

Upper Mississippi River Commission Notes

March 25, 2003

Slippery's Restaurant

Wabasha, MN

Present: John Campe, Bill Howe, Robin Grawe, Marc Schultz, Kent Pehler, John Wetzell, Bill Burke, Ed Passe of Wabasha, Vic and Karon Langer of Hager City, Dick Larson representing Congressman Gil Gutknecht, and Dick Otto of the Corps of Engineers

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 PM by Chair John Campe.

Moved by Bill H, seconded by Marc to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Moved by Bill H, seconded by Kent to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: John C. reported that the treasury had very little money.

Effects on river programs of state budget cuts: Robin summarized previously distributed reports of belt tightening from Ellen Fisher of WisDOT; Dick Lambert of MnDOT, Gretchen Benjamin of W-DNR, and Steve Johnson of M-DNR.

Status report on Pool 9-10 beach plans: Dick Otto reported that Pools 7 And 8 beach plans are due on his desk next week, that a beach was completed in Pool 10 last summer, that Pools 9 and 10 plans are old and it will be a year before updates on these plans will begin, that Pool 3 plans are completed but not implemented, and that plans for Lower Pool 4 and Pool 5 have never been done. Discussion ensued over problems such as preventing beach erosion and incorporating beach plans into Pool Plans and the CCP. Kent pointed out that recreational users paid a federal fuel tax and to some extent state fuel tax which is not returned to recreational use. Robin recommended a combined meeting of the MRCC and agency representatives to discuss recreational issues. It was agreed to invite agencies to consider ways of incorporating recreational needs into existing agency missions and ways of finding new state and federal funding sources for recreational enhancements.

Hydroelectric permit at L & D 10: Bill H reported that an Ohio firm has applied for a permit to study the hydroelectric potential of Lock and Dam 10. Recognizing that all the dams are so permitted and hydroelectric had been thought unlikely on the Upper Mississippi given the low heads on the dams, he said it is nevertheless important to monitor results of hydroelectric permitting to prevent an unlikely but undesirable development and to make legislators aware of the possible need to challenge such development. He asked Dick Otto to investigate and inform the Secretary of similar applications on other dams. Vic Langer noted an expressed concern for Twin Cities input on future use of the Rosemont plant. John C noted that all energy sources have problems.

Robin suggested that in the unlikely event that hydroelectric came to the Mississippi, there might be an opportunity for a fish passage. Dick Larson indicated that in the event that the Xcel nuclear plant was not granted spent fuel storage approval, it would have to shift its operations to the Rosemont coal plant.

Commissioner and Participant Reports:

Bill Howe reported on attending meetings on the Grand Excursion of 2004.

John Wetzel noted that the second round of CCP public meetings had been completed and that draft plans were expected in late fall or early winter.

Marc Schultz said that he had been attending meetings of the DNR shoreline floodplain advisory board, where issues of nonconforming use and the 50% rule in the context of a court decision prohibiting future variances dominated the discussion. He also reported that the proposed Mathy Asphalt plant controversy might get resolved.

Kent Pehler reported that he would be attending La Crosse Grand Excursion meetings. He also reported that the first tow of the season had entered La Crosse that day with nine empties and that with honeycomb ice 13 inches thick having been sited over a five-mile stretch in Lake Pepin, he anticipated navigation through Lake Pepin next week.

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, April 23, 10:00 AM in Winona.

New Business:

Kent suggested drafting letters to agencies inquiring about the possibility of using portions of fuel tax for recreational purposes. It was agreed to make inquiries pursuant to the next meeting. Dick Larson of Congressman Gutknecht's office volunteered that fuel taxes have historically been designated for highways and that currently the Minnesota ethanol subsidy is being redirected to roads in order to address budgetary challenges.

It was agreed to request for the next meeting updates on the CCP from someone of the Fish and Wildlife Service and on the River Bill, HR 961, from Karrie Jackelen of Congressman Kind's office.

Commissioners and citizens from Wisconsin agreed to work together to plan a visit to Madison to update legislators on the river the MRCC. Robin agreed to help provide materials similar to what she had distributed in St. Paul.

Chair John Campe noted that Bill Burke of Lansing, Iowa had expressed an interest in becoming a member of the MRCC and said he would entertain a motion to approve Bill as a Commissioner pending a letter of recommendation from an elected official. **Bill Howe moved Bill Burke's approval. Motion passed.**

John Campe reported that he had arranged for a visit to Lock and Dam 7 by the staff of Senator Coleman's office but that the visit had been aborted because of the war.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Grawe, Secretary