

## **UPPER MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY PARTINERSHIP DETAILED ANUAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2003– SEPTEMBER, 30, 2004**

The year effectively started with a partnership steering committee meeting held in Lacrosse Wisconsin. The steering committee closely examined the long term goal of the partnership and broke down into activities that would build towards the achievement of the desired goal.

Below are the agreed activities for the period of October 2004-september 2004.

- Identification of federal, state and county agencies with responsibility for the upper Mississippi
- Identification of NGOs and their interest/initiatives regarding the upper Mississippi
- Identification of existing partnerships and their work effort in the upper Mississippi
- Assess resources of the upper Mississippi and assess the capabilities and tools of potential partners
- Meet with individual state partner representatives
- Meet with key decision makers in each state
- Identify and communicate opportunity to state representatives to support the upper Mississippi effort
- Prepare a power point presentation (and possible a poster) for the regional round table workshop.
- Through the round table, gather the stakeholders, recognize potential conflicting values and uses, and promote forestry as a solution.
- Develop or update plan a plan (action plan) to address the issues.
- Identify why the Upper Mississippi partnership is important.
- Initiate implementation of the action plan
- Document success and pursue long term funding for position and initiatives via grants or specific appropriations

Through meetings the agencies below with responsibility for the upper Mississippi were identified:

### **A. FEDERAL AGENCIES**

#### **1) USGS UPPER MIDWEST ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE CENTER**

The US Geological Surveys (USGS) is the Nation's principle earth and biological science Agency. The USGS provides long-term monitoring, integration, and interpretation of data, and scientific research in partnership with state and county Governments, municipal public works departments, sanitation districts, Indian agencies and other federal agencies.

The Upper Midwest Environmental Science center is the field station that takes care of USGS activities in Wisconsin, Minnesota Iowa, Illinois and Missouri, Indiana is taken care of through agreements with cooperators.

The mission of the Long Term Resource Monitoring Program is to provide decision-makers with the information needed to maintain the Upper Mississippi River System as a viable multiple-use large river ecosystem. The long-term goals of the Program are to understand the system, determine resource trends and impacts, develop management alternatives, manage information, and develop useful products.

## **2) REGION 3 MIDWEST US FISH AND WILD LIFE**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats or the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System that encompasses more than 520 national wildlife refuges thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas nationwide. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological service field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. The Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The Region manages 1.2 million acres in refuge land and water on 46 national wildlife refuges and 9 wetland management districts, including more than 240,000 acres in waterfowl production areas. The region also manages 6 national fish hatcheries, 9 fisheries stations, 10 ecological service field offices, and 18 law enforcement field offices.

## **3) The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a major Army command with a broad set of missions and capabilities. The Corps is subdivided into divisions and then districts. The St. Paul District covers an area of approximately 139,000 square miles. Our borders follow the edges of five river basins. This area includes most of Minnesota, the western half of Wisconsin, the northeastern half of North Dakota, and small portions of South Dakota and northern Iowa. The St. Paul District is one of six Corps districts that make up the Mississippi Valley Division. The St. Paul District is responsible for:

- Supporting inland navigation by operating 13 locks and dams and by maintaining the Nine-Foot Navigation Channel.

- Helping local communities reduce damages caused by flooding.
- Issuing permits for work in wetlands and navigable rivers.
- Operating 16 reservoirs for flood damage reduction, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat and water supply.
- Environmental restoration programs to improve fish and wildlife habitat.
- Emergency response operations following natural disasters.

Recreation activities at Corps facilities including campgrounds, day-use areas, boat ramps and swimming beaches.

In granting or denying permits to developers, the Corps strives to prevent environmental damage. Evaluating public interest, regulatory experts balance the needs of economic development with the environmental considerations. The Corps forms numerous partnerships with other agencies, state and federal governments, environmental groups and private citizens to help solve ecological problems.

The Corps of Engineers' Environmental Management Program (EMP) has studies and projects located in the Upper Mississippi River system north of Cairo, Illinois. The system includes the Illinois River. The EMP is intended to ensure the coordinated development and enhancement of the Upper Mississippi River system, with primary emphasis on habitat rehabilitation and enhancement projects and long-term resource monitoring.

#### **4) The Natural Resources Conservation Service**

NRCS puts nearly 70 years of experience to work in assisting owners of America's private land with conserving their soil, water, and other natural resources. Local, state and federal agencies and policy makers also rely on our expertise. They deliver technical assistance based on sound science and suited to a customer's specific needs. Cost shares and financial incentives are available in some cases. Most work is done with local partners.

The Mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is to provide leadership in a partnership effort and to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. And their vision is Vision Harmony between people and the land.

### **A.FEDERAL AGENCIES**

#### **5.Farm Service Agency**

The missions of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is to; stabilize farm income, help farmers conserve land and water resources

provide credit to new or disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and to help farm operations recover from the effects of disaster.

This is a system under which Federal farm programs are administered locally. Farmers who are eligible to participate in these programs elect a three- to five-person county committee, which reviews county office operations and makes decisions on how to apply the programs. This grassroots approach gives farmers a much-needed say in how Federal actions affect their communities and their individual operations. NRCS provides the technical Support need by the farmers.

### **6.Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

FEMA's mission is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages Citizen Corps, the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

In the Upper Mississippi FEMA is involved in Mapping out flood plain risk areas.

### **7.Department of Transportation DOT**

The mission of DOT is to serve the United States by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today and into the future.

The interest of DOT in the upper Mississippi River Basin is the bridges, Railroads, and navigation in the river.

### **8.THE USDA FOREST SERVICE**

The Forest Service is a Federal agency that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry. The Forest service team works together to " Provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run." The forest service is divided into three branches; State and Private forests, National forest systems and Forest research.

## **B. State Agencies**

The responsibility for the upper Mississippi in the partner states rests with the following state agencies:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota DNR, Iowa DNR, Indiana DNR, Illinois DNR, Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri

DNR. These agencies are equipped with tools and resources for protection, planning, regulation, and provision of incentives, training and to linkage with other partners.

### **C. County Agencies**

#### **1) Soil and Water Conservation Districts.**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's) are subdivisions of State Government, but private citizens operate them. They generally correspond to county boundaries, although there are a few exceptions. SWCD's establish local priorities for conservation efforts. Emphasis is on agriculture and forestry. SWCD's hold workshops, set up demonstrations, offer educational programs, review development plans, and set priorities for one-on-one technical assistance, at the request of landowners.

#### **2) Watershed District.**

These were established by public law 566 to provide assistance for constructing flood control structures; watershed districts have the right to tax the benefiting landowners in Minnesota.

The watershed district is a county agency headed by a watershed district manager.

Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts provides educational opportunities, information and training for watershed district managers and staff through yearly tours, meetings and quarterly newsletters.

### **Identification of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and their interest/initiatives regarding the upper Mississippi**

#### **1.The Nature Conservancy**

The NTC was formed 1951, they have been working with communities, businesses and citizens to protect more than 117 million acres around the world.

The Mission of the NTC is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

The NTC work closely with communities, businesses and citizen.

They have a science-based plan that achieves tangible results.

And use a non-confrontational approach.

#### **2.Audubon Society**

Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biodiversity.

Their national network of community-based nature centers and chapters,

scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences

By the end of the quarter information on NGOs had started to come in on Ducks Unlimited, Quills Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the Farm Bureau, and the different producer groups like the Pork Producers and Soya Producers. Work on the identification of NGOs and their interest has just begun and is continuing according to the work plan.

### **Identification of existing partnerships and their work effort in the upper Mississippi**

#### **1) BALMM (Basin Alliance For the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota)**

A partnership in Minnesota that was created to coordinate efforts to protect and improve water quality in the lower Mississippi River basin in Minnesota. Alliance members include SWCD district managers, county water planners, state and federal agencies working through this informal Ad-hoc alliance.

#### **2) The Tri-State meeting**

This is a forum created by three states forestry agencies namely Minnesota Wisconsin and Iowa. The tri-state meeting meets annually to share new experience and lessons learned on primarily forestry issues.

#### **3) Sustainable Forestry Roundtable**

Through the sustainable forestry round table workshop scheduled for March 23-24, 2004 fact sheets are being developed that feature sustainable forestry criteria and indicators specific to the upper Mississippi. This round table will provide base line information for this initiative.

USGS has a lot of geographical spatial data collected on the upper Mississippi. However, before I am allowed to start utilizing this database I have to enhance personal GIS skills. I am working Kevin Hop and John Nelson of the USGS GIS unit of USGS.

### **Progress on meeting with individual state partner representatives**

Meetings with individual partner state representatives of Illinois Missouri Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa and Wisconsin have been successful. The preliminary field visits were a step forwards toward understanding the various linkages and

partnerships with in each state in upper Mississippi watershed. These are also opportunities to communicate key messages of the partnership. The idea of a multi-state

### **The round table**

The Forestry Partnership hosted the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership Sustainable Forest Regional Roundtable on March 23-24, 2004 in La Crosse, WI. The Roundtable gathered information from participants on the ability of the seven sustainable forest management criteria and Indicators to measure the sustainability of the Upper Mississippi River Watershed forests. Hosting the Roundtable also introduced the Forestry Partnership to a broad spectrum of forestry agencies, organizations, and landowners.

A power point and a poster were prepared and presented at the round table. The coordinator worked with USDA S&PF, the Great Lakes Forest Alliance to developed fact sheets for the round table featuring resources of the upper Mississippi using the Montreal process criteria and indicators. The draft document is being put together by the Great Lakes Forest Alliance and will be shared on the upper Mississippi forestry partnership web site.

### **Issues That Need Attention:**

#### **1) State of forestry in the watershed**

- Landscape has been greatly modified through the land use changes, mainly conversion to agriculture and human settlement as a result the forests strips left along the river and its tributaries are narrow with reduced hydrological function. These forests are about 20 feet wide or less in some areas these trees are collapsing into the water channel.
- It is desirable to increase the residence time of water on the land possibly requiring the sign up establishment of riparian areas and retention ditches.
- To increase the infiltration of water on the land and therefore reduce the rate of overland flow at which it approaches the water channels is desirable to prevent erosion.
- The continuous flooding has also greatly affected regeneration leading to the silver maple dominance in bottomland forest types and also the seeds which germinate don't have the opportunity to grow into mature trees.

#### **2) Cost of projects**

-Much as the project is interesting, timely and necessary for the Mississippi river, however the cost of implementing the projects, such as the establishment of riparian areas is too high for state level budgets. Partners have strongly

proposed that this issue be included in the Farm Bill 2005-2010 and attracting more funding partners like the EPA.

### **3) Structure of the partnership**

- The partnership is 4 months old and still in its formative stages. Partners are discussing the formalization of the partnership through the signing of a memorandum of understanding and the election of leaders for the steering committees.

### **4) Personnel Issues**

The states I have visited welcomed the project but raise concerns regarding the cost, especially now with the economy not doing well. Most states are cutting down their budgets and re-evaluating their priorities. As a result, state level personnel have not been readily available because of the volume of work they have to accomplish. State representatives have therefore proposed the appointment of state level coordinators/watershed foresters to take responsibility for this specific activity. We will need to work together to raise the resources to support these positions.

### **5) Baseline Data**

It is important for us to know where we are starting. The upcoming regional round table is very timely and will feature the Montreal process C&I and will produce fact sheets for the upper Mississippi; providing important baseline data.

### **Opportunities and Observations:** 1) BALLM(in Minnesota) and Illinois 2020(in Illinois)

These have provided a forum for state level agencies to discuss issues at basin level. BALLM in Minnesota and the creation of similar forums would go a long way towards providing opportunities for discussing mitigation activities.

- Federal programs – CRP has played a great role and leaned more towards agriculture and are weak in addressing forestry issues. There is a need for the forestry partnership to meet with FSA and discuss the strengthening of forestry in FSA programs.
- Federal partners –USGS are generating plenty of scientific information on the Mississippi. However, additional information is needed beyond the flood plain.
- States are at different levels in the development of resources, such as forestry best management practices for water quality and the states that are lagging behind in this aspect need help through sharing experience.
- Collaborations: in the past state agencies have worked in isolation. However, collaboration would help mitigate resource shortages resulting from financial constraints.

