

A-Team Meeting – July 31st, 2020
Webex Webinar

Attendance:

A-Team Reps:

Nick Schlessler (Chair and MN Rep)
Shawn Giblin (WI Rep)
Matt O’Hara (IL Rep)
Matt Vitello (MO Rep)
Steve Winter (USFWS Rep)

USGS:

Jeff Houser
Jennie Sauer
Jennifer Dieck
Kevin Hop
Kathi Jo Jankowski
Kristen Bouska

USACE:

Karen Hagerty
Dave Potter
Kat McCain
Eric Hanson
Jon Hendrickson

UMRBA:

Andrew Stephenson

MN:

Megan Moore

WI:

Deanne Drake

IA:

Dave Bierman

IL:

John Chick
Jim Lamer

MO:

Dave Herzog
Molly Sobotka

Introduction and Roll Call, Nick Schlessner

Time, place, and type of next meeting and approval of April A-Team meeting minutes

Next meeting will be webinar with date determined by Doodle Poll

Nick Schlessner – Don't know when we'll have out of state travel approval from Minnesota, likely will hold online meetings for next few meetings. Will send a doodle for the fall meeting.

Karen Hagerty – The Fall UMRR CC will be October 28

Nick Schlessner – Will look toward mid to late October likely.

Motion to approve minutes made by Shawn Giblin and (second) Matt Vitello passed with unanimous approval.

Staffing Update

Nick Schlessner – Dan Dieterman retiring August 4th 2020. Any contacts directed to Dan can shift to Neil Rude and Kevin Stauffer.

Macroinvertebrate update

Shawn Giblin -- COVID has delayed Invert work – planning to pick up in the fall after field work is completed, volunteers from all agencies.

Nick Schlessner – Will include on agenda for October meeting.

Shawn Giblin– depending on when fall meeting is, good possibility for initial information.

UMRR Update from Karen Hagerty

UMRR CC meeting August 12 – meeting announcement sent by Margie Daniels.



UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM



Execution:

- FY 20 Program - \$33,170,000 / \$21,420,469 64.5%
 - Bass Ponds (MVP) Contract Award 18 June
 - LTRM Science Proposals (MVR) June Obligated
 - McGregor Lake (MVP) Contract advertised in July, Award September
 - Draft WRDA 2020 authorization increase

HREP Design/Construction:

- Harpers Slough (MVP) – Repair plan underway, exploring funding, FY 21 award potential
- Conway Lake (MVP) – Construction underway
- Huron Island (MVR) – BPA Wetland plantings completed
- Pool 12 Overwintering (MVR) – BPA Tree planting SOW awarded
- Clarence Cannon (MVS) – Ongoing construction (photo)
- Piasa & Eagles Nest Islands (MVS) – FY 21 Contract Award

HREP Feasibility:

- Reno Bottoms (MVP) – Measure development underway
- Lower Pool 10 (MVP) – TSP Fall 2020
- Steamboat (MVR) – Completed MDM 25 June
- Lower Pool 13 (MVR) – Completed virtual charrette on 24 June
- Yorkinut (MVS) - Completed Chapters 1&2; Existing structures survey underway
- Oakwood Bottoms (MVS) – Completed MDM 13 July

LTRM:

- UMRR LTRM fish methods adopted by IL DNR
- Science in Support of Restoration – \$2m obligated
- IWW Consolidated Closures Monitoring - Underway
- COVID 19 –
 - Increased costs to implement (extra vehicles)
 - IWW closure monitoring: Aquatic vegetation monitoring challenges in Starved Rock Pool (travel restrictions)



BPA = blanket purchase agreement – using for tree plantings at Huron and Pool 12 and other HREPs.

Program execution on track. Some large awards with Bass Ponds and Science Proposals. McGregor Lake in September. Some movement in the House WRDA 2020 for HREP increase to \$40M and LTRM to \$15M. This would be increased authorization, not appropriated funds.

Andrew Stephenson – MacGregor Lake sand moved in conjunction with channel maintenance?

Jon Hendrickson – Unloading McMillan Island this year -- M&R crew moved material to MacGregor from placement site and channel locking. Good win-win situation.

Illinois DNR has adopted LTRM fish methods

Aquatic vegetation monitoring (2020) during IWW closure was unable to be completed in Starved Rock due to travel restrictions

Looking at aerial photography for those areas. Fish crews may also be looking in targeted areas.

COVID-19 Updates

Nick Schlessner – Want to check status of agency approaches and maintain communication.

MN

Nick Schlessner – Likely no travel in foreseeable future. Minnesota still restricted to 1 person per vehicle. Only allowed to use gear from approved list with social distancing protocols. No 3 person crews in boats. Working from home except for field work crews.

Megan Moore – LTRM in Lake City was able to start conducting most of their contractual obligations, veg, fish, and WQ. Unable to hire interns. Not able to have 3 person crew – affects fish monitoring

(electro fishing unable to sample), were able to do netting. Some increased costs from personnel in vehicle restrictions, but may balance out with no intern wages.

WI

Shawn Giblin – one person per vehicle. Sampling affected by social distancing in place. Veg and WQ sampling was conducted. Electrofishing was curtailed. Travel authorization is unlikely. Very similar to Minnesota.

Deanne Drake – (via chat) WI LTRM exactly the same as MN.

IL

Matt O’Hara – Illinois can sample with COVID protocols. Minimal travel is possible with supervisor approval.

John Chick – Had to put together safety plans for doing field work – approved by Prairie Research Institute. Madison County has a possibility to be shut down by governor as cases increase. Authorization for research we received will allow continued sampling. Travel out of state unlikely in the near term.

Jim Lamer – one per vehicle using vehicles and rental cars. Can do lock closure and LTRM sampling – have done first time period for both.

IA

Karen Hagerty – Iowa has had a COVID positive in field station so impacts to work are likely. Otherwise situation similar to other states.

MO

Matt Vitello – Offices are open, staff can work from home or in the office. Transition occurring – have several offices that have closed due to positive COVID cases. Limited in-state travel allowed. Recommend one-person per car, limit of 2 if you have face coverings and drive with the windows down. Out of state travel – limited, but getting approval is probably hard.

Dave Herzog – Hasn’t impacted LTRM program. Have had some flexibility and autonomy to make adjustments. Have kept close eye on crews for allotted personnel per vehicle. Have face coverings. Can sample with 3 person crews, but electrofishing with face coverings in 106-109 degree heat has made things complicated. Southeast Region office had some COVID cases. If cases increase, may see additional office closures.

Nick Schlessler -- With some states being able to do 2-person electrofishing and some unable to do any – is anyone doing modified electrofishing or are we doing all or nothing?

Jennie Sauer – Pool 8, believe they are going out and getting vital rate collections done. Pool 4 was also going to do that?

Megan Moore –Yes, doing vital rates, can be done with 2-person, don't need 3.

Nick Schlessler – So we will have holes in our data in the upper pools for the year.

USFWS

Steve Winter -- Similar to others, most of our work from HQ office (environmental engineers working on HREPs), limited to 2 people per boat no more than 6 total. In boat, keep 6ft distance and wear masks. District offices are doing their field work – think it's similar. Limited group size for any project and wearing masks and maintaining distance. Most of us are working at home if able. At HQ office, can work there, but try to manage having only one person in there through scheduling. Districts may be similar.

UMESC

Jennie Sauer – UMESC, hasn't been any change since March 2020, WQ lab staff are at the center, but they are there part time, cycling through so not everyone works at the same time – keeping numbers down. Students have been able to join the center – helped when SRS samples come in. Everyone else is still teleworking. Haven't discussed going into phase 2 as La Crosse County is still in the severe risk category.

USACE

Karen Hagerty – MVR, Only at 30% occupancy in the building. Most people are choosing to work remotely. Sometime this fall before we increase occupancy. Based on local community and restrictions on Arsenal Island.

Kat McCain – St. Louis District office up to 75% capacity, but then went back to 0% because St. Louis is a hotspot – recommended to telework now.

Dave Potter – MVP – 10-20% of workers come into office. Most are teleworking. Field work -take similar precautions – doing mussel surveys. 2-3 in car, wearing masks.

UMRBA

Andrew Stephenson – All staff working from home. E-mail is the best way to contact. Contact Lauren Salvato via email with questions about connecting.

Review A-Team in Charter

Andrew Stephenson provided an introduction to the charter review.

- The last half of the charter is dedicated to HREP selection and is being updated.
- Wanted to review other sections during the process

Karen Hagerty – When are A-Team recommendations needed?

Andrew Stephenson – Ahead of the October UMRCC meeting

- Best if finalized before meeting.

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Jennie Sauer – Changes in acronyms (LTRMP -> LTRM and UMRR-EMP -> UMRR)

Have discussed adding USFWS to chair rotation in the past. Any thoughts?

Steve Winter – Tim Yager said that might not be a good idea. But should discuss. Do we want it to reflect current leadership perspective or future potential options?

Nick Schlessner – Are internal concerns due to workload or appropriateness of that role for our organization?

Steve Winter – Not sure, can get Tim Yager to forward a response.

Nick Schlessner – Would be good to document it. Could you dig up and distribute prior to the next meeting?

Steve Winter – Yes

Karen Hagerty – Team leaders and component specialists at UMESC – expected to attend. We have all team leaders (except Iowa) on the call. What do you think about having component specialists attending the meeting as well? Has been spotty in the past. May not need to change Charter language, but could we encourage their participation?

Jeff Houser – May depend based on agenda. Remote attendance is easier to accommodate.

Component leaders were on the last A-Team call. Some calls would warrant their participation.

Jennie Sauer – Suggest we make sure they have the A-Team agenda. If there are items that should be addressed – ask them to participate. Don't need to put in the Charter, because there is no enforcement. Brian Ickes is on annual leave this week for example.

Matt O'Hara – Agree that as-needed basis is appropriate. Keeping the group small is good. All the component specialists all the time is not necessary.

Andrew Stephenson – Question about the purpose in first sentence (component vs element)?

Jennie Sauer – Is currently element. We didn't like component because the various sections of LTRM are components (e.g. fish, veg etc.)

Andrew Stephenson – Should charter language chair be USFWS region 3 or change the language there?

Steve Winter – Good question for Sabrina Chandler.

Nick Schlessner -- Karen Hagerty will send a markup version of small changes to the A-Team Distribution for further review.

Ranking Procedures and Methods

Nick Schlessner – Have not made changes to the spreadsheet yet due to compressed field season work.

Will have methods for generating a blank ranking sheet. Still have list of structural changes to technological aspect of collecting rankings. In general, it seemed that people liked and appreciated the method – concerns people had were more of a systemic nature and how we rank projects that address issues that are not equally disbursed across the river. Other issues need to cover?

Steve Winter – I had concerns about how the ranking went. Glad we're still talking about it. I'll be interested in when the next round description and criteria we use. Thanks for continuing to keep it on the radar screen.

Jeff Houser – Like Steve said, when we come back to this will have to think carefully about our approach. How we deal with things with regional interest. Want this group to think about why that did or did not work and how we can work around that. The whole process starts with revisiting the focal areas – that's a place for direct and substantial partner input. Kicked off with my sense of needs and have gotten modest feedback on it. Imagine there could be more interaction there as this group and the partnership can weigh in a lot there during each funding cycle. The way the criteria is set up – criteria #1 – overall importance and priority was supposed to be derived from the extent to which the proposals directly and effectively address one or more parts of the focal document. That's the bulk of that criteria 1 assessment should be based on. Then when it comes to criteria itself, Nick, I, Jennie, Karen discussed a bit – had disbursed criteria – overall importance. Partners would assess how well a proposal fit into a focal area. Next the appropriateness of the methods etc.. Next was the scale the project addressed.

Place where scale should be considered is in criteria 4 – shouldn't influence the other criteria. If you had equal proposals on criteria 1-3, but one addressed systemic and one was regional, the systemic would have priority.

Setting it up that way did not address the simultaneous need.

Collectively the projects we fund need to address the system – not each project. Under focal area document, there are things that are not systemic. As you reflect on this, if folks have a better idea of how to balance and incorporate evaluation of the criteria.

Nick Schlessner – I echo Jeff's thoughts on our initial process for putting criteria together and decouple individual opinions as much as possible to rate projects as best we can. Going forward into next iteration, if you have ideas, please pass them along.

Shawn Giblin – I had some objections to the last iteration – key is to get more input from individual states – WI had 10 people score projects, if you get more input from each state's personnel – may even out a bit more. Second point is that each person need to take it seriously regarding how they rank things. Feel we fell down in following the guidance during the last one. Can't see how a well-written proposal could get an 18. Like the idea of favoring the systemic versus regional, but scale (regional projects) shouldn't be disqualifying.

Karen Hagerty – For those of us who attend the A-Team meeting where we discussed the criteria and scoring – understand how things should be done. As Shawn said, with 10 people ranking them in

WI, would it be worth creating a guideline document with explanatory text to sending with ranking spreadsheet.

Nick Schlessner – We could look at technical aspect of ranking to enforce order of ranking criteria.

Jeff Houser – Can codify our guidance for the ranking process to further standardize. One effect would be to make it easier for everyone – less interpretation needed. Happy to work on that.

Asian Carp Invasion Front

Nick Schlessner – Scott Gritters wasn't able to attend today, but asked if we could discuss the lessons learned and any changes we would make with hindsight to monitoring the invasion front of Asian Carp. With high water in 2019 and large captures made by commercial fishermen in Pool 8 during the spring of 2020 what if anything should upstream states be doing differently than downstream states did when the invasion front passed them? Should other gear be incorporated into sampling?

Jim Lamer – Kris Maxson and Levi Solomon put together slides. Recruitment event in 2016. Asian Carp reproduction and YOY emergence is highly variable from year to year based on water conditions. Electrofishing and mini-fyke nets were needed to sufficiently show the magnitude of Asian carp events. That's in areas where it has been established for some time – not the leading edge. Electrofishing missed several potential year classes alone – 2012, 2017. Underestimated potential size of year classes 2007, 2014, 2018. Some events in 2011 that had large number of YOY but occurred prior to start of first time period. Detected in May, but collected in shallow water at edge of littoral zone – not reflected in LTRM catch. 26,518 YOY – all but 1000 caught in a single mini-fyke. Over 25,000 caught in one mini-fyke. Timing is critical. Mini-fyke picks up YOY 50mm or smaller – electrofishing is better for 100mm and above. In areas still considered leading edge (Pool 19) – not finding them out in main stem and channel borders, but small tributaries in water 2-3ft deep where LTRM gear can't access. Primarily using seines and dragging trawls through small creeks to capture. One creek at bottom of Pool 19 – above dam on IL side – picked up 12,000 YOY AC – 40-80 mm. Primarily through seines and dragging trawl. Rock bottom stream, could see to bottom – 1.5 – 2 ft of water. That's where all the fish were. Started surveying though the pools. Caught a few in mini-fykes. Did best going to skinny water in tributaries – many creeks – small areas that wouldn't be accessible with LTRM gear. Mainly using seines and trawls.

John Chick – As part of a quick response caught 12,000 YOY Silver Carp near flood areas with aquarium nets on poles. You would never get that with LTRM gear. For getting real small ones to detect if they are spawning that year early on, think you have to use a different method. When capturing the transformed larval stages of a fish, the abundance you get of those may not correlate with subsequent year class due to variation in survival. In general, we can get a feel for it by the end of all three time periods with LTRM sampling to understand what a good year class may be. Not sure about adding something else unless you want to try to get an abundance estimate of truly larval Asian carp. Like with other fish, abundance estimates of larvae don't correlate with subsequent recruitment.

Dave Herzog – I recall sub adults and adults were documented before YOYs – don't know what thought is with the additional gear, but in my memory, the detection of age 0 occurred after we saw several years of sub adults and adults invading.

Matt O'Hara – on Illinois – in pretty good numbers, but then in 2000 we hammered them a lot in mini-fykes. Just a few mini-fykes that caught them and drove the numbers, were several 1000 in mini-fykes, but caught them 4-5 years after seeing adults. Mini-fykes are effective and will catch Age-0, could consider beefing up number of mini-fykes and targeting small tributaries that normally would not be sampled with LTRM methods.

Karen Hagerty – Is the question to modify LTRM methods or is the Asian carp group already monitoring?

Jim Lamer – On the last UMRCC meeting where Scottie brought it up – looking for ways to detect upriver – above LD 14. Is the current LTRM 13, 8, 4 sufficient for YOY Asian carp or do we need to supplement or ask LTRM to add a gear that would be better at capturing Asian Carp? Increasing effort on gear that can effectively capture them.

Nick Schlessner – Agree. Based on his email, largely trying to figure out if there's change that should be made in areas that don't have higher numbers that would allow earlier detection of YOY than was done in lower reaches based on lessons learned there.

Jennie Sauer – My first question would be is whether this is an LTRM role or Asian Carp role or USFWS role of what needs to be done. Have an idea, but would need to be more written and developed before making decisions going forward.

Jim Lamer – Across all the states in UMR, given limited funding to go to each, looking for other ways to add surveillance that wouldn't take money out of pots that go to harvest or telemetry. That was part of their motivation.

Nick Schlessner – The last sentence of Scottie's email – what can we expect LTRM to detect – can we expect it to detect YOY or do we need some other method? If the LTRM sampling is not able to detect spawning well, should then LTRM or other programs look into suite of other gear that may be better?

Jennie Sauer – Nick, can you forward Scott Gritter's email and Brian Ickes and I can look into it more to try to address some of his additional questions.

Nick Schlessner – I just sent it your way.

Karen Hagerty -- Desire in the past to expand LTRM to provide more information about Asian carp monitoring specifically, but think that really for the program to change, there has to be a good reason. Think at the time, with multiple other entities tasked specifically with Asian Carp monitoring – think this might not be the right role for LTRM, but important to understand limitation of LTRM gear for detecting relative Asian carp abundance.

Jeff Houser – Think Jennie's suggested path forward makes sense.

Jennie Sauer – Have been very careful about adding species-specific monitoring – has been community-based monitoring, but could discuss as a potential special project or if certain research questions should be addressed.

Status and Trends III

Jeff Houser – We are making good progress on Status and Trends report – hoping to have document for A-Team to review in early September. In an ideal world, a 3-week period for review would be nice to keep it moving. Would people be able to provide a review in September and is 3 weeks sufficient? Will be lengthy document, keep space on calendar if possible.

Shawn Giblin – If it shows up in early September and have 3 weeks, could turn it around.

Steve Winter – Doable.

Nick Schlessner – We can get something to you from MN.

Matt Vitello – we can make that happen.

Matt O – can make it work too.

Jeff Houser – Thanks, will keep you all updated on progress.

Motion to adjourn made by Shawn Giblin and seconded by Matt Vitello. Unanimous approval.

Adjourn 2:40 PM