

## **Upper Mississippi River Commission Notes**

Weiser Building  
33 S. Walnut  
La Crescent, MN

**Present:** Commissioners John Campe, Bill Howe, Robin Grawe, Marc Schultz, and Kent Pehler, Gretchen Benjamin (Wisconsin DNR), and Karrie Jackelen (Congressman Kind).

**The meeting was called to order at 10:15 PM by Vice Chair Bill Howe.**

**Approval of agenda: By consensus the agenda was modified to postpone election of officers until John Campe would be present and to add Wisconsin's report on the Corps Feasibility Study, the proposed USGS Building, the Recreation Task Force, Pool Plans, and new initiatives by the four-state R, C. & D's.**

**Approval of minutes of previous meeting: Robin noted that the minutes of the last meeting under Karrie Jackelen's discussion of the River Bill in the Senate mistakenly referred to Senator Harkin's support when it should have read "Senator Feingold," and that the Commission was very grateful for Senator Feingold's work. Moved by Robin, seconded by Bill to approve the minutes as amended. Motion passed.**

**Wisconsin Report on Feasibility Study:** Gretchen Benjamin reported that as yet she had been unable to organize a briefing session among high-level Wisconsin staff and the Governor's office who, in the absence of Ellen Fisher (retired from the DOT) and Terry Moe (retired from the DNR), would be responsible for coordinating the Wisconsin state position. She cautioned that we cannot expect a Wisconsin State position until after the next round of public meetings in May. She reported that their Mississippi River Team had been skeptical of the cost estimate of Alternative 6 (7 new locks and 5 lock extensions at \$2.3 billion). The team had also found in the environmental alternatives low estimates for habitat improvement (such as estimating island complexes at 15 acres average rather than the more realistic 30) and that the Corps in October had revised their documents to reflect these suggested changes from Wisconsin. Since that time Wisconsin's Mississippi River Team had suggested revised estimates for environmental alternatives B, C, D, and E to include fish passages in all alternatives and the need for additional staff to manage for short-term pool fluctuations. (A handout of changes was provided.) As modified, Wisconsin's Alternative E would implement most of the Pool Plans. She said that Wisconsin's E was being advocated by most of the other states and that she expected Wisconsin to advocate for a dual-purpose mandate for the Corps and the most economically justifiable navigation alternative. She also noted that shipping on the Illinois River was very important to Southeastern Wisconsin. She concluded that Wisconsin's Alternative E would cost \$220 million per year for the largest freshwater ecosystem in North American, a cost still lower than current O & M of the navigation system plus navigation Alternative 6, currently most favored by the states.

Discussion followed, touching on the growing use of container barges and the concomitant technology, the National Research Council report, and the Corps response. It was noted that the commercial navigation industry had not shown interest in the dual-purpose character of

the Feasibility Study. It was generally agreed that the Governors' offices needed to be made aware of the economic impact of environmental restoration proposal, since there was a tendency to see the Navigation study as impacting only states farther south. Kent warned that there was a tendency in the industry to focus on the Missouri and Ohio Rivers, and that without a strong unified voice, the Upper Miss, both economic and environmental components, could be overlooked. John Campe reported that in phone call discussion with the director of the Mississippi River Commission, where he expressed the need for Upper Miss representation on the MRC, he was told not to worry, that Upper Miss needs would be looked after; John said this made him all the more concerned for the need to restructure the MRC. It was agreed to add the MRC to the January 14 briefing agenda. Bill Howe noted that in the south watersheds tie recreational dollars to commercial. Marc noted the need for harbor commissions and mayors in Wisconsin to urge the Governor to recognize the importance of the Feasibility Study and come to a position.

**Planning of meetings with federal offices:** Robin reported the meeting had been scheduled for January 14, 10:30 AM at Perkins Restaurant at the Quality Inn, junction of Highways 61 and 43, in Winona. She reported that Jay Rendall of the Minnesota DNR had agreed to make a PowerPoint presentation on exotics and that she was expecting Dave Kennedy to talk about the USGS building. She noted that the room was free because we were non-profit, but that we would be expected to buy lunch and she recommended a \$17 pot of coffee. She recommended that the short menu be circulated early in the meeting and lunch be served in the meeting room during discussion.

Karrie Jackelen suggested that a 2-page update on the MRCC and its positions on the issues on the table sent prior to the meeting would be helpful. By consensus the following agenda was adopted:

- Introductions of the participants and the MRCC (chair)
- Invasive species (Jay Rendall and others)
- USGS Building (Dave Kennedy)
- EMP funding
- Restructuring of the MRC (John Campe)
- Discussion, Q & A over lunch

**Recreational Task Force:** Marc Schultz reported that the task force was scheduled to meet January 7 from 9 to 2 at the West Campus of the USGS (Fish Lab) on Fanta Reed Road. Marc said he had emailed questions for thought ahead of time. He noted that the Fish and Wildlife Service was waiting for approval for its draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and thus was somewhat restricted in what they could comment on. Marc asserted that recreational management is bigger than one agency. He had brought with him the 1992 study plan for a Comprehensive Recreational Management Plan, put together by the River Resources Forum Recreational Work Group and agreed to bring copies to the task force meeting. **Moved by John, seconded by Marc that the Task Force make a report by July 15. Motion passed.**

**Election of Offices: the following officers were elected unanimously:**

**Chair—Bill Howe**

**Vice Chair—Kent Pehler**  
**Secretary—Robin Grawe**  
**Treasurer—John Campe**

**The Commission thanked outgoing chair, John Campe, for outstanding service.**

**Treasurer's report:** John reported that the account contained \$3725.79, including Pool Plan checks from Iowa (\$188.74), Minnesota (\$1500.00), and the Corps (\$2000.00), and it anticipated a wire from the Fish and Wildlife Service for \$5000 and checks for \$1500 from Wisconsin and the National Park Service each.

**Commissioner Reports:** Robin reported that she had registered RiverPlans.org for three years, to be linked to the River Resources Forum pool plans website as soon as it was up. She requested \$75 to cover the cost.

Marc reported the resource conservation districts of the four driftless area states had formed a coalition to request federal grants for reduction of soil and nutrient erosion.

Assignments for portions of the 2-page update to be distributed prior to the federal aides' briefing were made as follows:

Marc—USGS building and EMP funding  
Kent and John—restructuring the MRC  
Robin—invasive species and the MRCC

**The meeting adjourned at 12:00.**

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Grawe, Secretary