

**Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Mississippi River Committee Minutes - August 26, 2011**

The regular meeting of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Mississippi River Committee was held on **August 26, 2011** at the Prairie Inn of Holmen Wisconsin.

The meeting was called to order at 6:59 PM by Chairman Marc Schultz; roll was called.

Committee members present included: Marc Schultz (Chair), Wes Domine (Secretary), Bob Brunkow, Mike Hayes, William Howe, Rick Knutson, Ralph Kunkel, Wayne Stietz, Joshua Hennlich, Ted Engelen, and Gary Dillaber

Committee Members absent and excused included: Chris Perkins and Matt Sedelbauer.

DNR Staff Present included Fisheries Team Supervisor Ron Benjamin and Conservation Warden Ed McCann who was covering for regular DNR Liaison Bob Jumbeck.

Other invited participants included Kevin Forester and Jim Nissen of the USFWS; Randy Hines from USGS LaCrosse office; and Kate Strom Hiorns of the WDNR Bureau of Fisheries Management

**ORDER OF BUSINESS –**

The mission statement adopted by the MRC in 2008 was read. There were no comments suggesting new changes or improvements.

**Mission Statement of the Mississippi River Committee (MRC) of the  
Wisconsin Conservation Congress:**

Within and to the support of Wisconsin Conservation Congress process; it is the mission of the Mississippi River Committee to advise the Wisconsin NRB on issues, rules, or policies which affect the river and/or other associated natural resources.

The MRC strives to stay acquainted with current river resource management; the science in support or opposition to that management; and with public opinion thereof. The MRC encourages river management agencies to seek public participation in management decisions or policy. Influence stemming from the MRC shall be generated with greatest intentions toward long term benefits to all wildlife resources; and with an emphasis toward preserving public access and harvest of game resources, (i.e., preserving outdoor heritage activities of hunting, fishing, and trapping).

**DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

**Item A - DNR Updates**

• **Mississippi River New Duck Hunting Zone –**

Discussion was held summarizing the new Third Zone recently approved by the USFWS and WDNR for the Mississippi River within Wisconsin. Comments were

positive with exception of concern shared over the many duck season opening dates which occur on river. Kevin Forester of UMWR passed around a paper which listed most of the opener dates to be encountered on the Mississippi River bordering Wisconsin. Ted Engelen stated his hope for greater consistency in future duck opener dates.

- **Collection of Live Bait on Mississippi River -**

Wes Domine emphasized that because an important part of their river heritage has been taken, "Mom & Pop" river sportsmen/women want this issue fixed! River residents are needlessly deprived of the right to tie a minnow trap to their shoreline or dock, and youth can no longer experience bait capturing. Mississippi River anglers and campers often must drive very long distances to acquire bait while minnows swim abundantly past their shores and camp sites. Spring Hearing Question 26 received widespread support across the state. Hearing support was strong despite that Q26 did not mention any exemption for ice anglers. Ice anglers typically do not contaminate unused bait and do not wish to lose the right to retain expensive sucker minnows etc. And bait collection is neither typical nor practical in winter months.

Domine also reiterated that we have people who still collect bait and believes catching them is especially difficult since river residents will not call the TIP Line for someone collecting their own bait. Hence only honest anglers are deprived. Awareness is the only real tool for slowing spread of invasives and the Department continues to do a good job of educating anglers. But the risk of a careless individual transporting bait exists now, as it will if the proposed rule is adopted. There would be no net change to the risk.

Hayes noted increased risk of spreading invasives under current rules whereby transport of purchased live bait (claimed) away from the river is allowed. Summer minnow survival requires additional water exchange causing contamination which increases risk of spreading VHS or other invasives under the current rule. Also, Conservation officers cannot know if bait has been contaminated nor can they know if it was purchased. The proposed change would ease enforcement challenges and simplify current regulation in that no live fish could leave the river.

- **Motion by Domine, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hayes** to *"Clarify the MRC's support for 2011 Spring Hearing Question 26 as written, but also to reiterate support for an added exception to allow retention of purchased bait minnows by ice anglers only."* This request was shared with DNR Fisheries members prior to the Spring Hearing, but was not included in Q26 verbiage. The shared belief being that such revision can be written and enforced by most simplistic method; i.e., either by fishing type (through ice) or by calendar dates.

- **Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.**

## **DNR Reorganization and Mississippi River Programs**

Marc Schultz shared comments regarding the unfortunate elimination of the Mississippi River Team due to reorganization, staff attrition, and budget cuts. The River Team formally included collaborating WDNR biologists, Law Enforcement members, and Planners which provided valuable coordination among different programs as well as work with other state and federal river agencies on river projects issues and policy.

- **Motion by Howe, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Knutson** to "Send a formal letter to CC Chair Rob Bowman and the Executive Council members; stating the importance of the River Team and MRC's support for keeping the River Team in tact."

- **Motion passed.**

## **Item B – Leaning Tree Management to Control Backwater and Side Channel Erosion**

Wes Domine restated (from 2009 MRC meeting) and emphasized to Kevin Forester and Jim Nissen of USFWS that forest management on the UMWR should include some provision for habitat loss prevention/maintenance. Specifically, complete up-rooting of trees with which huge chunks of bank are permanently lost, could be prevented if "shoreline leaners" could be cut when they become close to the point uprooting. These trees are erosion catalysts. The cutting of shoreline leaner trees would:

- keep bank/soil-holding tree roots in place
- Save islands and shorelines that are eroding at facilitated rates due to maturing forests
- Allow sunlight to rejuvenate soil holding grasses and sedges, further holding soils
- Retain critical shoreline root structures habitats for mink, muskrats, snakes, etc.

## **Item C – Keiselhorse Rip-Rap**

Wes Domine shared concerns over the substantial sediment being scoured away below the rapids at Kieselhorse Bay in Pool 5A. The sediment is deposited closely downstream and filling in numerous natural waterways near Merrick State Park. Furthermore, the scouring is close to breaching a natural barrier which would then cause substantial and undesirable changes to present backwater flow. Adding riprap to the area of concern could reduce scouring and downstream silting.

Ron Benjamin shared that the area of concern has been discussed within the DNR and that Jeff Janvrin has been assigned to study the conditions make further recommendations.

#### **Item D – Hydropower Applications to FERC and WCC Letter to FERC**

A letter was sent from CC Chair Rob Bowman to Kimberly Bose, Secretary of FERC, expressing further need to study impacts of new technology hydroelectric systems. Kevin Forester Director of the UMFWR stated that river agencies have begun coordinating comments to assure that conflicting messages are not sent to FERC. USFWS has prepared a 12 page comment letter which is not final yet. When it is ready for public release a copy will be sent to Chairman Schultz. A copy of the letter will then be forwarded to the committee.

#### **Item E - USCOE Final Land Use Allocation Plan**

The USCOE formally adopted and published the Land Use Allocation Plan for the Upper Mississippi River January of 2011. A copy of the completed plan was shown to committee members. Chairman Schultz offered to attempt to obtain copies for committee members. Several members requested a copy if it is available. An online copy is not yet available; however when it is an email with link can be forwarded to members having email.

#### **Item F - Status of EMP Habitat and Stimulus Fund Projects**

Ron Benjamin shared updates on various pools and projects. The projects in Pool 8 will be finishing up this year. New project at Capoli Slough is scheduled to start. The committee is scheduled to tour pool 8 projects tomorrow. Great progress was made on EMP projects because of the federal stimulus funds which caused more projects to be bid and constructed.

#### **Item G - Invasive Species Research Update (USGS)**

Randy Hines of the USGS provided updates on studies relating to control of invasive species and funding issues thereof. Of particular concern are findings that native fish within habitats infested with asian carp have less body fat and lower reproduction rates.

#### **Item H – Update on Act 21 and the Governor’s Charge to the Congress for Regulation Simplification**

Discussion on Act 21 was negative. Concerns were shared regarding added steps to accomplish a rule change, communication difficulty amongst staff, erosion of democratic process through the Conservation Congress, and too much power afforded the governor at expense of knowledgeable biologists and the public.

## **Member Matters**

Marc Schultz encouraged committee members to join a tour Pool 8 the next morning. Completed EMP projects would be viewed and discussed. Boat transportation and information updates for the tour were complements of WDNR, via Ron Benjamin.

Wes Domine expressed concerns to USFW about their closure of highly desired recreational areas (protected sand beaches) otherwise left by the USCOE. As just one example, the sand staging area down river of Fountain City has been in place for many years and was enjoyed by masses of river users. This protected cove with beaches was cherished for recreational value. Protection for moored craft and safe swimming away from currents is highly desired. Suggestion was made for USFWS to reconsider closure of these valuable recreation beach areas. Domine was unaware of any problems created by use of these areas which provide safe boat landings and perhaps prevent drowning incidents.

Ted Engelen emphasized his hope for a consistent state wide duck opener in future years.

Bill Howe expressed concerns over the high capacity well proposed in SW Wisconsin near Copper Creek. The well, and others that may follow, could deplete critically important ground water levels.

Wes Domine asked if others are also observing vast infestations of purple loosestrife along the river. Others agreed to this observation and concern. Blame was thought to be part of a natural cycle of the invasive vs control beetles.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mike Hayes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rick Knutson. Meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM

Respectfully Submitted, Wes Domine – Secretary