

Upper Mississippi River Commission Notes
January 17, 2002, 12:00 noon
The Sting, La Crosse, WI

Present: Bill Howe, Marc Schultz, Robin Grawe, Dick Larson and Verna Regier representing Congressman Gil Gutknecht, Joya Szalwinski of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dan McGuinness of the Audubon Society, Ken Lubinski of the USGS.

Bill Howe opened the meeting at 12:00 and requested that Marc Schultz conduct the meeting from then on.

Discussion ensued concerning the need for a mission statement, funding, and a legal structure.

Concerning **mission**, Dan McGuinness and Ken Lubinski noted the need for structured public participation in the EMP and cited an open niche for a neutral body dedicated to providing a channel for public input on the river. Marc noted that many of the public do not feel comfortable or able to participate in a formal public input process but will communicate their river concerns through someone else and noted the need for someone to go out to smaller communities and less publicly visible stakeholders such as clambers and houseboaters. Dan said that we would need to decide early whether we wanted to be a facilitator of points of view or an advocate of a point of view. Marc commented that there was a need for a facilitator but not for “just another advocacy group.” Dan suggested a newsletter perhaps called “Points of View” which would collect and distribute comments from the broad range of river interests. Marc noted that often information provided by the agencies is not localized and cited a need for Pool Fact Sheets, which would provide data on each pool from a multipurpose perspective. Robin suggested that such fact sheets might eventually be published on a UMRC website. Bill noted a need for a fulcrum to urge agencies to sandwich their thinking into good science gathering. Robin reported that John Campe, who had been unavoidably precluded from the meeting, had expressed a strong value for the UMRC to act as “neutral ground.” **A draft mission statement was formulated (see attached) and it was agreed that it would be circulated to other charter members for tweaking/approval via email within the near future and once thus approved, acted under and at the next meeting formally approved.**

Concerning **funding**, Dan suggested not putting all eggs in one basket, but being prepared for funding possibly from the federal agencies to assist in public input and also from foundations such as McKnight. It was generally agreed that grant funding would be easier to obtain once we had a track record. Marc noted that in La Crosse there existed a consortium that provided assistance to nonprofits in securing grants for a fee of only \$5.00. It was agreed that much could be accomplished without grant funding.

Concerning **legal structure**, Robin reported that John had begun the process of registering the trade name Upper Mississippi River Commission in the state of Minnesota and that he had recommended that the group eventually incorporate to acquire limited liability. Dick Larson recommended that the group eventually secure 501-3-c tax status. Dan remarked that he had once been part of an organization which raised money and acted simply on a name. Ken suggested that the term “Commissioner” might be replaced with another; suggested were associates, directors, members, affiliates. **It was agreed that with a mission statement, the group could begin a work program without incorporation, with the expectation of incorporating and seeking 501-3-c tax status in the future.**

Regarding the need for a **website**, Dick Larson suggested that the group ask its mailing list for possible hosts. Marc suggested that Dave Kennedy might be helpful. Robin noted that she was having cable installed in her home to better facilitate UMRC business, and that her new email address would be ragrawe@hcbi.com.

Work Program

Ken Lubinski reported on **progress on the NAV study**, stating that the Corps had developed a new process of “scenario development” for estimating export needs, and that he had just returned from Memphis from a meeting to determine if ecological scenarios could be developed. He noted that the states were NOT involved in the ecological side of the study but that American Rivers was, and that UMRBA had been asked to provide an input document. He reported that public meetings were to be scheduled in March for St. Paul, La Crosse, Peoria, Bettendorf, and St. Louis. Dan reported that the towing industry was rumored to be preparing a request for 1200 foot locks preemptive of a completed Corps study; he and Ken expressed a strong disapproval of any Congressional action on one facet of the river as opposed to all facets as required by the revised Corps study guidelines. Dick noted the need to consider navigation needs in the context of a total transportation picture.

Regarding **UMR candidates for the Mississippi River Commission**, Bill Howe reported that Merv Sarchet of Guttenberg had expressed an interest and willingness to serve. Robin reported that Kent Pehler of Brennan Marine had sent her an extensive resume of William D. Ashton of Iowa who had the support of Brennan. **It was agreed that within the draft mission statement it was appropriate for the group to support both candidates.** Dick Larson pointed out that since the post was a Presidential appointment, it would help to involve the Republican Congressmen in river districts, notably Gil Gutknecht and Jim Ramstead, and he asked to be kept informed of any endorsements. Dan suggested contacting standing members of the MRC and agreed to provide a current membership list.

Concerning science fairs, it was agreed that Robin would grant science fair awards at local and regional science fairs where possible, and to work with the Pool 8 Drawdown video task force to determine if the video is suitable for school distribution and if so to distribute videos to teachers participating in regional science fairs.

Concerning **bridge meetings (State of the River meetings)**, it was noted that while it would be working on short notice, if we could organize three meetings yet this spring, they would enhance UMRC visibility and public perception of UMRC neutrality. It was agreed to seek agency cooperation in three meetings in March or April in Red Wing, Winona, and Lansing (not in La Crosse since the Corps intended to have its meeting there.) Meetings would involve all agencies and all uses of the river and focus primarily on local pools. Marc agreed to attempt to put together Pool Fact Sheets for distribution at those meetings.

The group agreed to meet again at the La Crosse County administration building, at 10:30, on February 20 or 21, 2002, depending on member availability.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Grawe, Secretary