Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership Stakeholders Meeting
February 28-March 1, 2006

Bottomland Hardwood Regeneration Discussion Group
Strength and Opportunities

- strong ties to several communities enable us to collaboratively address research questions posed by management agencies
- work with NGO's has no jurisdictional boundaries
- public interest
- interagency interest
- importance of bottomland in water holding and water quality
- LIDAR information is being collected by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), county governments, and others and will provide valuable topo data for mgmt.
- NESP program (ACE), if authorized, will bring significant funding potential for research, management, and partnership
- Corps operation and maintenance program for environmental stewardship is already addressing mgmt. issues on ACE fee lands
- partnership between river agencies, academia, conservation groups have already been established to address mgmt. issues at smaller scales and would serve as good exp. for partnership
- NRCS cost-share programs and networks
- due to shortage of seedlings, IL developed a Direct Seeding Handbook and a website where landowners could buy seeds from local collectors
- most if not all of the direct seeding has been in riparian areas
- need for beneficial tax laws and info. on weed control
- new forestry association (IL Forestry Association) is being formed. Mission is to promote forestry-urban, community, rural. Reach large diverse groups within IL-education opportunities.
- DAI-Driftless Area Initiative
- research in Root Pruning Method seedlings
- ACE restoration plans
- Midwest Invasive Plant Network-reed canary grass
- INHA-??
- Blufflands Alliance
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- concentrate on specific areas with all resources and expertise available rather than many projects—choose 2 distinct bottomland ecosystems
- data and papers from various entities from forest and plant surveys-compile all to have a good understanding of each area
- agencies such as Corp may contribute in selected areas to contribute to bottomlands predamn and flood control cycles
- local field offices (every county) provide technical assistance to private landowners dealing with planning and tree planting

- federal cost share programs such as WHIP, CRP, WRP, and EQUIP provide financial assistance to landowners to plant trees and shrubs and to restore wetland communities
- the NRCS field office technical guide (FOTG) is available on-line for landowners to access our technical information and guidelines
- recreational uses are increasing the market value of BLH
- problem—altered hydrology work against healthy BLH systems and reforestation efforts
- problem-crop subsidies and insurance work against restoration
- need for enough plant material to meet regeneration efforts that are-genetically adapted to the region and of sufficient morphological and physiological quality to survive and grow when planted on appropriate sites with adequate care
- need to develop regional lists for appropriate species for bottomland regeneration and establish seed source guidelines for movement of seed
- research underway in process of getting funding for three projects—Reed Canary Grass RCG) risk assessment, size/shape analysis, successional model
- UMN interest in RCG Joe Z.? and Sue Galatonich?
- very large area of opportunity for study
- motivated agencies with funding
- broad array or challenges to be met
- strength of the existing knowledge base at best mgmt. and the opp. to collaborate with partnership to combine/publish and acknowledge knowledge gaps and address from research
- state owned land and private lands may be available for demo/experiment along the Wisconsin River
- WI state nurseries are able to grow large quantities of bottomland hardwood species if demand is made clear to them
- DNR's-good relationships and networks with landowners sharing technical information on forest mgmt.
- bottomland forest regen. and ecology research projects are actually taking place in the lower Miss. but are applicable to the lower Upper Miss. area
- use Miss. River Environmental Pool plans as a guide for restoration
- focus on the bottom third of the tributary to the Miss. River for bottomland mgmt. and regeneration
- many bottomland forests are not regenerating but are being replaced with reed canary grass after harvest
- main river bottomland forests are in danger of perhaps disappearing in the next 50 years because of the lack of elevational diversity on most island areas. This is a result of closing of the lock and damn and change in the hydrologic cycle (no longer do we have low mid-summer water levels) and the stabilization of the water levels resulting in a shallow rooting zone.

Issues – Actions for Next Three Years

Bottomlands defined: A diverse forest ecosystem within the floodplain of a water body that is historically inundated

1) PR/advertising campaign to raise public awareness of the Mississippi River
2) Prioritize/target desired species for bottomland regeneration based on an index derived from latitudinal, elevation, hydrological & soil suitability gradients (basin wide)
3) Get the agricultural community involved, reach out to farm groups
4) Regional (multi-state) standards for hardwood and shrub species acceptable by all natural resources agencies and organizations
5) Develop species-site guidelines for bottomland hardwoods
6) Organize "big river" – "streamside" issues
7) Develop a point of contact in the partnership as a recognize source of information on bottomland hardwoods for the watershed
8) Reach out to agencies and the public on the importance of bottomland hardwoods and their conservation and management
9) Develop a list of expertise on bottomland hardwood regeneration
10) Identify areas to use as demonstration sites and start preparing for restoration projects.
11) Identify what we really want, can realistically accomplish, with altered ecosystems.
12) LIDAR data collected by ACE for 2 foot topo. Contours of Illinois River and Middle Mississippi River Floodplain.
13) Network of state nurseries along the Upper Mississippi River to raise seedlings of different ages/species and try experimental planting north to south of the river.
14) Try out gap of altered sizes to release the otherwise suppressed trees.
15)Government agencies need to stop promoting upland practices that degrade bottomlands (Farm Bill).
16) Research consolidation – literary search
17) Site visit by foresters and natural resource professionals of different agencies.
18) Partnership should expand audience – Hydrologist, fisheries, etc.
19) Existing and on going research needs should be funded. These questions should be answered before we can fully address the regeneration issue.
20) List of species by area.
21) Ranges of wild seeds could be collected by area.
22) Weed management techniques.
23) Target priority areas.
24) Do we know what has worked and not worked.
25) Review past projects.
26) Compile what we know now.
27) Corps forestry staff could expand technical outreach on practical management application by inviting other interested partners/landowners to our annual coordination meetings (Info. Exchange)
28) Partners could support authorization of NESP to provide more ecosystem funding for Upper Mississippi River System.
29) UM partnership could utilize the results from the 2005 Mississippi River Forest Research Workshop to help prioritize research opportunities.

30) Annual tour of bottomland regeneration techniques & nurseries.

Gaps in Information on Bottomland System Management

Strategy	Partners	Resources	Timeline	Commitments
Working group develops criteria for reference sites	COE, USFWS, NRCS, Land Trusts, States, Tribes, TNC, USFS, USGS, Universities, NGOs, RC&Ds	ECS info, UMESC analysis, risk assessment analysis (reed canary grass, MN/WI), existing plans, financial resources from Foundations, lit review	Identify Lead by 6/06 Organize W.G. by 9/06 Develop Criteria by 6/07	MNDNR-Ecoservices, COE, BIA, States, USFS NRS?, TNC?, NGRREC
Develop a list of reference sites of bottomland sites – variety of scenarios	COE, USFWS, NRCS, Land Trusts, States, Tribes, TNC, USFS, Local Communities	WRP sites, easements, hunting clubs, refuges	By 6/08	States, COE, USFS, BIA, USFWS?, TNC?, WRP sites, DU, American Land Conserv.?
Develop a complete list of forest composition in bottomland systems Overstory & Understory	COE, USFWS, NRCS, Land Trusts, States, Tribes, TNC, USFS, USGS, Universities, NGOs, RC&Ds	FIA data, COE CFI plots, Heritage data, GLO (historic data), existing ECS info	Start ASAP for existing data, Complete by 12/07	UMESC?, MDC?, FIA?, Universities, NGRREC interns, College of Menominee? Need $$

Strategy	Partners	Resources	Timeline	Commitments
Develop standards for plant material	NRCS, States, COE, Nurserymen (State/Private), USFS, USFWS, Univ.	Existing standards, Existing research	Establish Working Group by 10/06 Summarize Existing Info by 6/07 Develop Standards by 6/08	Lead – Ron Overton, NRCS Elsberry PMC (Jerry Kaiser), Greg Hoss (MO), State Nursery folks, Purdue (Grad Student)
Update USFS E/A/C Mgt. Guidelines Expand to Bottomland Hdwds. In General?	USFS, COE, USFWS, NRCS, Land Trusts, States, Tribes, TNC, USGS, Universities, NGOs, RC&Ds	ECS Field Guides, Existing research & standards	By 12/09	USFS? (Prouty?)
Establish New Demonstration Sites, May Contribute to New Reference Sites			2010 →	

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Conservation of Priority Forest Discussion Group

QUESTION #1-current strengths and opportunities

- Get arms around all Priority Area and associated OBJECTIVES…Map them, assess relationship to UMFP, move forward.

- Investigate opportunities to utilize Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) as a means to intensify development in some areas while simultaneously protecting critical open space and other areas.

- Develop Upper Mississippi River watershed basin "green infrastructure opportunity assessment" that can be included and refined in state, regional and local planning efforts and implemented through targeted/ focused activities (by using the spatial analysis efforts).

- Use creative zoning techniques like clustering to preserve remaining forested areas in new housing developments.

- Need strong political leadership and will to support conservation at all levels of government.

- Isolation of priority sites through advanced spatial techniques and incorporation of expanding regional data. (opportunity)

- Provide financial incentives and tax breaks for (permanent) land protection so that interested landowners aren't squeezed out by high property taxes and assessments or loss of their nest egg. (some alternatives to fee title and conservation easement acquisition)

- Determine which NGOs and agencies with the states have a role in UP MS forest conservation; articulate that role; share the information re: program availability, cost sharing/ incentives.

- World Trade Organization pressures on 2007 Farm Bill and potential $ incentives for land uses other than row crops, e.g. forests.

- Use data and its analysis as basis to apply sound criteria and thereby set priorities for action on the ground.

- Plenty of technical expertise.

- An organized system to reach landowners is already in place.

- Common objective by many entities to make it happen for forestry and other disciplines.

- Utilize existing organizations who already work one on one with landowners to disseminate information and help start dialog about forest management.

- Priority areas have been well defined in much of the UMRB

- Opportunities to preserve or restore priority forest areas are dwindling as lands become developed as urban or commercial. Opportunities to tie up ag lands before they are developed through easements, programs, and acquisition currently exist through fed, state, and NGO. These programs need to be used for willing landowners.

- The states have a strong existing program to deliver landowner services. We should continue to refine our delivery of these services.

- Diversity of upper MS forest partnership can bring different ideas and tools to reach forest landowners and have them to sustain their forests.

- View the shift in landowners as an opportunity to reach new, interested parties that may be more willing to conserve forest traits.

Issues – Actions for Next Three Years

QUESTION #2

1. The activities that constitute "conservation of priority forest areas" needs to be prioritized, i.e. landowner/forest owner contacted. Stewardship activities, conservation easements, acquisitions.

2. Identify the criteria, define and map areas and implement on the ground activity. Work on developing a handbook on who is currently doing what management and research in the area and what they have planned so we can better leverage funds. Could provide a "google" by topic or HUC.

3. Need to be SOS – Strategic, Opportunistic, and Science-based.

4. Continue and strengthen the partnerships to pool resources expertise knowledge, share data, access to key organizations and individuals in addressing common priority issues. Possibly start a list serve.

5. Need clean objectives and criteria for what constitutes a priority forest area.

6. Further clarify and refine role of Upper Miss Partnership--should it be to provide grants to to projects, a one-stop shop for data and information? Don't let it be too broad-focused.

7. Get everyone (all interested organizations) to the table and cultivate champions in every state. Preferably representing: citizens, businesses, NGOs and elected officials.

8. Develop a forest green infrastructure map which identifies a network of forest lands of state, multi-state and national significance which provide for multiple benefits including water, wildlife, economic and social factors. (This goes beyond UMFP work – but could be framework, for many different partnerships)

9. Wage a huge public campaign to be sure people in the targeted areas know what's happening and why. Gain the political will to get the job done.

10. Join up with Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee

11. Finish mapping the Regional Assessment. – Establish criteria for UMFP priority areas; map these areas; QUANTIFY. THEN→ IN the priority areas: UMFP work with all appropriate resources (NGOs, agencies at all levels); quantify needs and potential opportunity to address needs (agencies, NGO resources); develop an action plan to IMPLEMENT activities to address needs.

12. Work as a partnership to influence direction of '07 Farm Bill (increase focus on environmental services)

13. Gather efforts together. Currently land purchases and easement purchases are scattered and insignificant which results in little political strength. (Too scattered and unfocused currently)

14. Focus efforts for measurable H2O quality results (using proxy metrics) and advertise the heck out of it.

15. Assess strengths of all partners and assign roles based on these strengths and to minimize redundancy and gaps

16. ID and evaluate the full range of tools available for conservation (e.g. cost-sharing, conservation easements, tech asst, planning etc.)

17. Improve partner and public participation and communication.

18. Develop model projects of ecosystem services.

19. Identify 3 to 5 priority watersheds and focus partners, resources to help landowners sustainably manage their forestland and increase forested areas.

20. Development of systemic model to identify priority areas first identifying desired condition. What do we want the landscape to look like, where are the weaknesses, or high value areas, and how do we restore or protect these areas.

21. Facilitate coordination of multiple agencies and organizations to maximize limited funds. Avoid duplication of efforts.

22. If ag practices are the main contributor to water quality, there must be some positive dialogue on how to use forestry and BMPs to protect surface and subsurface water in a manner that is mutually agreeable.

23. Oak regeneration in the Driftless Area—the demand for oak has many forests being high-graded but the canopy is not being reduced sufficiently to regenerate oak. This is changing forest composition throughout the Driftless Area.

Upper Mississippi River OASIS: Partnership Collaborative				
Strategy	**Partners**	**Resources**	**Timeline**	**Commitments**
Research other open accessible space information system (OASIS) websites and develop scope of services for an RFP.	**UMFP Coordinator or FS watershed Liaison with input from Tech Advisory Committee**	**Staff-time**	**Within one year**	**Assess this task within other work assignments of coordinator or liaison**
Develop UMR-OASIS website	**Contractor with oversight by tech advisory committee and input from UMFP**	**Funding for:** • **contractor** • **Server** **Data library from all identified partner data sources**	**Two years after contract is executed**	**Steering Committee will work together to find funding.**
Maintain website over time, updating with latest information on an on-going basis.	**Regional entity such as NGO or university**	**Don't know! TBD**	**Forever or until the Upper Mississippi River runs clean!**	**TBD**

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Migratory Bird Habitat Regeneration Discussion Group
Strength and Opportunities

- Interest in watchable wildlife,opportunity for natural resources based economic development that increases habitat
- Data, resources and interest is abundant
- Information compiled for Important Bird Areas
- Organizations on mainstem, programs and potential funding combine to provide increased opportunities for monitoring and habitat work
- Migratory birds capture the imagination making them very marketable
- Conservation efforts can create jobs and money (expand user groups)
- Several different agencies own and protect large blocks of land that include critical bird habitat—if they could learn more about the status of bird species of concern and forest management, they could have a big impact collectively
- Bird migratory corridors along rivers in IL are outlined by forest cover maps, provides an opportunity to reverse their narrowing and decline
- A 'fairly good' forest resource base
- Loss of transitional areas, increase in riparian areas near cultivated areas provides opportunity for awareness and increased transitional areas
- Increase GIS data/models and bird count data
- Increase Partnerships working to assess and implement
- Increase coordination
- Partners that once focused on waterfowl are expanding to include 'all bird conservation'
- Focus on NRCS and SWCD offices with forest important interests
- Increased interest in land trusts, LCV data, modeling capabilities
- Increased interest in inter-related, multi end point management interests
- Increasing number of private landowners willing to commit resources
- Increasing interest from FS to meet landowner needs for lower impact harvesting
- Increased flyway species, diversity, knowledge and habitat need
- Increased GIS and research, provides opportunity for change in legislation—local, state, and federal
- Bird conservation regional planning documents are done for CHBCR/MMR --partnership coordination has planning goals for wildlife, state wildlife plans, National Forest plans etc.
- Increased private landowner interests in wildlife, opportunity to educate
- Increased emphasis on creating and expanding partnerships, creates and expands habitat
- Regional Environmental Learning Center's, nature centers, EE programs provide venues to demo sustainable forestry with focus on wildlife habitat
- Increase number of people in central MN are interested in volunteer to help plant and manage forest habitats

Issues – Actions for Next Three Years

- focus on private forest landowners who own the habitat, more species of birds depend on it
- direct funds to on the ground projects to increase or improve habitat-use citizen groups, plans, locals
- ID the missing links needed to connect existing critical forest habitat blocks and focus efforts there for connectivity
- make sure forestry plays a bigger part in the Farm Bill debate
- find funding to ID, protect and manage migratory bird habitat and educate the public about the need
- compile communication among players and get them to agree on forest objectives and work together
- implement appropriate conservation measures on areas inhabited by birds of highest concern
- get people of all agencies knowledgeable of all the tools—educate professionals
- develop a tax incentive program to encourage natural community restoration
- continue red shouldered hawk inventories to determine best forest mgmt. practices for many species
- coordinate forums to bring wildlife and forest managers together to address bird habitat needs, involve public
- address changing landowner demographic
- get good curriculum into forestry schools and field sites to educate the next/impending generation of foresters
- establish a vision for the area that is reasonable
- ID and map specific priority sites for habitat restoration
- develop web mapping servers and internet resources to create template management plans
- concentrate on large-scale connectivity-research the number of birds using migratory corridors and determine what kind of linear corridor gaps are significant
- promote and fund TSI for wildlife on private lands
- educate the public on the value of NMB (neo migratory birds?) in basin
- create good habitat materials for landowners
- expand this partnership-share research-learn
- UMFP-ID projects and implement
- certify all state, county, federal lands to FSC standards with bird habitat a major priority

Strategy	Partners	Resources	Timeline	Commitments
Identify - then build connectivity between existing critical bird habitat blocks by directing funds to on the ground private lands projects that restore protect and manage.	Different partners will participate in different stages of this strategy. Private Landowners, Land Trust, RC & D's, DAI, NGO's, NRCS, Forest Service, USFWS, Audubon, USGS, State DNR's, SWCD's, COE	Existing information, ongoing research, GIS capabilities, existing IBA's etc. Demonstration project partners, Biologists and Private Land Staff, Partners Ready to Implement	Coarse Filter will be completed by April, State Wildlife Plans by July. Then fine filters to include above plus IBA, BCA & other models already available will be incorporated by September (other IBA work continues.) Distribute to partners between September and October. Begin using information by October 1st.	**US Army Corp** - Will provide existing avian and land cover information as needed. **Audubon UMR** - help ID important areas. **Iowa DNR**- Will disperse information to landowner and land managers through DNR publication available to all. **Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development** will distribute information to SWCD's, forestry groups etc. **Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation** will work with landowner in identified areas **Great River Greening (MN)** work to identify landowner and assist landowner with habitat restoration (if there are funds) **Blufflands Alliance** will work to increase collaboration to ensure a unified message **Middle Mississipppi River Partnership** will direct outreach to private landowners in focus areas and work with NRCS to reach private landowners

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Riparian Buffer Discussion Group

Issues – Actions for Next Three Years

Government Programs

Improvements to existing programs

- Include managed forests in "working lands" for CSP (8)
- Have conservation programs be competitive with rental rates (7)
- Include a buffer component in all programs, not just CRP or CSP to take advantage of the resources presented by agriculture subsidies (2)
- To be eligible for buffer "credits", tiles need to be removed (2)
- Use EQUIP for tree-based practices (1)

Analysis of programs

- Complete analysis of barriers in how states' administer agriculture programs (6)
- ID solutions to issue other than CSP (3)
- Assess federal commodity programs and conservation budget (1)
- Identify small changes that can occur in program administration at state and local levels that typically discourage buffer installation – places where people stumble on program interpretation

Other opportunities

- Continue CRP and CSP in Farm Bill – fully fund if possible (1)
- Get involved in local/county-level decision-making, such as EQUIP ranking formula (1)

Mapping

Priorities

- Complete "Hot Spot" mapping & tie into FWS mapping (6)
- Find areas of contribution – are there "hot spots" to focus on or is issue spread evenly over UMR? (1)
- Identify watersheds (8-digit HUCs) that need buffers to help focus work (1)
- Focus on large-scale demonstration projects – dramatically altered landscapes will show dramatic results (1)

Document effects of riparian buffers

- Include forested buffers in FIA and NRI (1)

Collaboration

- Be active on state technical committees (6)
- Utilize non-profits – they have a strong base of constituent with a broad range of interests (5)

- Have each state establish a riparian buffer committee to have agencies and other partners talk to one another on riparian buffer issues and complete barriers analysis (3)
- Bring together non-profits, different levels of government agencies and people that may not traditionally work together (3)

Emerging Markets

- Develop a nutrient-credit market (2)
- Need to integrate with bio-based futures like bio-fuels to help improve economics for landowners (1)

Tools/Education

- Utilize tools to obtain landowner buy-in for buffers and provide accurate economic analysis of the true cost of buffers, like Agroforestry Center's Buffer$ and web-site , GIS Suitability analysis, buffer conservation design, simulation exercises (5)
- Work with teachers to build conservation interest (3)
- Match the tool/practice to watershed needs – don't rely on just one practice/tool (2)
- Put trees and grasses in right places for right reasons - in some places a riparian buffer of native grasses would be more appropriate than a forested buffer (2)

Messages and Audiences

- Target audience and their needs – focus on people who can champion issue and people who implement practices. Need to prioritize big picture messages (4)

Strategy	Partners	Resources	Timeline	Actions	Commitments
Establish a UMFP Riparian Buffer Implementation Team	NACD, Mid-west SF, TNC, Trees Forever, RC&Ds Boards, TU, DU, NWTF, PF	National, State, Local (NACD Forestry sub-comm., NASF Water Res. comm., Bluff Lands Alliance, TNC, LSU & Gulf contacts, UMR Basin Assoc., F&W partners, DU, TU, State SWCD Assoc., Trees Forever, USDA FS, NRCS, US Fish & Wildlife)	Team formed 3/1/06 Compilation of existing recommendations provided by 4/30/06 Draft recommendations reviewed by Team by 6/1/06	ID future Farm Bill program issues and barriers and provide recommendations Compile existing recommendations Compile a list of Tools for landowners Draft recommendations Submit recommendations to resources and partners	Al Todd will coordinate compilation of existing recommendations and disseminate to Team UMFP Riparian Buffer Implementation Team
ID existing program issues and barriers and provide recommendations	NACD, Mid-west SF, TNC, Trees Forever, RC&Ds Boards, TU, DU, NWTF, PF	State technical committees (NRCS, FSA) and local technical committees, Pete Nowak?, Bear Creek researchers, PF	May 1, 2006 June 1, 2006 Sept 1, 2006	Survey conservation field staff Compile survey results Provide recommendations to State Tech Committee and Program mgrs	State Foresters, Trees Forever, Partners for Wildlife, State SWCDs, RC&Ds
Investigate the establishment of a state Riparian Buffer Implementation Team / Sub-committee (state by state)	NACD, Mid-west SF, TNC, Trees Forever, RC&Ds Boards, TU, DU, NWTF, PF	NRCS, FSA,	May 1, 2006 April 1, 2006	Talk with NRCS State conservationist Develop project ideas and proposals Seek funding	State Foresters, Trees Forever, Partners for Wildlife, State SWCDs, RC&Ds