



US Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District

Information Paper

B. Institutional Arrangements

Upper Mississippi River System - Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

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Location/Description

The program area comprises the Upper Mississippi River System, as defined by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (WRDA 1986), which includes the Upper Mississippi River from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Cairo, Illinois; the Illinois Waterway from Chicago to Grafton, Illinois; and navigable portions of the Minnesota, St. Croix, Black and Kaskaskia Rivers. This multi-use resource supports an extensive navigation system (made up of 1200 miles of 9 foot channel and 37 lock and dam sites), a diverse ecosystem (2.7 million acres of habitat supporting hundreds of fish and wildlife species), floodplain agriculture, recreation and tourism. Based on the recommendation of the recently completed UMR-IWW System Navigation Feasibility Study that examined system needs over the next 50 years, the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) was implemented to achieve the dual purposes of UMRS ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements. The Institutional Arrangements Program is one of 3 initial NESP programs being implemented under this new UMRS program. The Institutional Arrangements project addresses the needs for organizational collaboration and coordination on the UMRS to support integrated management of this and other UMRS programs.

Problem Statement

The Upper Mississippi River System Navigation Feasibility Report calls for integration of Federal river management activities to achieve a sustainable system. In addition to the dual purpose authority recommended in the feasibility report, the Federal activities suggested that coordination under the sustainability umbrella include operation and maintenance of the 9-foot navigation channel project, the Environmental Management Program (EMP), environmental Continuing Authorities Programs, the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan (pursuant to Section 459 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA of 1999), the FWS Refuge Management, Illinois River basin restoration initiatives (Section 519 of WRDA 2000), U.S. Department of Agriculture programs and other activities.

The existing framework of institutional arrangements needs some modification to enable more integrated, science-driven, inclusive, efficient, and cost-effective management of the UMRS. At the system-wide scale, the present EMPCC attends to the UMRS EMP but not to other aspects of river management.

Current Status

A draft Operational Model for the River Council was presented to the UMRBA,EMPCC, and NECC-ECC. Comments on the latest version were received from members of these organizations and incorporated into documentation. A letter requesting input and buy-in on the general goals for integrating management of UMRS programs from senior leaders in the 3 districts was delivered at the beginning of January and signed off by all districts in April. Revisions of the River Council Operational Model and supporting material will continue through joint efforts of the Corps and FWS with input from the other stakeholders.

Components of institutional arrangements will operate at different levels and scales facilitating integrated, adaptive management and will include the following:

- River teams
- River Council
- Science Panel (*established through contracts with the Corps*)
- Work Groups (*at reach and system levels*)
- Interaction through project delivery teams (*stakeholders, partners, and the public*)

Components of institutional arrangements for connection to high level decision-makers and broader basin management include the following:

- UMRBA (*existing interstate organization*)
- Mississippi River Commission (MRC)
- Federal Principles Group
- Advisory Panel potentially mandated by Congress (*depending on authorizing language*)

Authority

Pending new authority, our current activities supporting UMRS navigation and ecosystem improvements are performed under authority provided by Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-611).