
Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee

Status Report

David Johnson, ND Member & Terry Fleck, Recreation Member

October 14, 2009

July 2009 Meeting

The sixth meeting of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (Committee) was held July 21-23, 2009, in Pierre, South Dakota. The agenda continued to focus on Committee organization and information sharing on the recovery program and the ecosystem recovery study. Two substantive recommendation proposals were on the agenda and consensus was reached. One recommendation was on the purpose and need statement for the Missouri River Ecosystem Recovery Plan and the other was a recommendation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to expedite the Similarity of Appearance Notice for public comment on the commercial fishing of the shovel nose sturgeon.

Committee Organization

- The Committee approved membership and scope of work for the continuation of the following work groups:
 - Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP) Work Group
 - Missouri River Recovery Program (MRRP) Work Group
 - Integrated Science Program (ISP) Work Group
 - Communications/Information Technology (IT) Work Group
- The ISP Work Group presented a process to select a neutral third-party firm to manage the independent science review processes that was approved.
- The IT Work Group presented a process to develop the annual report, which includes a self assessment survey that was approved.

Information Sharing

A panel of individuals presented detailed information on the Yellowstone Intake Project and how the project fits into the recovery program and pallid sturgeon recovery. The following individuals gave presentations:

- Background information - George Jordan, USFWS
- Biological underpinnings - Sue Camp, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation); Matthew Jaeger, State of Montana
- Relationship to ongoing biological opinion requirements - Henry Maddux, USFWS; Robin Wankum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)
- Overview of environmental assessment process and results to date - Greg Johnson, Corps; Signe Snortland, Reclamation
- Project stakeholder perspectives - Don Youngbauer, Yellowstone River Conservation District Council; Burt Williams, TNC Yellowstone River Project; Al Thiessen, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Association; Richard Cayko, Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project; Kim Trangmoe, Glendive City Chamber of Commerce

A tour of the region and the Oahe Dam took place.

Missouri River Recovery Program Work Group (MRRP)

The MRRP Work Group reported on efforts conducted since the last meeting and reported that they were gaining knowledge of the 2010 Corps' Work Plan. They recommended that the Committee pass a tentative recommendation to the Corps to prioritize the pallid sturgeon in the 2010 Work Plan and have the Corps report to the Committee what changes would be implemented in the 2010 Work Plan in response to this recommendation. The Committee agreed and reached tentative consensus.

The MRRP Work Group was tasked with working with the Corps to understand the effects of the tentative recommendation to prioritize pallid sturgeon.

Missouri River Ecosystem Recovery Plan Work Group (MRERP)

The Committee tasked the MRERP Work Group with proposing a recommendation on the Purpose and Need Statement at the May 2009 meeting and to seek final consensus in July. A recommendation was presented at the May meeting. After revisions were made, a tentative consensus was reached in May, and final consensus was reached at the July meeting. The Committee recommended that the scope of the study and goals for the recovery program be clearly defined and that the study focus on the following topics:

- Federally listed species
- Natural resources of greater significance to the tribes
- Invasive species
- Sediment and river morphology, including river bed degradation and reservoir deposits
- Water quantity, including demands and future scenarios of droughts and floods
- Water quality, including temperature and chemical composition
- Impacts to existing uses

The next assigned task for the work group is to develop a recommendation on the engagement strategy for the Committee's participation and recommendations on the study. The work group presented a skeleton of an engagement strategy and gathered Committee input. The Committee generally agreed with the approach. The work group was then tasked with refining the engagement strategy for approval at the September Committee meeting.

The Committee also tasked the work group with developing a protocol and selection process for liaisons to the MRERP Technical Committees.

Integrated Science Program Work Group (ISP)

The ISP Work Group presented an interaction strategy recommendation for selection of a third-party science neutral to manage the independent science review process with the Corps; the Committee reached consensus on the recommendation.

The ISP Work Group was tasked with further development of the interaction strategy for the Committee with the independent science review process and to take the lead on compilation of questions related to the Yellowstone Intake to send to the joint lead agencies, Reclamation and the Corps.

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