensure that EMP-CC meetings are as efficient and effective as possible. Toward that end, Foley offered the following suggestions designed to keep EMP-CC meetings focused at the policy level:

- Have presenters prepare a one-page summary for each agenda topic. This summary, which would be included in the agenda packet, would provide background information on the issue and identify what is being asked or decided at the meeting.
- Eliminate the HREP and LTRMP showcases from EMP-CC agendas.
- Provide detailed status information (e.g., HREP updates) in writing. Entertain questions at the meeting when necessary, but encourage program partners to pursue questions off-line where possible.
- Provide the EMP spreadsheet in the agenda packet, but do not make it the topic of a presentation. Encourage program partners to pursue questions regarding the spreadsheet off-line.

Szcodronski said there is value in the showcase items, noting that they help document the program's successes. He expressed reluctance to drop the showcases entirely and suggested linking them to current issues. Foley said he understands Szcodronski's point, but noted that the showcases add to overall meeting length. Szcodronski observed that the showcases are typically only 30 minutes long and said they are valuable in helping everyone understand the policy issues that the EMP-CC is designed to address.

Stoerker said that Foley's proposed background piece should further the Corps' goal of sharpening the policy focus of EMP-CC meetings. She said the write-up should describe the background of the issue, the presenter's perspectives or recommendations, and the specific questions on which the presenter is seeking feedback. Stoerker emphasized that an important function of the EMP-CC meetings is to help make the program transparent to the partners and the public. Rhodes said the Corps wants to ensure that EMP-CC meetings are productive and efficient, noting that the way we execute the meetings sets the tone for the program as a whole. He said the Corps will continue to work on ways to enhance the committee's meetings. Moe endorsed efforts to sharpen EMP-CC meetings.

Ramp-Up Strategies/Capabilities (cont'd.)

Noting that the earlier discussion under the ramp-up item focused on streamlining proposals, Moe asked for information about the Corps' ramp-up strategies. Foley said increases in HREP and LTRMP funding are tied to the habitat needs assessment (HNA) and overtarget scopes of

work, respectively. Foley emphasized the importance of efficiency, explaining that the habitat program will not be able to execute a \$23 million program unless it streamlines.

Moe asked about the EMP's current ability to execute at a higher level. Rhodes explained that the LTRMP has overtarget capability at present, but said the HREP program's ability to execute is currently limited because there are relatively few projects on the shelf. He attributed the lack of projects in the pipeline to the relative allocation of resources between construction and planning in the years leading up to reauthorization. Even with reauthorization, Rhodes said uncertainty regarding out-year appropriations will continue to make allocating money between planning and construction a challenge. He noted that plans and specifications have a shelf life, so projected future funding is important in determining how much money to put into current planning efforts. Rhodes said the habitat program needs flexibility to handle both peaks and valleys in annual appropriations. In response to a question from Moe, Rhodes said it is difficult to estimate precisely how long it would take before the Corps could execute a fully funded EMP. On the HREP side of the program, Rhodes said the time required is a function of how quickly projects can move through the pipeline to construction. This in turn, according to Rhodes, depends partially on what types of projects the program partners pursue.

Szcodronski acknowledged that there will be many ideas for future HREPs and emphasized the importance of having a sound process of addressing project proposals. With respect to the LTRMP, Szcodronski said ramping up should not consist solely of adding discrete, flexible projects. He stressed the importance of augmenting the LTRMP's baseline monitoring, while maintaining the flexibility needed to address budget fluctuations. Rhodes said the Corps could prepare a more precise timeline for ramp-up if it knew what the out-year appropriations levels will be. In reality, however, there is substantial uncertainty regarding future appropriations. Rhodes explained that, as a result, the Corps must base its program planning on its best assumptions about what will happen.

Foley said the three districts need to refocus on project planning now that the program is reauthorized. Foley estimated that within three years, the districts would be able, or almost able, to execute a fully funded HREP program. Foley suggested that the February meeting agenda include time for the three districts to describe their HREP capabilities over the next two to three years. Don Powell noted that the districts would have to base their capability estimates on existing, pre-HNA project priorities.

Habitat Needs Assessment

Mike Thompson reported that representatives of the HNA Technical Team have almost completed a series of meetings designed to get resource managers' input regarding the existing conditions information. In response to a question from Kevin Szcodronski, Thompson said the meetings have generally gone well, with the resource managers providing data and anecdotal information about existing conditions and asking many questions about the HNA data. Bob Clevestine said participants have been impressed with the potential of the query tool, but sobered by the lack of data. Noting that relatively little data is available systemically, Terry Moe asked whether non-systemic data will be added to the query tool as a supplement. Clevestine said the Technical Team is currently working through questions such as what data to add and how to refine the query tool. He observed that it is difficult to add some data, such as land use coverages that employ different classification schemes.

Thompson announced that Clevenstine will serve as interim chair of the Public Involvement Team until a replacement is found for Bruce Carlson. Thompson said the Public Involvement Team plans to use focus groups to obtain information about desired future conditions. Thompson and Clevenstine urged the states to become more engaged in shaping and implementing the HNA public involvement tasks. Clevenstine asked the state EMP-CC members to ensure their states' participation in developing the focus groups. Holly Stoerker encouraged Thompson and Clevenstine to prepare a draft proposal on the focus groups before bringing the state public involvement specialists back together.

Thompson displayed an overhead showing remaining steps leading to review of the draft HNA. He explained that the Technical Team will develop an “ecological desired future condition” based on all the information gathered, including input from the meetings with river managers. The ecological desired future condition will then be explained to participants in the Public Involvement Team's focus groups. These focus group members will be asked to respond to what they have heard. Their responses will be used to identify the public's desired future conditions. Thompson emphasized that process is designed to identify the public's preferences with respect to future habitat conditions and will not seek to address issues such as water quality, recreation, or water supply. In response to a question from Moe, Thompson said the focus group participants have not been selected. The Public Involvement Team will be responsible for this selection. Thompson said the locations and schedule of the focus group meetings also remain to be determined.

Thompson identified several next steps for the HNA, including:

- complete the existing conditions database,
- hold a Public Involvement Team meeting in December,
- schedule the public involvement focus group meetings,
- complete the forecast future conditions database, and
- hold meetings with resource managers regarding forecast and desired future conditions.

Gordon Farabee observed that there are many people interested in the HNA and that these people have a wide range of ideas for how the assessment should be used. Farabee emphasized the need for further discussion about what the HNA will look like and how it will be used. Thompson said he envisions a 30 to 60 page main document that is scientifically sound but designed for lay people. The main document will necessarily be somewhat general, with more detailed data provided in technical appendices. Clevenstine said some people have voiced concern with potential misuse of the HNA. Clevenstine emphasized that it is up to those involved in the assessment to make sure that the right data is considered and that the resulting tool is appropriately characterized. Users of the query tool and other assessment materials will need to understand what went into the HNA and what its applications and limitations are. In response to a question from Bob Goodwin, Clevenstine said the query tool will be maintained over time and used in future refinements to the HNA. Szcodronski said he would like to hear how resource managers, district HREP planners, and others anticipate using the HNA.

In response to a question from Barb Naramore, Rhodes said the HNA must be complete at the division level by September 30, 2000. Moe suggested scheduling an HNA review session at which program partners would address outstanding questions and controversies prior to finalizing the partnership assessment.

Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects

Future Project Planning

Leo Foley reported that the Corps is committed to developing a new tool to guide future HREP prioritization. Foley said he envisions a matrix that accounts for factors such as habitat needs at the system, reach, and pool scales, as identified through the HNA; endangered species; cost share and the availability of funds; and integration with other programs. He emphasized that this new tool will build on the ranking systems currently used in MVR and MVP and will use the HNA as a major factor in prioritizing projects. Foley said the Corps is eager to work with the other program partners in developing the matrix and requested input regarding the factors that should be considered in prioritizing projects.

Gordon Farabee asked whether the Corps anticipates using the matrix at the district or division level. Dusty Rhodes said the matrix will be used at both levels, but said he is reluctant to commit to a specific process until the matrix is developed. Rhodes said the Corps basically wants a scientifically defensible HNA that identifies critical needs. The Corps then wants to use the HNA and other factors in the prioritization matrix to allocate EMP funding among the districts. Rhodes said such an approach would be preferable to the current, river mile-based allocation scheme. He emphasized that the matrix will not generate rigid priorities, explaining that MVD will still need to exercise judgment in consultation with the districts and program partners. Tom Pullen noted that MVD is considering an approach that would establish a baseline level of funding for each district and then allocate any additional annual appropriations based on need. Rhodes drew a parallel to the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project in MVD's three lower districts. Under the MR&T, all of the money in a given year does not go to a single district, even if all of the highest priority work is in that district, because the Corps needs to maintain capability and expertise in all three districts.

Steve Johnson acknowledged that the river mile-based allocation of resources could certainly be improved. He also observed that MVP and MVR's existing prioritization processes are not as clear as they might be. Johnson expressed reservations regarding the use of a matrix, but endorsed the idea of developing some sort of sequential process to prioritize among projects. He cautioned that the process should not be solely HNA-driven and encouraged consideration of factors such as geographic equity and innovation. Johnson said he is pleased with the Corps' commitment to develop and implement the prioritization process in consultation with the other program partners. Terry Moe stressed the importance of using the HNA as a tool early in the project formulation process. Rhodes said it is too early to commit to what the prioritization process will look like and how it will be used, but said the Corps is committed to prioritizing projects and to involving its partners in that process.

In response to Foley's request for input, Gordon Farabee identified natural processes as one factor that should be considered. Several committee members offered observations regarding how and when to develop a draft matrix/prioritization process. At the conclusion of this

discussion, Rhodes directed Foley to initiate development of a new prioritization process and to do so in consultation with the program partners. Rhodes estimated that the new process would not be implemented until the fall of 2000 at the earliest, leaving ample time for discussion and refinement.

HREP District Updates

In response to an inquiry from Foley, EMP-CC members indicated that they did not have any questions regarding the status of individual HREPs.

Long Term Resource Monitoring

A-Team Report

Ken Brummett reported that the A-Team met on November 9-10, 1999. Brummett distributed an A-Team memo supporting overtargget funds for the LTRMP in FY 00 and urging that the monitoring program be ramped up as quickly as possible. The memo also expresses concern with the LTRMP's significant equipment replacement needs and with the omission of the bathymetric and sediment survey work from USGS's list of overtargget priorities. Brummett reported that some resource managers are concerned with the potential for misuse of the HNA query tool. Other HNA concerns include the age of the 1989 land cover/land use data on which the query tool relies and lack of important systemic data sets, including bathymetry. Dusty Rhodes inquired about the temporal considerations in collecting bathymetric data, asking whether single year money would be wasted if additional money is not provided in subsequent years. Brummett said systemic baseline data needs to be collected over no more than three years. Effective updates could then be done approximately once every 10 years thereafter. He emphasized the importance of having the same personnel involved in collecting a coverage.

Brummett also reported that John Wetzel is working with the other A-Team members to identify LTRMP ramp-up priorities and strategies. These will be refined and discussed further at the A-Team's February meeting. Other items discussed at the November A-Team meeting included the EPA as a potential source of funding for river projects and USGS's provision of \$150,000 for LTRMP equipment refreshment.

FY 00 Program and Scopes of Work

Leslie Holland-Bartels reported that USGS is restructuring the LTRMP consistent with MVR's August 23, 1999 guidance and the mid-line budget scenario. The restructured program will allow for increased data analysis and potential ramp-up. Holland-Bartels said USGS has already made a number of personnel adjustments to accommodate the restructuring. She emphasized that the FY 00 data analysis efforts are designed to help set the stage for a logical ramp-up of the LTRMP. Data analysis efforts in the current year will focus on vegetation monitoring methodology and land cover/land use data.

Holland-Bartels said the USGS's list of FY 00 overtargget priorities was developed in consultation with the A-Team, Corps, and UMESC staff. She invited additional comment on the list. Addressing the potential to use overtargget funds to support bathymetric and sediment monitoring, Holland-Bartels explained that she is not willing to reprogram permanent,

professional staff people based on one-year funding received mid-year. She noted that the staff who worked on the LTRMP bathymetric work have been reassigned to other tasks. She observed that much of the sediment monitoring work was previously done under contract and said overtarget money could potentially be used to accomplish both bathymetric and sediment monitoring through contracts. Holland-Bartels said another possibility might be to obtain overtarget money this year and use it the following year. She explained that this would avoid the disruption of mid-year staff reprogramming.

Dusty Rhodes said MVD needs an EMP reprogramming request from MVR as soon as possible. Rhodes reiterated MVD's commitment to seeking overtarget money and his optimism that there will be money available in the Corps' construction general account at some point this year, but emphasized that there are no guarantees. He also stressed that any overtarget money the EMP receives in FY 00 must be expended in FY 00. Holland-Bartels said this requirement makes it unlikely that bathymetric work would be done using UMESC staff. She said USGS will explore other ways of doing bathymetric work with mid-year money. In response to a question from Leo Foley, Holland-Bartels said she did not know how soon USGS would need to receive overtarget money in order to pursue the contracting option for bathymetric monitoring in FY 00. Rhodes suggested that USGS consider establishing a multi-year contract with annual options.

Terry Moe said he supports USGS's FY 00 LTRMP strategy, but observed that Titles 21-23 appear to be missing from the study plan proposals. Holland-Bartels explained that these titles were incorporated into other work items. Moe called for making previously collected data available more quickly. He said this should be done before overtarget work is pursued. Moe also stressed the importance of completing the Title 6 report summarizing the FY 99 analyses evaluating LTRMP data adequacy and design. Holland-Bartels agreed that this report should be completed quickly.

Moe urged that, in future years, the work plan be developed and discussed prior to the start of the fiscal year. Moe also advocated giving Title 4 (i.e., field data collection equipment refreshment) a high priority on the overtarget list. He noted that significant needs have been deferred and estimated equipment needs at \$400,000. Moe cautioned that equipment failures could significantly impair a field station's ability to execute the monitoring plan. Holland-Bartels said Title 4 is among USGS's overtarget priorities. Jerry Skalak noted that overtarget money is not typically provided directly for equipment purchases but can be used to buy equipment that is integral to the completion of a specific overtarget work product. Rhodes deferred to the EMP programmers, observing that these are the people with the expertise needed to determine what can be done with overtarget funds.

Kevin Szcodronski emphasized the importance of getting bathymetric monitoring back in the baseline program and encouraged efforts to build the justification for increasing the LTRMP's baseline budget. Skalak said the INA will scope a bathymetric component. He said the LTRMP needs scientifically sound projects on the shelf, similar to the HREP program's need for habitat projects that are ready to go. Holland-Bartels said UMESC could estimate the staff cost required for a three to five year bathymetric effort.

Rhodes emphasized that there is no guarantee the EMP baseline will ever go up, or even remain stable. He said the Corps would need several years of experience with increased

appropriations before it would be willing to raise the program's baseline. Szcodronski acknowledged the challenges of the budgeting process, but said Congress' decision to increase the EMP's authorized funding level suggests at least some willingness to entertain increased appropriations. He observed that it was difficult for the partners to remove bathymetric and sediment monitoring from the base LTRMP and said restoring them to the base program should be a priority. Rhodes said the \$4.8 million LTRMP base will not increase until there is a multi-year pattern of increased appropriations. In the interim, Rhodes said the Corps would entertain changes to the mix of work in the \$4.8 million base if that is the program partners' desire.

Szcodronski asked about the optimal timing for program partners to communicate with the Administration and Congress concerning EMP funding. Rhodes explained that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues a budget target to the Corps and identifies a few project-specific amounts. The Assistant Secretary and headquarters then allocate the OMB-issued target among the major accounts and give each division a target amount. Rhodes observed that MVD never has enough money to fund all of its authorized projects and programs. As a result, the division must make difficult choices. The division's proposed allocations are then forwarded back to Washington, where headquarters, the ASA, and OMB may all make changes. Once the President submits his budget to Congress, the action shifts to the Congressional appropriations process. Rhodes said it is important for program advocates to interact with the Administration as well as Congress on the budget.

Holly Stoerker observed that the EMP partnership does not currently have a common vision of what a fully funded LTRMP should look like. She stressed the importance of developing such a vision rather than simply pursuing incremental, potentially unrelated, steps. Rhodes agreed that the EMP partners can and should develop a plan for what fully funded LTRMP would include. Holland-Bartels said the data analysis slated for FY 00 is designed to facilitate development of just such a plan. She emphasized the importance of a comprehensive plan that is scientifically defensible and is not merely an amalgamation of parts. Holland-Bartels said the partners need to consider a wide range of issues related to development of this plan, including funding pilot efforts to help determine the LTRMP's future direction. Rhodes concurred with Holland-Bartels' observations.

Szcodronski asked who would reply to the A-Team's memo advocating ramp-up of the LTRMP in the Corps' next budget cycle. Rhodes said the A-Team's memo reflects some unrealistic expectations and said the Corps is not prepared to consider increasing the LTRMP's baseline until it sees increased appropriations. Moe said that John Wetzel's efforts with the A-Team to develop an LTRMP ramp-up strategy are consistent with what Holland-Bartels advocated. According to Moe, Wisconsin firmly believes the current monitoring program is too small and wants the LTRMP's future focus to be on long term trend monitoring. Rhodes said substantial work remains before the Corps, USGS, and others should begin designing a \$10 million LTRMP. Rhodes expressed optimism that the data analysis effort Holland-Bartels described will shed valuable light on questions such as the relative emphasis that should be placed on trend monitoring. In the interim, Rhodes said the Corps remains committed to doing what it can to ease the current budget constraints with overtarget funding. Moe expressed concern that the funding currently allocated to planning the program's future is insufficient.

Holland-Bartels asked the states to let her know whether their field stations can do interim hiring. She noted that such flexibility will be important in determining the field stations' ability

to make use of overtarget funding. Brummett said he would like to see some overtarget money go to temporary labor to support field station monitoring. Holland-Bartels noted that overtarget funds must result in specific additional products. Within this framework, however, Holland-Bartels said she would look for opportunities to include the field stations in overtarget work.

Information Needs Assessment

Jerry Skalak referred EMP-CC members to their agenda packets, which include a draft white paper outlining INA alternatives. Skalak said the Corps recommends tabling the INA until at least October 2000. While the INA will be important in justifying an expanded LTRMP, Skalak said several factors suggest it is premature to initiate a comprehensive INA now. Among these factors, according to Skalak, are the on-going HNA and navigation study and several pending LTRMP work plan items. Completion of this work will provide an important foundation for the INA. Moe concurred with the Corps' recommendation to delay the INA. In response to a question from Moe, Skalak said the white paper's fourth alternative (i.e., UMRS-EMP INA) most closely parallels what John Wetzel is doing with the A-Team.

Other Business

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.