

MINUTES OF THE  
UPPER MISSISSIPPI, LOWER MISSOURI AND ILLINOIS RIVERS  
FLOW FREQUENCY TASK FORCE MEETING  
18 NOVEMBER 1998  
(Upper Mississippi River System Flow Frequency Study)

The meeting began at 8:00 am with welcoming remarks and an overview by the Chairman, Mr. S.K. Nanda. It should be noted that a complete transcript of the meeting was recorded. Each attendee was introduced and a roster was signed. A list of the attendees is provided in the transcript.

Dr. David Goldman from the Hydrologic Engineering Center then made a presentation summarizing the progress and methodology related to developing and selecting a distribution to be used in determining flow frequency relationships for the study. He reviewed the roles and membership of the Interagency Advisory Group (IAG) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). These advisory groups have slightly differing opinions regarding the worth of regional information. The TAG feels there is value in using a regional shape parameter in estimation techniques. Irrespective of the two opinions some type of regional analysis must be included to get consistent flood profiles throughout the study area. He explained that his initial investigations are based on first estimates of unregulated flow values only. Based on sensitivity analysis Dr. Goldman concluded that a maximum average difference of about 10 percent at the one-percent event results from the records and various distributions tested.

Dr. Stakhiv from the Institute of Water Resources then made a presentation related to Risk & Uncertainty. He discussed the possibility of a change in regime causing the statistical distributions discussed by Dr. Goldman which are based on the historic record to be different in say the next 100 years. Dr. Stakhiv indicated that a definitive, conclusive answer might not be obtained but that the issues must be explicitly addressed. Primary factors mentioned included non-stationary climate change and land use change.

Mr. Soyke discussed concerns raised at a previous meeting of the citizens public involvement committee. He mentioned the fear that the new name of the study does not mention the Missouri and Illinois basins and therefore the public in general will not be aware that these are included. Another major concern was how the data from this study will be used by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Corps of Engineers (COE). The citizens committee requested that the task force consider impacts to the interest groups levee districts, and the communities that could result in relation to floodplain management and Public Law 84-99. Overtopping of levees, uncertainty estimates of significant parameters, and selection of the Missouri River operating plan were also mentioned as major concerns. A lot of concern was expressed relating to the need for the citizens committee to have their own independent expert to advise them on what questions to ask from their point of view. Finally the importance of cooperation and communication between the citizens committee and the task force was emphasized.

Lars Evan Pettersson presented some comments based on the experience of the Norwegian visitors to the meeting. He mentioned their main interest at this time was related to floodplain mapping and they faced many similar issues as those in the Upper Mississippi River System Flow Frequency Study.

Next, Roger Kay (Omaha), Steve Spaulding (Kansas), Greg Eggers (St. Paul), Marvin Martens (Rock Island), and Ron Dieckmann (St. Louis) each presented the Plan of Study for each of their respective Districts. These plans remain essentially as presented in the Plan of Study dated June 1998.

George Gitter then presented an overview of the study progress. He mentioned that the scheduled completion date for the hydrology was June 1999 but due to a reduced rate of funding a September 1999 completion is anticipated. Over all Mr. Gitter estimated that 22 percent of the study had been completed and 22 percent of the money programmed for the study had been expended.

The remainder of the regular meeting included the comments offered by the COE Divisions, the States, and the other Federal Agencies involved in the study.

Mr. Occhipinti (MVD) indicated that the Mississippi Valley Division is satisfied with the progress. Mr. Engelstad stated that the State of Minnesota is concerned with how the study results will impact the people of Minnesota and that there is a good understanding of the study by the non-technical people.

Mr. Bauman, representing the State of Wisconsin, expressed concern with the impact of the hydrologic studies on the flooding elevations and resultant impacts to mapping and persons in the floodplain. Mr. Stralow indicated the State of Illinois was very impressed by the progress of the study and implied that he expected any future complaints or problems would be worked out through the political process. Mr. Katt, from the State of Missouri, emphasized his confidence in the technology of the study but challenged the group to make use of the data and study results and not let it become just another study. Mr. Lawlor from the State of Kansas, Department of Agriculture, indicated strong support and satisfaction with the study but echoed previous comments as to the importance of making the study useful. The State of Nebraska was represented by Mr. Dunnigan who indicated agreement with the previous comments, and appreciation for being a part of the study.

Mr. Johnson, representing FEMA, stated a need for the study and a need for extensive coordination between the COE and FEMA in order to use it for floodplain management. Ms. Julian from the National Weather Service (NWS) described her work with precipitation and her agreement with the tentative conclusion that there seems to be no compelling evidence to change from 17B. Mr. Bullard from the Bureau of Reclamation commended Dr. Goldman for an excellent report and proposed a meeting between the TAG and the IAG. Finally Dr. Tseng from the COE thanked the participants from the citizens' group, from the States, and from the Federal Agencies for their interest and input. He questioned the need to investigate the standard project flood (SPF) event and the need for the citizens' group to have an independent expert advisor. Dr. Tseng requested that the various interests let him know the basis for additional study needs and stated that he will try to correct any inadequacies.

Closing comments were then presented by Mr. Nanda. He discussed the importance of this study and pointed out that not only will the primary results be very valuable but there will also be several very valuable by-products. These include digital databases, the potential for watershed modeling, and the potential for floodway computations based on unsteady flow models. Although tributary streams are not a main focus of the study, there will be significant base work related to developing base flood profiles for many smaller streams. In response to a comment, from Ms. Philippi on behalf of the Wetlands Initiative supporting providing a technical expert for the citizens' group, **Mr. Nanda directed that each Corps District provide a person to attend citizens' group meetings.** So five persons selected by the POCs from each District will attend future citizen's group meetings.

Mr. Dyhouse thanked all the participants on behalf of the hosting St. Louis District, and Mr. Berg from Norway described similarities with studies in Norway and expressed appreciation for being able to attend the meeting. The meeting concluded at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Immediately following the November 1998 Task Force meeting, Mr. Nanda held a special session for the state floodplain managers and FEMA (National & regional representatives) to discuss the relationship of the Upper Mississippi River System Flow Frequency Study to floodplain mapping. A transcript of the meeting that is 62 pages in length is available through the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers. The meeting included discussion of the following: acceptance of the (new) methodology, determination of base flood, floodway determination with UNET/HEC-RAS, and revision of floodplain maps. The key point from the meeting was that establishing base flood elevations and floodway mapping are the responsibility of FEMA. However, the COE is willing and able to help provide the required analysis. Also that great results and efficiencies are possible based on this study if the necessary coordination is accomplished.