

**Minutes of the  
Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program  
Coordinating Committee**

**May 26, 2021  
Quarterly Meeting**

**Virtual Meeting**

Sabrina Chandler of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. on May 26, 2021. UMRR Coordinating Committee representatives on the virtual meeting were Brian Chewning (USACE), Mark Gaikowski (USGS), Chad Craycraft (IL DNR), Randy Schultz (IA DNR), Megan Moore (MN DNR), Matt Vitello (MO DoC), Jim Fischer (WI DNR), Verlon Barnes (NRCS), and Ken Westlake (USEPA). A complete list of attendees follows these minutes.

Chandler announced that Illinois DNR recently named Chad Craycraft as Illinois DNR's UMRR Coordinating Committee member. Craycraft said he is the Federal Programs Coordination Manager for Illinois DNR and expressed enthusiasm for the new role.

**Minutes of the February 24, 2021 Meeting**

Randy Schultz moved and Matt Vitello seconded a motion to approve the draft minutes of the February 24, 2021 UMRR Coordinating Committee meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**Regional Management and Partnership Collaboration**

Marshall Plumley expressed appreciation for the partnership's implementation of the Earth Day social media campaign. The campaign theme was "Restore Our Earth," with specific messages acknowledging the program's 35th anniversary. UMRR's implementing partners were involved in the effort either by sharing, being tagged, or developing their own language and posts. The effort required considerable coordination, had tremendous reach, and increased awareness of UMRR.

*FY 2021 Fiscal Update*

Plumley said UMRR has obligated over \$18.1 million, or 54.6 percent, of its \$33.17 million FY 21 funds to-date. The obligation rate is on target. Cost savings realized for Harpers Slough and Huron Island resulted in additional funding available for those projects. In response to a question from Jim Fischer, Plumley said he does not have any concerns about low water impacting projects. In response to a question from Andrew Stephenson, Plumley explained that cost savings from Harpers Slough may be used to advance other restoration objectives within the project or be reallocated to other program priorities if necessary. Huron Island cost savings are substantial. Given that the project is nearly complete, those funds will likely be allocated to another project in construction by the end of the fiscal year. Ken Westlake suggested that a footnote be added to explain that red items in the fiscal reports signify savings.

*FY 2022 Budget Outlook*

Plumley said the President's FY 22 budget has not yet been released but that it is anticipated to be published by the end of May 2021.

### *UMRR Ten-Year Plan*

Plumley explained that adjustments to UMRR's ten-year plan include timeline extensions for planning for Reno Bottoms habitat project and Lower Pool 13 habitat project. Other changes were editorial corrections – e.g., adjusting project names and location information. Plumley anticipates adding additional projects to the ten-year plan in the next fiscal year.

### *Acres Restored*

Plumley said that 332,657 acres of habitat have been restored, created, improved or protected from FY 2012-2020 under the Corps' aquatic ecosystem restoration programs and projects. Over that period, UMRR has restored 31,370 acres or approximately ten percent of the acres. Physical construction of three projects totaling 5,590 acres is anticipated to be completed by December 2021, increasing UMRR's total acres restored to 111,000 acres through 59 completed projects. Planting of trees or aquatic vegetation may extend out after physical construction is complete. These projects include Conway Lake, Pool 12 Overwintering, and Ted Shanks. Another four projects are anticipated to be completed in 2022 that will collectively add 9,810 acres to UMRR's total restored or improved habitat. Plumley said these restoration accomplishments in the next year will help to underscore the program's value, particularly in the 2022 Report to Congress and other forums. Potential project construction completions for FY 22 include Bass Ponds, Harpers Slough, Beaver Island, and Huron Island. Even though significant construction delays over the past four to five years due to high water, UMRR continues to make important ecosystem restoration contributions.

Andrew Stephenson expressed appreciation for the perspective on potential project completions. Stephenson noted that UMRR is on schedule to restore 120,000 acres by the end of FY 22. Olivia Dorothy asked if the Corps was working with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to ensure UMRR acres are recognized as part of the America the Beautiful Initiative to conserve, connect, and restore 30 percent of that nation's lands and waters by 2030. Plumley said he has not been contacted directly about that, but that he believes the Corps is engaged in sharing information on that topic. Dorothy expressed concern that the Corps is not one of the key agencies working on the initiative. Sabrina Chandler said USFWS is deeply engaged in the America the Beautiful Initiative and that UMRR HREPs on the Refuges contribute to that. Chandler said she plans to share more information during the external communications portion of the agenda and provided a link to the initial DOI report that discusses the Initiative, which is as follows: <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>.

### *UMRR Joint Charter Review*

Plumley recalled that on February 10, 2021, the UMRR Coordinating Committee held a virtual meeting to discuss the review of the 2013 Joint Charter of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Coordinating Committee, Analysis Team, and Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects Selection Process Teams. The UMRR Coordinating Committee reviewed the A-Team's suggested edits to its provisions in the Charter. The Coordinating Committee accepted the majority of the A-Team's suggested changes and provided some revised language for the A-Team to consider as follows:

- Remove the line “e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale” from the A-Team's seventh listed responsibility.
- Reword the statement at the end of the A-Team's Purpose or the A-Team's third listed role to clarify confusing and potentially contradictory language. A potential rewording for the role was suggested as “3. Advise the UMRR CC regarding the technical implications of decisions affecting LTRM, including policy, programmatic, and budget matters.”

Plumley said that, on May 12, 2021, the A-Team revised its respective section of the Joint Charter of Consultative Bodies in response to direction from the UMRR Coordinating Committee. The A-Team removed the line from the seventh listed responsibility and removed a line from their purpose statement to address the contradiction and eliminate confusion with the third listed role. The third listed role was unchanged. Plumley said that Nick Schlessler will provide additional context on the discussion during the A-Team update.

In a May 25, 2021, email to the Coordinating Committee, Stephenson clarified the A-Team's edits and attached a corrected version of the Charter that is newer than the version included in the meeting agenda packet.

#### *2015-2025 Strategic and Operational Plan Review*

Plumley said a survey is being developed for distribution to the UMRR partnership at-large regarding the 2015-2025 Strategic and Operational Plan. The purpose being to seek input regarding progress achieved since 2015, priorities for the next five years, and the issue areas to include in the 2022 Report to Congress. The UMRR Coordinating Committee will be requested to review a draft version of the survey in early summer. Stephenson said Coordinating Committee members will be asked to provide contact information for people within their respective agency who should receive the survey.

#### *2022 Report to Congress*

Plumley reported that, on April 14, 2021, the *ad hoc* team developing an outline for the UMRR 2022 Report to Congress met to discuss the Coordinating Committee's feedback on the draft outline of the report. Plumley provided a summary of those comments as follows:

- The Executive Summary should organize aspects around the four floodplain reaches.
- The History and Background Chapter should explain UMRR's accomplishments and efficiencies gained from consistent funding of \$33.17 million.
- The Strategic Partnership and Vision Chapter should acknowledge stressors to the ecosystem.
- The Enhancing Habitat Chapter should describe the ways in which UMRR is more responsive and efficient in executing projects and include case studies to highlight projects that have been designed to address challenges of high water.
- Implementation Issues should be phrased in a way to be seen as opportunities.

Plumley said next steps include finalizing the report outline and identifying chapter authors and contributors. Plumley noted that, as program manager, he will be responsible for assembling material in collaboration with others. The intent is to have drafts of individual sections by the end of September and a consolidated draft of the report by December 31, 2021.

Jim Fischer expressed appreciation for the effort and the opportunity to review the outline. Fischer noted that UMRBA had previously been contracted to help write the program's reports to Congress and asked if there has been a departure from past practice. Plumley explained that he has had initial discussions with UMRBA about a contract for support in developing the report and that he is starting to work with the contracting office. In response to a question from Fischer, Plumley said partners will be asked to provide direct input regarding the report content and be involved in crafting language for the report not just reviewing the overall document. Fischer emphasized, and Plumley agreed, that a key aspect of the program is the rich partnership and that it requires all partners for implementation.

### *Desired Future Condition*

Plumley said the UMRR Coordinating Committee will soon initiate a process to develop a desired future condition for the UMR ecosystem through a qualitative narrative approach. As an initial step, a summary of efforts to-date to define a desired future condition will be drafted for inclusion in the 2022 Report to Congress. A more deliberate evaluation is being planned to define desired future conditions through a structured partnership discussion. A small *ad hoc* group will be assembled to scope this process.

### *LTRM Implementation Planning*

Plumley reported that, on May 21, 2021, an *ad hoc* team scoping the LTRM implementation planning effort convened a meeting to discuss the timeframe, participants, facilitation, and process. Members of the *ad hoc* team include Jim Fischer, Megan Moore, Matt Vitello, Mark Gaikowski, Jeff Houser, Jennie Sauer, Marshall Plumley, Karen Hagerty, Andrew Stephenson, and Kirsten Wallace. Fischer expressed appreciation for the team's work and said this strategic planning will position the program well to receive its increased annual authorized appropriation. He suggested considering how any additional funds might be used to further integrate LTRM and HREP.

## **Communications**

### *UMRR Communications and Outreach Team*

Jill Bathke said the UMRR Communications and Outreach Team's purpose is to develop, organize, and implement clear and updated communication materials. Over the last few months, the team developed and implemented a social media campaign to celebrate Earth Day with the theme "Restore Our Earth." UMRR's partnering agencies coordinated in publishing a series of social media posts. The campaign reached over 34,000 Facebook users and 18,000 Twitter users. We gained insights around tagging and photo uploading issues on Facebook. It will be important to engage partner agency communications staff earlier in planning future social media campaigns. Kirsten Wallace applauded the team for executing the social media campaign and for generating social media energy around the program. She expressed appreciation for the posts that showcased partner contributions. The series was reflective of the program's breadth. Jim Fischer agreed and said he learned more about the process for coordinating internally within Wisconsin DNR to participate in social media campaigns. Moore said it was a good learning opportunity for Minnesota DNR as well and helped identify how they could improve their own messaging about the Mississippi River and UMRR. In response to a question from Sadie Neuman, Bathke said USACE cannot use TikTok and Instagram did not seem like a good option because of the use of videos and website references. A more photo-based campaign would be better suited for Instagram.

Bathke said the team is also finalizing a draft UMRR flyer and will send it to the UMRR Coordinating Committee for comments in the coming weeks. The flyer is geared toward a general audience with limited knowledge of UMRR and will highlight the value of the UMRS and benefits of UMRR in the context of water, wildlife, and way of life. Karen Hagerty suggested making the website a little more prominent. In response to a comment from Neuman, Bathke said a QR code was considered but ultimately not included due to limited spacing and concerns about long-term viability of keeping links updated. Matt Mangan suggested adding river viewing in the flyer. Plumley said UMRR could organize a production run of the flyers in a glossy format and distribute to partners but that an electronic version will be distributed to partners that they can use to make hard copies.

Bathke reported that the team also discussed how UMRR can recognize and celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will continue this discussion at their next meeting. Initial discussions included identifying audiences and key messages. Potential activities included sharing printed flyers during 2021 boat tours, developing a five-minute video with interviews from members of the partnership and public, and a photo contest. In response to a question from Hagerty, Bathke said the team is hoping to have the flyer available for the

MRC low water trip in August 2021. Kim Schneider suggested having a UMRR-theme based issue of USACE's *Our Mississippi* newsletter. Bathke said the team would like to consider that opportunity. Jennie Sauer said the "Mississippi River Photos" Facebook group may be a good place to advertise a photo contest. Hagerty noted that it is a private group and requires permission to join. Fischer said that LTRM crews spend thousands of hours out on the river and could be a resource as well.

The team's future activities include finalizing an inventory of existing UMRR communications and outreach materials, identifying additional communication and outreach needs, developing HREP/LTRM signage, revisiting the existing draft Communication and Outreach plan, and refining the Lower Illinois River Pilot Project. Fischer expressed appreciation to the Communications Team efforts and asked if there was a timeline established for the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary effort. Bathke said the timeline is being developed and will include a schedule and milestones for that effort. Schneider commended the team on the flyer.

### *External Communications and Outreach*

Communication and outreach activities in the second quarter of FY 21 include the following:

- Sabrina Chandler said USFWS is participating in the America the Beautiful Initiative. The USFWS Midwest Regional Director submitted to Headquarters UMRR HREPs on Refuges as means for addressing the Administration's land conservation priorities. Principal Deputy Director, Martha Williams, is planning visits to field stations to highlight Service activities that support the priorities of the Initiative such as engaging communities, climate change, and resiliency. Director Williams would likely visit the Upper Mississippi River Region in August 2021. Chandler will connect with partners as more details are known. Chandler said USFWS also participated in UMRR's social media campaign and conducted local outreach with UMRR habitat projects in construction.
- Jeff Houser said KathiJo Jankowski, Danelle Larson, and Molly Van Appledorn gave presentations at the Society for Freshwater Science's 2021 annual meeting held virtually.
- Kirsten Wallace said UMRBA provided a April 30, 2021 briefing to Sen. Tammy Baldwin's office on forest conditions in the UMRS, UMRR's restoration efforts in Wisconsin waters, and how NESP could help further support restoration of the region's forests. Wallace said UMRBA hopes to provide similar briefings to other Congressional member offices. Wallace expressed appreciation to Angela Deen for presenting UMRR-related information and Andrew Goodall for his briefing of NESP's forestry plan. Jim Fischer said that he and Steve Galarneau attended the meeting with Sen. Baldwin as well.
- Fischer said he presented to the Mississippi River Study Committee of Wisconsin's Conservation Congress, including UMRR and LTRM in particular. The Conservation Congress provides advice to WI DNR on managing state resources and the Mississippi River Committee is looking to increase the number of meetings they have every year regarding the river. The Committee expressed its support for UMRR.
- Megan Moore said she was able to leverage LTRM science during a recent presentation to Minnesota DNR staff. The agency was going through intensive data dive to learn the state of knowledge and science on invasive carp and relied heavily on the status, conditions, and trends in the UMR, using insights gleaned through the upcoming LTRM Status and Trends Report. Karen Hagerty asked how aware Minnesota DNR staff are of UMRR and LTRM. Moore said that staff who worked along the Mississippi River had a working knowledge of the program, but staff from other parts of the states were not familiar. Moore reflected that the presentation represented an important internal outreach opportunity within the agency.

- Mark Gaikowski said USGS is hosting an invasive carp event on June 3, 2021 at L&D 19 to showcase the underwater acoustic deterrent system. Gaikowski said USGS staff will discuss the value of UMRR habitat restoration and fish monitoring data as well as the benefits of preventing upstream movement of invasive carp at L&D 19.
- Scott Gritters said he was asked to participate in the Goldstar Teachers program to present on reclaiming coal mines and restoration of mussels and the mussel industry. Gritters said the event scheduled for August 2021. It will be a unique opportunity to reach teachers in Iowa. In response to a request from Chandler, Gritters agreed to provide an update on the event at the August 11, 2021 UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting.

## **UMRR Showcase Presentations**

### *Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir HREP*

Jasen Brown provided an update on the Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir HREP. It is the first UMRR HREP to be sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and will encompass 4,700 acres located in the Shawnee National Forest. The area is home to the Shawnee's largest Indiana bat maternity colony, provides critical waterfowl migration habitat, and has been the focus of many partnership and conservation efforts. Problems at the site include unnatural water level fluctuations, degraded forest community, and a reduction of emergent wetlands. Project objectives include:

- Increase regeneration of bottomland hardwood forest within the study area during the period of analysis.
- Restore natural hydrologic conditions and function to the floodplain by emulating natural flooding and drainage regimes in the study area during the period of analysis.
- Restore degraded wetland habitat in the study area for resident migratory wildlife during the period of analysis.

Brown commended Monique Savage's work as the plan formulator. The recommended plan is the Forest Service's preferred approach and includes berm modifications, water structure replacement, channel grading, and installation of a pump station and six well pumps to improve the ability to add and remove water from various areas, as needed. In the northern units, boundaries of existing subunits were modified and drainage channels upgraded to improve flow to pump stations or gravity drains. The restoration plans in this area are being integrated into Ducks Unlimited's recent restoration work in that area. In the southern units, more subunits will be opened and combined. The project will also include reforestation and timber stand improvement. The project feasibility report was approved by MVD in May 2021 and four design packages are anticipated to be advertised in January 2022.

In response to a question from James Lewis, Brown said sediment loading was not an issue put forward by the Forest Service and no significant changes to sediment loads are anticipated. Sabrina Chandler noted that the Shawnee National Forest has focused some work on climate change and geographic distribution of tree species including Cypress and tulip poplars. Chandler asked if those types of considerations are being incorporated into the project. Brown said there is a Cypress community at Oakwood Bottoms and said that particular species will be evaluated as tree planting objectives are refined. Chandler said restoration efforts in that area do not typically involve a mix of tree species, but might be necessary in a resiliency context. That type of approach may also be necessary in UMRR's other habitat restoration in the southern portion of the basin. Brian Markert agreed and said USACE foresters have been recommending planting traditional southern tree species. Matt Mangan said Cypress trees are common throughout southern Illinois and Tupelo are found slightly further south than the project area but could be considered. Mangan said the Forest Service is looking at planting a

variety of oak and hickory species and have done so in recent reforestation efforts. In response to a question from Ken Westlake, Brown said the project will be construction ready in early FY 22 with construction dependent on available funding.

### *Wild Celery Winter Bud Dynamics*

Alicia Carhart summarized a recent manuscript published in *Wetlands* regarding constraints on submersed vegetation distribution in the UMRS. Ecosystem health and resilience in the UMRS is often associated with submersed aquatic vegetation (SAV). This research focused on the combined effects of known constraints to SAV establishment and growth: water clarity, geomorphology, and water level fluctuations on aquatic vegetation. Methods included delineating areas in the UMRS where the effects of these combined conditions are not likely to limit the establishment of SAV. Modeling utilized data on daily water surface elevation at 121 gauges from 1993 to 2014, daily estimates of total suspended solids (TSS) during the growing season, and estimated light conditions suitable to support SAV, based on light conditions at bed elevations where SAV was detected in LTRM monitoring. SAV is expected to be limited by both minimum and maximum water depth requirements. The range of suitable elevations for SAV were defined with an upper boundary of low water level and lower boundary of average light conditions present at vegetated sites. The Upper Impounded Reach contained the largest proportion of suitable areas for SAV. For many pools in the Lower Impounded Reach, there was little suitable area based on the criteria – e.g., conditions are suitable for greater than 50 percent of years. Research indicates a complete absence of suitable area for SAV for some years in Pools 20-26 on the Mississippi River and all years in the La Grange and Alton pools on the Illinois River.

A system-wide 75 percent reduction in TSS was modeled to assess potential increases in suitable area for SAV and highlight areas that may respond well to vegetation restoration efforts. Even when modeling a 75 percent reduction in TSS, many pools in the Lower Impounded Reach had only minor increases in suitable area for SAV. Suitable area increased by 1,400 hectares or more in upper Pool 4, Pool 13, and Pool 19 with the same hypothetical TSS reduction. In the Peoria Pool, water clarity and water level fluctuation may not be the limiting factors for SAV presence, but other factors such as herbivory, seed bank viability, sedimentation, or water quality (chemical pollution) may be limiting SAV. These datasets can be downloaded from Science Base or viewed spatially within the UMRS-Systemic Spatial Data Viewer: [https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/management/dss/umrs\\_land\\_cover\\_viewer.html](https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/management/dss/umrs_land_cover_viewer.html)

In response to a question from Karen Hagerty, Carhart said that TSS levels from Upper La Grange pool are extrapolated upstream to approximate TSS levels in Peoria Pool. Future modifications to the model could incorporate data from outside LTRM. Chuck Theiling applauded Carhart for the research and presentation and said that the wind fetch model developed by Jim Rogala shows Peoria Pool as a big windswept lake with lots of wind-wave sediment resuspension. Carhart said the spatial data viewer allows many layers to be considered simultaneously to better understand these issues. Doug Blodgett suggested that sediment quality may also be an issue in the Illinois River. Brent Knights asked if including a substrate factor in the model would help better predict SAV in Peoria Pool. Carhart said she hopes to refine the model to include other variables such as substrate, wind fetch, and velocities. Hagerty noted that the sediment in Peoria Pool is fine grained and easily disturbed. Blodgett said fluffy sediments also provide poor anchorage for plants. Jeff Houser said the simplicity of the model is a benefit and that the model effectively considers two physical conditions that constrain where vegetation may be regardless of other conditions. Megan Moore expressed appreciation for the research and asked if the data viewer allows users to assess impacts on the model from changes in water level fluctuations. Carhart said it is not interactive yet, but that a future goal is to allow for adjustments to TSS and water levels. Jim Fischer said this is a great example of how long term data can be used to inform restoration and management on the river.

Fischer announced that Carhart will be starting a new position on June 7, 2021 as the aquatic vegetation specialist at the La Crosse Field Station.

## Long Term Resource Monitoring and Science

### *FY 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report*

Jeff Houser reported that accomplishments of the second quarter of FY 21 include publication of the following manuscript and completion reports:

- Understanding constraints on submersed vegetation distribution in a large, floodplain river: the role of water level fluctuations, water clarity and river geomorphology
- Probabilities of detecting submersed aquatic vegetation species using a rake method may vary with biomass
- Bluegill habitat use in the Upper Mississippi River
- Gear specific catch rates and size structure of channel catfish in the Upper Mississippi River
- Integrating perspectives to understand lake ice dynamics in a changing world
- Aquatic ecosystem metabolism as a tool in environmental management

House reported that the UMRR LTRM Component Meeting was held on March 30-31, 2021 and had 55 participants. Topics include field station updates, research project presentations, and LTRM component meetings. Discussions involved sharing lessons learned on sampling safely during a pandemic. The Mississippi River Research Consortium's annual meeting was held virtually on April 22-23, 2021 and featured a session devoted to the upcoming LTRM status and trends report. Houser said a variety of other presentations and posters included contributions from LTRM staff or made use of LTRM data. He noted that the conference is a great resource for Mississippi River-related research and encouraged others to attend in the future.

Houser explained that USGS implemented a new bureau-wide Quality Management System (QMS) in October 2020 that provides a foundation to ensure laboratory activities meet a defined standard of quality. The LTRM Water Quality Analytical Laboratory was one of the first USGS labs to implement the new QMS, which included small modifications to work processes. This effort did not disrupt workflow. Additionally, the LTRM Water Quality Analytical Laboratory volunteered to participate in the USGS Standard Reference Sample Project that evaluates the performance of federal, state, private, and university laboratories' analyses of chemical constituents of environmental samples. Results show that LTRM water quality labs are rated excellent for phosphorous, nitrite, and nitrate as N. Jim Fischer said the water quality lab provides tremendous value to UMRR and reduces costs associated with sampling. Fischer expressed appreciation to Shirley Yuan for her leadership in the lab's operations.

### *Status and Trends 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

Houser said that the Status and Trends Report 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition is being reviewed by USGS' Science Publishing Network (SPN) to produce a final version of the report. Figures are complete for eight of the ten chapters. Following report finalization, a summary brochure will be created for use in outreach and communication activities. A small group is planning for a strategic rollout to correspond with the report's publication.

### *USACE LTRM Report*

Karen Hagerty said UMRR's LTRM allocation is \$6.3 million (\$5.0 million for base monitoring and \$1.3 million for analysis under base) with an additional \$2.5 million available for science in support of restoration and management. This represents the third year of consistent funding at this level and has contributed to the advancement of many science priorities. Funded science activities for FY 21 total



\$8,678,114 and include LTRM base monitoring overage, IWW monitoring, COVID-related safety expenditures, graphical assistance on the status and trends report, adjustments to FY 20 proposals, and five FY 21 science in support of restoration and management projects. The remaining funds will be used to cover any potential emergencies or Corps labor.

### *A-Team Report*

Nick Schlessler said the A-Team met via webinar on May 12, 2021. Topics discussed include revisions to the roles and responsibilities of the A-Team as outlined in the 2013 UMRR Joint Charter of Consultative Bodies, macroinvertebrate sampling and research needs, continued impacts of COVID-19 on agency policies and potential impacts to the 2021 field season, and transferring the A-Team Chair. The A-Team's recommended modifications to the A-Team's section of the Charter include:

- Removing the line “e.g., through operationalizing adaptive management at the project or larger scale” from the A-Team's seventh listed responsibility.
- Removing the phrase “on technical issues that do not raise policy or budgetary concerns” from the first paragraph of the A-Team's purpose.
- Replacing “as directed by UMRR CC” with “Any specific actions will be coordinated with and directed by the UMRR CC” in the A-Team's sixth listed responsibility.

Schlessler said the first two changes were passed unanimously at the meeting and the third change was approved by A-Team representatives via email vote after the meeting. The macroinvertebrate subgroup requested the A-Team's consideration of the following two recommendations: 1) reinstate the macroinvertebrate monitoring in 2022 and 2) develop a new focal area for macroinvertebrates. Although all states supported reinstatement and indicated it would likely be a priority, concern was expressed over voting on the recommendations without additional information on methods and budgets. Jim Lamer volunteered to develop a proposal including methods and budgets in a format that allows for comparison and prioritization by the A-Team relative to other science needs. Houser agreed to include a macroinvertebrate focal group in future science meetings and will engage the subgroup to develop a research framework. Schlessler reported that the A-Team Chair was transferred to Scott Gritters of Iowa DNR. The A-Team's next meeting will be held via webinar in July 2021. In response to a question from Tim Yager, Jennie Sauer said macroinvertebrate data was last collected in 2004. Karen Hagerty expressed appreciation for Schlessler's excellent leadership of the A-Team during his tenure as Chair.

### **UMRR Joint Charter Review Endorsement**

As Chair, Sabrina Chandler requested a motion to accept the revised version of the A-Team's Charter. Verlon Barnes commented that the A-Team's Charter seems to require some responsibilities of NRCS that is beyond the agency's authority. In response to a question from Chandler, Karen Hagerty and Nick Schlessler explained that NRCS and USEPA are recognized as official members of the A-Team, but that the two agencies have not had designated representatives to the team in several years. Schlessler said the Charter was revised so that a formal vote would pass with a two-thirds majority of members present for the vote. This was important for the A-Team's effectiveness given challenges with reaching a quorum. Westlake said that USEPA participates in the UMRR Coordinating Committee and other financial discussions, as necessary, but that staffing issues have precluded the agency from designating a representative for the A-Team during his tenure over the last ten years. Barnes said that he is retiring in August 2021 and the NRCS Regional Conservationist for the Central Region position is currently vacant. This vacancy requires additional workload for him that will preclude his involvement in the A-Team that the Charter seems to demand. Hagerty acknowledged the valuable contributions of NRCS staff particularly with respect to knowledge of operations in the watershed. Hagerty expressed her interest in NRCS maintaining membership on the A-Team even if it is not staffed at this time. Chandler agreed and said USEPA and NRCS membership on the A-Team

should be maintained to allow for formal representation when and as permitted. Chandler recommended that Barnes abstain from the vote due to concerns over capacity to engage.

Matt Vitello moved and Jim Fischer seconded a motion to approve the A-Team Charter that was distributed via email on May 25, 2021. The motion carried with no opposition, NRCS abstained from the vote.

Jennie Sauer expressed understanding of staffing issues for both NRCS and USEPA and said their expertise is valuable in technical reviews of science proposals. Barnes and Westlake said they could not guarantee their ability to fulfill that request, but that review will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Chandler expressed appreciation for establishing expectations.

Westlake said that with the revised A-Team language accepted, there is a final document to act on and it would be appropriate for the Coordinating Committee to endorse the Joint Charter of Consultative Bodies as a whole and complete document. As Chair, Chandler requested a motion to endorse the Joint Charter of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Coordinating Committee, Analysis Team, and Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects Selection Process Teams with the accepted revisions to the A-Team Charter language. Jim Fischer moved and Matt Vitello seconded the motion. The motion carried with no opposition. NRCS abstained from the vote.

In response to a question from Hagerty, Barnes explained that NRCS still desires to participate in partnerships such as UMRR to the level agency staff are able.

In response to a question from Chandler, Stephenson said he will communicate with Coordinating Committee members to confirm their individual ability to sign the Charter on behalf of their respective agency prior to routing the Charter for electronic signatures. Fischer noted that the Charter includes a clause that views expressed under UMRR are non-binding on any agency. Chandler said that clause was likely included to address these concerns. Chandler confirmed that the tentative schedule is to complete the Charter signing electronically by the August 11, 2021 Coordinating Committee meeting.

## **Habitat Restoration**

Angela Deen said MVP's planning priorities include Reno Bottoms and Lower Pool 10. An interagency site visit was held at Reno Bottoms on May 4, 2021 and considerable tree mortality was noted. A second run of the forest succession model will be used to re-evaluate alternatives and TSP selection is anticipated in fall 2021. A draft feasibility report for Lower Pool 10 is undergoing district quality review and a final report is anticipated to be submitted to MVD in fall 2021. The district's design priority was addressing repairs on three islands and backwater areas at Harpers Slough. The project's design was approved in January 2021 and a construction contract was awarded May 19, 2021. MVP has three projects in construction – McGregor Lake, Bass Ponds, and Conway Lake. Interior lake granular placement is occurring at McGregor Lake and a site visit occurred on May 25, 2021. Concrete stoplog structures are finished at Bass Ponds and installation of handrail metals, guard rails, access roads, and aluminum stop logs are next. Construction may be completed one year ahead of schedule and drawdowns may be possible this summer. One thousand willows were planted at Conway Lake and low water levels have aided final grading and seeding. MVP participated in the UMRR Earth Day social media campaign with Facebook posts on Bass Ponds, McGregor Lake, and Reno Bottoms. Pool 8 islands HREP was included in the Engineering with Nature Atlas. The district is planning a kick off meeting for Lower Pool 8 Big Lake in fall 2021, completing three performance evaluation reports, and a Trempealeau site visit scheduled for May 27, 2021 will be rescheduled.

Julie Millhollin said MVR's planning priorities include Lower Pool 13, Green Island, Pool 12 Forestry, and Quincy Bay. The Lower Pool 13 PDT is working on feature dependency relationships and refining the project area. TSP selection for Green Island is anticipated for fall 2021. The Pool 12 Forestry PDT is

finalizing project goals and objectives and developing a video for a virtual open house and public comment. A kick off meeting for Quincy Bay is anticipated in fall 2021. MVR's design priorities include Keithsburg Island and Steamboat Island Stage I. Keithsburg Division Stage II was fully designed to accommodate a dam permit application but will be broken into smaller contracts before advertising. The 65 percent review for Steamboat Island Stage I is scheduled for June 3, 2021. MVR has five projects in construction. Tree planting was completed at Pool 12 Overwintering Stages II and a final inspection occurred on May 20, 2021. Construction at Keithsburg Division Stage 1 is on hold until mid-July due to an occupied eagle nest and the PDT is working on a modification to add an articulated concrete mattress for Stage II. Huron Island Stage II planting was completed in May and ERDC is schedule to plant aquatic vegetation for Huron Island Stage III in June 2021. Mussel substrate is being placed at Beaver Island. Re-built pumps at Rice Lake were tested on April 20, 2021 and are fully operational. MVR is addressing sponsor comments on three fact sheets prior to submitting to MVD. In response to a question from Andrew Stephenson regarding extreme weather experienced by ERDC, Millhollin said that there were no concerns about damage to the vegetation from ERDC. Sabrina Chandler said she received positive feedback from her staff after the Pool 12 Overwintering final inspection.

Brian Markert said MVS's planning priorities include West Alton Islands, Oakwood Bottoms, and Yorkinut Slough. The West Alton Islands planning charette was completed this spring. The Oakwood Bottoms feasibility report was approved in May 2021. TSP selection for Yorkinut Slough is anticipated for fall 2021. MVS's design priorities include Piasa & Eagles Nest, Crains Island, and Oakwood Bottoms. Plans and specs for Piasa & Eagles Nest Phase II and Crains Island Phase II are both anticipated to be completed in fall 2021. Oakwood Bottoms is anticipated to be ready for advertising in the first half of FY22. Construction on a rock structure at Piasa & Eagles Nest is anticipated to begin in late-summer 2021. The pump station at Clarence Cannon is anticipated to be operational by fall 2021 and exterior berm setback is underway. Earth work and pile removal is ongoing at Crains Island. Reforestation is underway at Ted Shanks and pump station warranty work was completed in May 2021. Fact sheets with MDC, USFS, and IDNR/TNC as sponsors are being finalized and will be sent to MVD for approval later this year. Marshall Plumley expressed appreciation for all the hard work from partners to move the program forward. Chandler agreed noting that many adjustments were needed, but that a great deal of good work was being accomplished.

### **Other Business**

Randy Schultz said the Iowa DNR has experienced significant turnover at the Bellevue field station. Mel Bowler retired and Kyle Bales accepted a position with the Corps' Rock Island District. Travis Keuter is the new fish lead. A new vegetation lead was also recently hired. The water quality lead is still vacant.

In response to a question from Olivia Dorothy, Kirsten Wallace said UMRBA coordinated with Congress regarding the increase in LTRM funding during the development of WRDA 2020.

Upcoming quarterly meetings are as follows:

- **August 2021 – Remote**
  - UMRBA quarterly meeting – August 10
  - **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – August 11**
  
- **November 2021 – TBD**
  - UMRBA quarterly meeting – November 16
  - **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – November 17**

- **February 2022 – TBD**

- UMRBA quarterly meeting – February 22

- **UMRR Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting – February 23**

In response to a question from Sabrina Chandler, Andrew Stephenson said the location for the November 2021 quarterly meeting is not yet known.

With no further business, Chad Craycraft moved and Randy Schultz seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

**UMRR Coordinating Committee Virtual Attendance List  
May 26, 2021**

**UMRR Coordinating Committee Members**

Brian Chewning	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Sabrina Chandler	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Mark Gaikowski	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Chad Craycraft	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Randy Schultz	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Megan Moore	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Matt Vitello	Missouri Department of Conservation
Jim Fischer	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Verlon Barnes	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Ken Westlake	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5

**Others In Attendance**

Jim Cole	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Thatch Shepard	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Ben Robinson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Leann Riggs	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Jim Lewis	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVD
Angela Deen	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jill Bathke	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Maria Delaundreau	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Jon Hendrickson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVP
Marshall Plumley	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Karen Hagerty	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Julie Millhollin	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Davi Michl	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Rachel Hawes	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Kara Mitvalsky	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Matthew Coffelt	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Rachel Perrine	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVR
Brian Markert	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Jasen Brown	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Bandon Schneider	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Brian Johnson	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Rob Cosgriff	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MVS
Kim Schneider	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Chuck Theiling	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ERDC
Kraig McPeck	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IIFO
Sara Schmuecker	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IIFO
Tyler Porter	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IIFO
Matt Mangan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IIFO
Tim Yager	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UMR Refuges
Jeff Houser	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennie Sauer	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Brent Knights	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jennifer Dieck	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Kristen Bouska	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
JC Nelson	U.S. Geological Survey, UMESC
Jim Duncker	U.S. Geological Survey, CMWSC
Mike Welavert	National Weather Service

Dave Glover	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Kirk Hansen	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Scott Gritters	Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Nick Schlessler	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Dru Buntin	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Bryan Hopkins	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Steve Galarneau	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Alicia Carhart	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Olivia Dorothy	American Rivers
Rick Stoff	Our Mississippi
Doug Blodgett	The Nature Conservancy
Jason Beverlin	The Nature Conservancy
Sadie Neuman	Unaffiliated Stakeholder
Kirsten Wallace	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Andrew Stephenson	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mark Ellis	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Lauren Salvato	Upper Mississippi River Basin Association