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Minutes State Interagency Missouri River Authority; August 18, 2009

The meeting of the State Interagency Missouri River Authority began with a tour of some beneficial uses of the river around Sioux City. The group (list below) assembled met at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center located along the Missouri River in Sioux City. The group traveled by car caravan to visit a Sioux City boat ramp access point (a key facility to launch power boats onto the river), view the heavily used recreation trail along the river, view the marina, reflect on the Sioux City plane crash at the 232 Memorial, and explore the Dance Pavilion, each located along the Missouri River adjacent to downtown Sioux City. Parks and Recreation Director, Terry Hoffman, and Skip Meisner functioned as guides. The facilities and grounds are beautifully maintained; the facilities along the river front are used extensively with many events held at these facilities. The group then moved to Port Neal Power Plant about ten miles downstream from Sioux City. Dana Ralston, plant manager, functioned as tour guide. At the plant the group was shown the water intake location, the processing of water, the power production mechanisms, and water release points. Excess water that is not used by the plant for cooling is pumped by the plant to Browns Lake to maintain water levels in the lake and discharged into Snyder's Bend wetlands to maintain the habitat; cooling water is discharged back to the river immediately adjacent to the intake point. Low flows in winter (below ~ 12,000 cfs, especially when impacted by ice jams) can cause problems, although cold water generally makes the plant run a bit more efficiently. High (full navigation) flows in summer (~30,000 cfs) allow full function of the plant in spite of warmer water temperatures, but summer flows below ~18,000 cfs require diminished electrical output from the plant.

Following lunch at Bev's on the River, part of a hotel/restaurant/marina complex, the State Interagency Missouri River Authority was called to order at 1:30 PM, August 18, 2009 at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

Authority members present included Amy Christensen, Harold Hommes, Mike Tramontina, and Bernie Hoyer. John Fleig attended for DOT in place of Stan Peterson. Also in attendance for all or portions of the meeting were Dick Vegors, Bill Beecom, and Skip Meisner.....

Mayor Kate Kollars welcomed the group to Sioux City.

Hoyer thanked Skip Meisner for arranging the tour and meeting facilities and functioning as a wonderful host.

Hoyer described the function of the SIMR Authority: advising the Governor on Missouri River Policy matters and determining Iowa's position with regard to votes at MoRAST.

- 1. Minutes from 6/12,2009:** SIMR Authority accepted the draft minutes prepared without discussion.
- 2. Clarification of MoRAST Voting and Payment:** Hoyer noted that Mary Sexton, Chair of MoRAST, wrote Iowa to inform us that if Iowa pays \$12,500 (half of the annual membership fee), Iowa will retain one Director's vote. This will enable us to move towards seeking permission from the Exec. Council to pay for our membership.

**MRRIC Status:** All of Iowa's MRRIC representatives were present, a unique opportunity, so Hoyer inserted into the agenda an opportunity for them to report briefly on MRRIC progress. Al Sturgeon said that the concept behind MRRIC is a good one. MRRIC puts all the various

stakeholders together requiring them to suggest consensus solutions. If that group can find consensus, their ideas deserve serious consideration for management of the Missouri River. He said that it has focused on organizational issues so far. Jim Redmond said that everyone was gaining an education on river issues, and added that as the area was so diverse everyone needs the background. He said finding common ground is hard. Bill Beacom noted that the Committee had found one consensus solution and proposed that because the shovelnose and pallid sturgeon are so similar in appearance, that all taking of these sturgeons be stopped. He said that there is much that can divide, but that they should focus on ecosystem recovery where they are more likely to find common agreement than get into various economic issues. David Sieck said that they were primarily in a 'trust building' phase following 13 years of fighting among interests, especially upper basin states and Missouri and Iowa. He expressed concern about overlapping studies (108, MRERP, and a new study on energy efficiency among transportation system types (barge, truck, rail) that make it difficult for USACE. Skip Meisner and Kevin \_\_\_\_\_, alternates on MRRIC, were also present.

### **3. Missouri River Uses and Priorities for Iowa:**

#### **a. Sioux City Missouri River Technical Group:**

- Skip Meisner introduced their groups' interests which focused on the benefits that the Pick-Sloan plan has provided Sioux City. He specifically suggested five areas: flood protection, navigation, recreation especially power boating and associated recreational activities, water supply, and power generation. He said that the most obvious benefit was flood protection. Sioux City had experienced major flooding prior to the mainstem dams' construction, but none since. He also emphasized the recreation benefits of the high stage, clean water flowing past the city and the resultant power boating on the river. This includes boating and associated fishing, water skiing, swimming, and sand beach picnics and parties.
- Bill Beacom reported that 8 years of drought have not killed navigation. He said that the biggest obstacle to navigation involved uncertainty, including the drought influenced shortened navigation season with reduced flows, but more importantly court orders which disrupted shipping in mid shipping season in 2003 and 2004. He suggested that the new 108 study may benefit navigation as it may allow linking management of the Missouri River to management on the Mississippi which is currently prohibited by the 1944 FCA. He said that business is investigating the shipment of products on the river that are new. He argued against economic discussions because they pit upstream interests against downstream interests.
- Kevin \_\_\_\_\_ suggested that rail rates are still reduced because of the potential of navigation. He noted the energy efficiency of barge shipping, an especially important issue in regard to global warming. He noted that there is interest in shipping wind turbines on barges, and example of potentially moving new products on the river.
- Doug Palmer noted that 'navigation flow' is really 'summer flow', and there are many benefits from that high, clear flow associated with energy production (hydro and power plant cooling). He said there is interest in moving new oversize products on barges, and he reiterated that truck and rail rates are impacted by potential navigation on the river.
- Others noted that asphalt is being proposed for shipment via barge, as well as ethanol.
- Rick Mauck noted that Sioux City has a major investment in maintaining high quality public drinking water. He noted that the flow on the Missouri River had a major

impact on the quality of water and cost to deliver high quality water to customers. He suggested DNR from Des Moines visit with him about this.

- It was suggested that the Master Manual was 13 years in the making and Siouxland can live with it.
- Jim Redmond asked about how ‘nimble’ the barge shipping business was and suggested that barges needed a lead time of 9 months for scheduling. Several said that barges might be scheduled and delivered to Sioux City within 4-6 weeks if appropriate resources are readily available.
- It was suggested that lower flows (<18,000 cfs) in the late summer could kill fish because of temperature increases. Apparently this is reported in prePick-Sloan days.
- It was noted that western Iowa counties were concerned about Missouri River restoration activities of the Corps because of the loss of lands on the tax rolls when the federal government purchases lands for restoration and mitigation purposes.
- There was a major discussion about the value of Iowa participation in MoRAST. Various persons suggested that it was counterproductive for Iowa, and as members Iowa becomes a sham part of MoRAST positions, on for example the desirability of the 108 study. It was suggested that even with the previous Missouri River Basin Association it was a problem. David Sieck suggested the SIMR Authority discuss Missouri River policy with the State of Missouri, and perhaps also Kansas and Nebraska. It was stated the Nebraska might drop out of MoRAST, also. Mike Tramontina suggested that the states need a voice independent of the Corps who has rather broad, unilateral powers with regard to management of the Missouri River.
- The group assembled seemed to be in general agreement that the SIMR Authority needed to develop an Iowa vision for the River so that Iowa may have a stronger voice in River policy and management. (This was reassuring as development of such a vision was the purpose of SIMR Authority meeting in Sioux City, visiting with local people, and seeing some beneficial water uses and the issues surrounding them first hand.)
- Skip Meisner mentioned that the Missouri River Recovery Program has money for restoration and mitigation. Currently they have about \$57 million. They can spend the money on one project, or they can spend it somewhere else. He indicated that the Iowa MRRIC representatives needed more guidance from the SIMR Authority in order to do more good for Iowa. David Sieck supported that view and said they needed more leadership from SIMR Authority and a closer working relationship between SIMR Authority and MRRIC representatives.
- Doug Palmer noted that Nebraska’s Ponca State Park on the River upstream was a wonderful recreation resource, but he questioned the relevance of it to Iowa because we have a channelized stream. Amy Christensen noted that she welcomed the opportunity to see the benefits provided by such a park, and noted that some aspects might be highly relevant to potential Iowa benefits.

- b. **Natural and Recreational Goods and Services Benefits:** Jeff Fields, Manager of Ponca State Park, Ponca, NE described the park, its goals, infrastructure, and programs. The park was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is the third oldest park in Nebraska. It has grown from 200 acres on the bluffs along the river to about 2300 acres, mostly on the floodplain of the Missouri. It has cabins and an education center, but it focuses on the River. It attempts to explain the river environment and its history. The park has 700,000 visitors annually. The park is located at the end of a 59 mile reach of the Missouri River National Recreation River which spans from Gavins Point Dam to the park. It is immediately above a stabilized but not channelized stretch of river down to

near Sioux City. They work in cooperation with the National Park Service, USACE, and USFWS. They have good relations with the town, and for one event, the town of Ponca (population 1000) provides about 350 volunteers for the Ponca Exposition. Visitors come from NE Nebraska, Omaha, Sioux City, and Yankton. They anticipate that with a new bridge that Sioux Falls may provide more visitors. The park attempts to provide an opportunity for visitors to 'experience' the 'more natural' river. They want people to walk along the banks, and visit wetlands and backwaters. For that purpose, they have worked cooperatively to develop a three mile water trail through backwaters and wetlands off the main river channel. The trail has signage to make visitation safer.

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