**A-Team Meeting Minutes 7/31/2019**

**UMESC – La Crosse, WI**

Attendance:

A-Team Reps:
Nick Schlesser – MN
Shawn Giblin – WI
Scott Gritters – IA (phone)
Matt O'Hara – IL (phone)
Molly Sobotka (for Matt Vitello) – MO (phone)
Stephen Winter – USFWS

USGS:
Jeff Houser
Jennie Sauer
Kristen Bouska
Kathi Jo Jankowski
Nate De Jager
Jennifer Dieck
Benjamin Finley
Brian Ickes (phone)
Danelle Larson (phone)

USACE:
Karen Hagerty (phone)
Marshall Plumley (phone)
Kat McCain (phone)
Kjetil Henderson

MN:
Megan Moore

IA:
Dave Bierman (phone)

IL:
John Chick (phone)
Jim Lamer (phone)

MO:
Dave Herzog

WI:

USFWS:
Neal Jackson (phone)

UMRBA
Andrew Stephenson (phone)

Minutes from last meeting

Resilience Discussion Comment on Pool 13 change - Steve

Move to approve (Nick) second (Steve Winter)

Unanimous approval

Next meeting will be in person likely in Dubuque or Quad Cities

Date will be in October

Nick will set up an online poll to determine date and location

Karen – request – Say who you are before you start speaking.

Megan Moore – Karen suggested that the next A-Team Chair could be the recorder.

Schlesser – that is Scott Gritters.

Scott Gritters – previously had Corps taking minutes – can we do that again?

Schlesser – Kristen Bouska is going to try to take notes and if anyone else taking notes can send to me, they will be incorporated

Karen – Wisconsin rep (court reporter) previously took notes

Schlesser – is Marshall on the line?

UMRR Update - Marshal Plumley

- Partnership in general – kicked off process to identify next HREPs – involving all 3 River teams (FWWG, FWIC, and RRAT). Started beginning of June – many engagements with teams – May, June and multiple webinars – building on HNA-II and lessons learned from past and what we know about how system is functioning.
- Effort anticipated to provide recommendations by end of year (may go into Jan, 2020), about what projects should be implemented. Lots of activity going on now about that.
- UMRR-CC in August. Will discuss planning and sequencing at that time
- Marshall is hoping to make it to lower three LTRM field stations by end of September
- Financial picture of program in FY 2019 - $33 million – fully funded – End of June, ~$13 million obligated across 3 areas – regional administration, regional science and monitoring, and HREP. More obligation occurs at end of year when construction contracts are awarded and LTRM science funding is obligated for next year.
- FY20 – president's budget recommends $33 million – House of Representatives concurred in budget – hoping that means full funding for project next year. Last year budget was approved Oct 1, hoping they can do that again.
- LTRM – All base monitoring underway – as well as Science in support of restoration projects funded.
- IWW – consolidated closure monitoring has begun.

- FY20 – LTRM scope of work being drafted
- HREP – 56 projects and 106,000 affected from beginning of program
    - 20 projects in design and construction – 65,000 acres – pace and scale of restoration has almost doubled from what we experienced in first 20 years of program. Attribute to effort from partnership.
    - 1/3 of time – accomplishing ½ of restoration acres. (slide 11).
    - 2019 – 2030 – pace of restoration increases across system- important aspect of telling the story – shows that we are doing more work with more funds. St Paul HREPs – McGregor Lake and Bass Ponds both completed feasibility and into design, hoping to sign construction contract by September for Bass Ponds
- St. Paul HREPs -- McGregor and Bass Ponds completed feasibility- moving into design – hoping to get Bass Ponds design finalized and construction awarded later this year.
- Rock Island HREPs – Steamboat HREP in feasibility – ID'd TSP. Floodplain requirements issues – working with team to sort through issues and make necessary adjustments – scheduled to complete feasibility in 2020. Lower Pool 13 kicked off in May – early stages of feasibility underway. Keithsburg HREP in design – first phase out for contract – hoping to award – involves spillway construction – later includes water control and berms. Flooding affected all three districts – Pool 12 affected. Asking Districts to look at damage from flooding – especially federal FWS projects where opportunities to address may exist. Beaver Island in Construction and making progress, Huron Island in construction. Beaver Island shut down from Beginning of January to three weeks ago. Contract remobilized and making progress.
- St. Lois HREPs Harlow Islands – feasibility completed in February – FONSI signed April – MOA execution expected June 2019. Oakwood Bottoms, Clarence Cannon will likely have construction contract by end of September, Crains Island entering construction phase

LTRM Update

Science Planning Update – Jeff Houser

- History of research frameworks –
    - 2003 - program would get smaller by about 1/3 to make room for inflation. Inflationary wedge of funds would be used in mean time to fund proposals (APES). Annual call for proposals – expected to be done in year of funding or subsequent years – imposed limitations on what could be done. 2010 SP put together to address limitations – goal to identify priority areas for funding with accompanying planning procedure (5-year plan) in order to do longer-term science projects.
    - 2010 strategic plan, identified topics were identified (aquatic vegetation, mussels, landscape patterns, and floodplain connectivity) to develop research frameworks that would be worked on over a 5-year timeframe.

        - 2015 strategic plan – refer to resilience in vision and goals, while initial work has been completed, more questions remain, which is the role of the framework
        - 2005 specific programmatic need ID'd by UMRR management – fish overwintering habitat. (Brian Ickes)
        - Until 2018 – open format request for proposals – stipulation that proposals should address thematic areas. In 2018 – new approach – because aware of full funding prior to science meeting – wanted to develop larger scale projects. – Identified focal areas first – based on select number of focal areas for research. JH created initial straw dogs based on previous reports, geomorphology and sediment workshops, resilience work that was ongoing, and information needs gleaned from planning documents.
        - Leaders for each focal area ID'd, assembled initial working groups, outlined proposal/topic for each group.2018 Science Meeting –
        - Different approach to proposals compared to previous years
        - Full-funding = collaborative, larger-scale research projects
        - First step – identify focal areas from existing research frameworks, early sedimentation/geomorphology work, ongoing HNAII and resilience, information needs inferred from 2009 reach planning, and partnership feedback
        - Proposals were fleshed out in collaborative groups at science meeting and finalized afterwards
        - A-team reviewed and ranked and UMRR-CC endorsed
        - 2019 stayed with focal areas identified in 2018
    - 2020 Science Meeting planning
        - Similar to 2018
        - Remaining needs from 2018 focal areas and additional topics needed
        - Topic for October A-Team meeting
        - Jeff will send last version of focal areas and comments and suggestions regarding ideas for 2020 Science Meeting should be sent to Jeff by Sept. 1
            - Shawn suggests advancing floodplain connectivity (that didn't end up moving forward) – referring to connectivity with off-channel areas
            - Jeff suggests this could be a topic, but doesn't recommend another research framework
            - Nick asked whether anyone ever goes back to frameworks and evaluates what work has been completed, what remains, and what new questions have arisen
                - Jeff said he did that to an extent while creating 2018 focal areas
                - Nate noted that he did that with the landscape ecology framework upon A-team request

        - Jeff suggested he do a short-hand version of what Nick is suggesting
        - Nick suggested a procedure in which documents are 'living' in that they are updated over time (e.g., citations added as work is completed)
    - Karen liked the structure of the last science meeting
    - Nick mentioned that the ability to move in different sessions in early part of the meeting would accommodate people with multiple interests

Resilience Framework Update - Kristen Bouska

- Revised Resilience Research Framework
    - Karen appreciated the response to comments document
    - Kristen - Yes, all the responses I received are in there. In this revision – went around to folks at UMESC to talk with them about resilience.

  Objectives remain the same
    - 11 additional research questions included (sorry it got longer…) – from additional conversations – tried to include in my comments clarification about why changes were made. Repeated comments (i.e. – invasive species) tried to explain that when recharacterizing the regime, have to rethink those models. Stayed with the three models that had been developed in the original draft.
    - Corps had comments about climate change. Inserted into research questions where relevant
    - Kat – army corps climate resilience and preparedness – tried to include - Kate Smith – leads climate resilience and preparedness effort?
    - Three questions (orange) added to consider turbid and clear water regimes.
    - Did not add questions to the fish – invasive regime.
    - One question added to floodplain vegetation
    - Two questions added about general resilience – role of hydraulic connectivity and aquatic-terrestrial connectivity.
    - Nick asked about where this document lies and how it gets there
        - Jennie suggests this go through USGS review before publishing on website
            - Peer-review part is now completed
    - Shawn asked about how questions are prioritized
        - Jeff suggested discussions surrounding the science meeting involve prioritization of the research questions from the framework that might move forward – a subset might make it into the focal areas document for the 2020 science meeting
    - Scott Gritters (IADNR) - Motion to accept the framework to publish on the A-Team corner website

- Stephen Winter (FWS) seconds motion
    - Motion passes unanimously

Status and Trends update (ST3) – Jeff Houser (Jeff will send powerpoint slides to Nick to share)

- Purpose – provide a broadly accessible and concise description of what we've learned about changes in the UMRS from three decades of monitoring and analysis; illustrate the fundamental role of long-term monitoring in understanding, restoring, and managing a large river floodplain ecosystem
- Objectives – four objectives
    - Karen – what about resilience indicators? Since this document serves as the backbone of the Report to Congress
    - Jeff – more discussion as we move into more detailed discussion on indicators
    - Karen – maybe spend more time on objective 3 - briefly discuss management and restoration implications of these changes
    - Megan – does obj. 4 (future changes) include climate change? Jeff – hold on
- Level of technical detail – similar to ST2
- Basic outline presented
    - Chapter One: Introductory chapter to set context (Houser and colleagues)
        - Purpose and objectives of the report
        - Connections to other recent UMRR efforts (Resilience assessment, HNA 2, etc). HNA 2 and ST3 should be largely complementary b/c of the scale/resolution of the data included in each.
    - Chapter Two: Physical and hydrological template of the UMRS
        - System Overview & Basic Longitudinal Summaries of Geomorphology
            - Hydrology (Van Appledorn)
            - Sediment (Van Appledorn)
            - Land cover (De Jager)
    - Chapter Three: Major Changes in the UMRS
        - Long term changes in water clarity and vegetation in the upper impounded reach and coincident changes in other biota (e.g., common carp). (Houser and colleagues)
        - Long term changes in abundance of Asian carp and associated changes in and ecosystem. (Ickes and colleagues)
    - Chapter Four: Status and Trends of Indicators of Ecosystem Health:
        - Water Quality (Jankowski)
        - Aquatic vegetation (Larson)
        - Fish (Ickes)
    - Chapter 5: Conclusions / synthesis (Houser and colleagues)
- Next steps –
    - Between now and next A-team mtg – draft specific indicators
    - Expanded outline distributed to A-team ahead of Oct 2019 mtg
    - Revise outline following A-team discussion and comments
    - Present outline to UMRR CC in Nov 2019
    - Writing and analysis during FY2020
    - Final product early FY 2021

Impact of 2019 flooding on projects, Asian Carp, etc. – Nick and others

- Some effects of flood will not be able to be assessed until next year
- Nick Schlesser – delayed yoy assessment and creel due to high water
    - Pool 4 – 3 tagged Paddlefish (among over 100 tagged Paddlefish) from Pool 16 and 14
        - A single tagged Silver Carp made it to Pool 4 and several 26' male captured
- Scott Gritters– big influx of Asian Carp with almost daily reports on Mississippi River and in inland rivers (Wapsi, Maquoketa)
- Dave Bierman – Pool 13 aquatic vegetation sampling had shortest field season because there was essentially no vegetation to sample due to deep water. Sparse vegetation in some areas, but concerned about current status. Typically around 5 ft this time of year, but have been around 13 ft. Spring Lake was pea-green where typically there is substantial SAV and emergent vegetation.
- Megan Moore – water levels have made aquatic vegetation sampling difficult in Pool 4, but Eric reports doesn't think vegetation has taken much of a hit, but composition seems to have changed
- Nick – surprised at how much vegetation is on Lake Pepin given the water levels this summer
- Scott – call for Asian Carp captured to be sent in for analysis
- Matt O'hara – observations from the Illinois River of zebra mussels covering everything in the Alton Reach (haven't observed that in a long time) and water clarity relatively high, river has come down and silver carp surprisingly appear to be in low abundance and no yoy collected in any of the minnow fyke nets,
- Jim Lamer – zebra mussels in La Grange, some Asian Carp but not large groups
- Molly Sobotka – not seeing as many Asian Carp in the Open River Reach
- John Chick –Pool 26 just came under flood stage this past weekend, in early June NSF undergraduates went out at peak flood (non-LTRM), using the throw trap in edge-of-flood that is to be used in the recently funded proposal, observed yoy SVCP, but not as many as in years past, many other good spawns were observed from native fishes
- Molly – still at flood stage in Open River, projected to go under in the next week

Wrap-up

- August during week of UMRBA and UMRR CC, 15 congressional offices with be visiting, USGS Director and others will be at UMESC and WI DNR will get them on the river

Adjourn

Shawn motion to adjourn, Stephen seconded