

## Upper Mississippi River Commission Notes

February 21, 2002

La Crosse County Administration Building

La Crosse, WI

**Present:** Bill Howe, Marc Schultz, John Campe, Robin Grawe, Karrie Jackelen representing Congressman Ron Kind, Malachi McNeal representing Congressman Gil Gutknecht, Assemblywoman Jennifer Shilling, Gretchen Benjamin of Wisconsin DNR, Barry Draskowski of St. Mary's University, Jim Nissen of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The meeting opened at 10:40 AM.

**Moved by John, seconded by Bill to approve the agenda. Motion passed.**

Approval of the minutes of the last meeting was deferred until the next meeting.

**Registration of Name:** John reported that we could get a certificate of assumed name for less than \$100 or we could directly incorporate as a 501-3-c for \$900 to \$1500. It was agreed to seek incorporation immediately. Several names of lawyers who might be willing to do the legal work *pro bono* were raised. It was agreed that Bill, John, and Gretchen would move forward on the suggestions and get back to each other and other members in a week. Questions of structure and membership were considered briefly but deferred to the next meeting when the incorporation process had become clearer.

**Moved by Bill, seconded by John to name the organization the Mississippi River Citizen Commission. Motion passed.**

**UMR representation on the MRC:** Bill Howe distributed an article from the Waterways Journal on the Mississippi River Commission. It was noted that the Commission called for three civilians (two engineers and a farmer) who serve for terms of nine years; members present were aware of two UMR active candidates, both from Iowa. It was also noted that the restarted Corps of Engineers study was considering whether or not changes should be made to the MRC in light of the study. It was the consensus of those present to support strong representation of the Upper Mississippi River on the MRC and to support the candidacy of both known candidates.

**Science Fairs:** Robin reported that she had given out certificates to river projects at the Winona Science Fair and was scheduled for the Southeast Minnesota Regional Science Fair in early March to present certificates to river projects and to distribute Pool 8 drawdown videos to teachers of participating schools. She reported having contacted the fair organizers in La Crosse. In Wisconsin, there is a large fair for middle schoolers which offers an opportunity to distribute videos and to erect booths, and there is also a much smaller, adjudicated event for high schoolers where she plans to present certificates. She encouraged other river entities to participate in the middle school fair on April 24.

**State of the River Meetings:** Robin reported talking with Gretchen Benjamin and others about three potential meetings in Red Wing, Winona, and Lansing in the second or third weeks of April. She said she had several presenters lined up for Red Wing and Winona, including municipal and university staff. She also reported that Lansing had been the site of several EMP meetings recently and that she was not finding issues that needed discussion. It was decided to drop the Lansing meeting.

The question of the primary purpose of the meetings arose, to what degree public information and to what degree public input. Marc noted the need for citizen input and to rebuild public confidence in the agencies' willingness to really listen. Barry commented on the redundancy inherent in the number of large studies currently going on --the CCP's, the Pool Plans, the Navigation study and the Corp's watershed study--and he suggested explaining to the public the role of each of these studies.

**Mission Statement:** Moved by Robin, seconded by John to add to the previously approved draft mission statement the following as the first goal:

“To provide a neutral forum for the discussion of issues pertaining to the UMR.”

Barry commented that the Upper Mississippi Basin Stakeholder Network (UMBSN), which shared many of the goals of the MRCC, had included a provision for neutrality and that provision had drawn considerable criticism from many parties who saw it as noncommittal. Bill Howe suggested the word “open” instead of “neutral.” Robin spoke to the importance of having some sort of explicit “neutrality” stance to protect the group from being drawn into taking controversial stands which would ruin its credibility. Vote on the motion was deferred until the next meeting.

The next meeting was set for March 20, 10:00 at the American Savings Bank in La Crescent. John Campe was named chair.

Barry Draskowski reported on changes in the website of the UMBSN, including a new serial fictional feature and invited the MRCC to join in partnership with UMBSN. No action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Grawe, Secretary