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# Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee

## Status Report

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David Johnson, ND Member & Terry Fleck, Recreation Member

April 7, 2010

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### **February 2010 Meeting**

The ninth meeting of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (Committee) was held February 2-4 in St. Louis, Missouri. The Committee's agenda is divided into three areas: information sharing, work group reports, and face-to-face work group working sessions. All of the work groups are active and provide significant feedback to the Committee for consideration.

A six-hour video conference meeting was held on March 24 to provide further information on water quality and the US Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) work plan and budget process. This also provided an opportunity for the Committee to evaluate this type of communication for future meetings.

### Information Sharing

Prior to the meeting, participants had the opportunity to attend a field trip that consisted of visits to the Chain of Rocks Bridge, the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, the Mel Price Lock and Dam, and the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and Museum.

Brigadier General John McMahon, the new USACE Commander and Division Engineer, Northwestern Division, expressed his perspectives to the Committee on the Missouri River.

The full range of biological outcomes described in the Missouri River 2000 and 2003 Amended Biological Opinion and the upcoming USACE Annual Report were presented by Mike Olson from the US Fish and Wildlife Service(USFWS) and Mike George from the USACE.

Chance Bitner with the USACE and Tom Bell from the USFWS land acquisition programs presented their criteria for acquiring land and the program goals/objectives they are trying to achieve.

Gary Davis from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) gave an update on the Yellowstone Intake Project. The draft Environmental Assessment has been completed and includes a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

Mr. George presented the current activities of the Recovery Program and explained the budget impact due to the earmarked funding by congress for the Yellowstone Intake Project.

Rob Turner from Oak Ridge Associated Universities, the third party science neutral consultant, gave an overview of what does and does not constitute independent science review.

Dave Herzog, a resource scientist with 20 years at the Missouri Department of Conservation, described the pallid sturgeon recovery efforts on the Mississippi River.

### Missouri River Recovery Program (MRRP) Work Group

The MRRP Work Group presented recommendations to the Committee on an engagement strategy to provide input on the MRRP, which was approved by a process consensus.

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The work group was tasked with 1) implementing the approved engagement strategy, 2) developing tools and timelines to enable the Committee to provide timely input into the USACE work plans and budget, and 3) developing a proposal on an approach to further deliberations on land acquisition issues expressed by some of the Committee members.

Missouri River Ecosystem Recovery Plan Work Group (MRERP)

The MRERP Work Group reported on the activities between meetings that included a review of the focal natural resources and the results of the workshop on cultural, economic, and social values held at the November meeting.

The work group was tasked with 1) developing a recommendation on focal natural resources, 2) coordinating revisions to the November values workshop summary and preparing a transmittal recommendation, and 3) reviewing the purpose and need statement when it becomes available.

Integrated Science Program Work Group (ISP)

The ISP Work Group presented a recommendation that the spring pulse should be the priority for the first science review. The work group was tasked with 1) continued development of a scope of review on the spring pulse and 2) collaborating with the MRRP Work Group to review the adaptive management presentation.

Communications/IT Work Group

The Communications/IT Work Group continues to collaborate with the USACE to develop a communication plan to improve the effectiveness of communication with interested parties in the basin.

Concern was raised about the limited participation from the tribes. The work group was tasked with coordinating with the agencies to address this concern. The Committee chairman, John Thorson, has been coordinating efforts to reach out to the tribes.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee will be held April 27-29, 2010, in Bismarck, North Dakota.

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