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Interstate Council on Water Policy Summary of Board Meeting October 25th – 27th 2022 | Davenport, Iowa

Oct 25th Field Tour to Beaver Island

Unfortunately due to inclement weather, the in-person field tour to the Beaver Island Habitat Rehabilitation and Restoration project was cancelled. Instead, Kirk Hansen of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Kara Mitvalsky with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Rock Island District provided a “virtual tour” of the project with plenty of pictures, facts and discussion from the comfort of the Blackhawk Hotel meeting room.

Supplemental materials: See “Beaver Island Placemat” flyer prepared by USACE Rock Island District via this link to the [presentations folder](#).

October 26th and 27th Plenary:

The day started with introductions led by ICWP Chair Andrew Dehoff, Immediate Past Chair and Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) Executive Director Kirsten Wallace, and ICWP Executive Director Beth Callaway. We were pleased to kick things off with a warm welcome to the Quad Cities area by City of Bettendorf Mayor Bob Gallagher who highlighted the area’s accomplishments around drought planning and a recent award of \$500M in resiliency revolving loan fund to facilitate work between the cities in the area and beyond.

Supplemental materials: See [link to presentations folder](#).

Panel #1 -- Regional Highlights of the Upper Mississippi River Basin (Kirsten Wallace, Moderator)

“Illinois River Basin Updates” – Jim Duncker, Central Midwest Water Science Center, USGS

- Overview of USGS Next Generation Water Observation System (NGWOS), National Water information System (NWIS), and rollout of other programs in the basin.
- Priority issues are nutrient loading, upgrades in gages and instrumentation, conducting continuous water quality surveys and non-riverine urban flooding issues.

“Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program and Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law” – Andrew Goodall, USACE Navigation and Ecosystem and Sustainability Program Regional Program Manager

- Overview of the USACE Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) vision which is long term sustainable ecosystem and navigation uses.
- The first NESP project funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was doubling the length of a lock system near St. Louis to prevent single point system restraints (\$732M).
- Highlighted strong partnerships in the system to facilitate \$45.1M in IIJA funding for partnership funding, including UMRBA, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, States of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and USGS.
- Most projects on this system require a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA); ICWP’s leadership in PPA reform is instrument to prod projects along.

“Ecosystem Restoration and Water Resources Management: Overview of Beaver Island Project” – Marshall Plumley, US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District

- There are two important components to this project: habitat restoration and rehabilitation and long term resource monitoring.
- The project received \$33M/year consistently; 2022 saw an increase to \$55M.
- The shared commitment to a healthier ecosystem makes the project successful.

“Ecological Status and Trends of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers” – Jeff Houser, USGS

- Summary of results of the Ecological Status and Trends Assessment in the basin that monitored four flood plains into the system considering multiple uses of the river.
- The trends assessment shows how the river is doing and how it’s changed over the years. There is more water more of the time; reduced floodplain forest, high nitrogen and phosphorous (total phosphorous loading is down) and improved water clarity.

Panel #2 – Water Planning (Beth Callaway, Moderator)

“Lessons Learned from Minnesota’s Drought of 2021” – Pooja Kanwar, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (in person) and Luigi Ramolo, Minnesota State Climatologist (virtual)

- Minnesota’s drought plan works on a watershed basin scale. Overview of the plan’s matrixed which is based on the US Drought Monitor and involves heavy coordination between state agencies.
- The 2023 drought was the worst in Minnesota since 1988. Droughts are a natural part of our climate. Efforts looked at what was needed to better respond; the key to succeeding is open communication channels.

“Leveraging the NRCS WFPO Program for Agricultural Water Management: Examples from Nebraska and Kansas” -- Jim Schneider, Olsson and Orrin Feril, Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5

- The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) is very broad in what it can accomplish. Authorizations are for flood prevention watershed protection and more.
- Jim gave an overview of the Turkey/Thompson Creek case study in the Lower Republican Natural Resource District in Nebraska. The Rattlesnake Creek case study in Kansas highlighted streamflow augmentation by groundwater pumping and streamflow responses.
- Orrin shared that the watershed planning process facilitated through the NRCS WFPO program brings stakeholders throughout the watershed together.

“Optimizing Planning Resources for States: A Upper Mississippi Planning Assistance for States Success Story” – Kristen Wallace, UMRBA

- Five UMRBA states contributed resources for in-kind contributions and cash to utilize USACE PAS funds to restore water level availability.
- It took time for everyone to be on the same page, so structured decision making was a useful model.
- The basin is in a much better position now; as it allowed for more flexible decisionmaking, more funding is available and the partnerships make it possible.

“Perspectives from Iowa’s Drought Plan Update” – Tim Hall, Iowa Department of Natural Resources

- In 2021, Iowa was facing a looming drought with no updated drought plan in place. The state reviewed what to do from other state plans and established a core Drought Team including the state climatologist to act as drought coordinator.
- The science team developed a standardized streamflow index for low to high flows, a risk assessment team held talks among all Iowa state agencies, and the communications team follows an actionable matrix.
- The final drought plan will be issued in December 2022.

Panel #3 – Water Data & Science (Heidi Moltz, Moderator)

“Flash Drought Monitoring and Forecasting” -- Elizabeth Ossowski, Program Coordinator, NOAA/National Integrated Drought Information System (virtual)

- Half of the US is currently in moderate to exceptional drought, in particular the Great Plains.
- Stakeholders have identified needs to close gaps in data and gain a better understanding of flash drought. A workshop on flash drought was held in 2020 and there is a report posted on NIDIS website online. Next steps are to organize a 2023 Flash Drought Workshop to hold regional discussions and soil moisture monitoring network.

- ICWP members expressed support for NIDIS reauthorization; Elizabeth noted that NIDIS has matured and improvements will be iterative to involve stakeholders on the ground. The NIDIS strategic plan is a culmination of stakeholder input and NIDIS will bring that report to the Hill. Stakeholder input could focus on the growth of NIDIS and elements of the strategic plan.

“Unified Monitoring and Public Messaging for the Mississippi River Basin” – Heidi Mehl, Director of Water & Agriculture Programs, The Nature Conservancy - Kansas

- The Mississippi River Basin is a priority landscape for the Nature Conservancy; the goal is to achieve a 20% nutrient load reduction by 2025.
- The core objective of work in this basin is to get information on the trends, provide real-time information, and establish a data interface.
- Next steps now that the plan and structure are in place is to advocate for funding.

“USGS Water-Use Data and Research Program: Current Program Status and Successful Outcomes” -- Erik Smith, Water-Use Data and Research Program Coordinator, USGS

- Highlights show that grants have helped many states improve their water use databases.
- Case study successes of WUDR funded efforts in Delaware, Nevada, Texas and Oregon, plus online reporting tools and web service query tools.

“USGS Water Monitoring Program Updates” – Cory Angerth, Deputy Program Coordinator for the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, USGS

- Cory provided Water Monitoring Program funding updates for FY2023.
- The Federal Priority Streamgauge Network, NGW Network, NGWOS basins, WOSP priorities and NWIS modernization.

“USGS Water Prediction and Assessment Progress” -- Brian Clark, Deputy Program Coordinator for the Water Availability and Use Science Program, USGS

- There are 14 different science programs to improve water availability assessments.
- Planned activities for FY 2024 will look at current conditions, FY 2026 will look at past conditions and water quality; FY2030 will tackle projections incorporating forecasts.

Panel #4 – Legislation & Policy, Interstate Water Management (Kirsten Wallace, Moderator)

“Updates from the Hill” – Geoff Bowman, Van Scoyoc Associates (virtual)

- Geoff gave an overview of key dates coming up in the near term.
- The key places to focus for ICWP will be by FY2023 Appropriations and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).
- Other funding activity made possible by the IIJA and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will be a key area to focus moving forward.
- WRDA will likely be an amendment to the NDDAA. Final text will have to be delivered to committee by December 23rd.

- Now is the time to pivot to FY2024 planning. It's unclear if earmarks are allowed but it's likely so ICWP members should keep one or two in mind for their discussions.

"Updates from Resilience Coalition Efforts" – Chuck Chaitovitz, Vice President, Environmental Affairs and Sustainability, US Chamber of Commerce (virtual)

- There are \$500M in new grants to water utilities, \$500M made possible by the STORM Act, plus pre-disaster mitigation objectives
- The Resilience Coalition is working to get a meeting on the STORM Act implementation and will want states' feedback on low interest loan rollout.
- The National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Act is the next priority.
- The US Chamber of Commerce Business Task Force develops water policy priorities each year and the next effort will be getting IIJA funds to authorize programs.

"USACE Programs for Economically Disadvantaged Communities" – Amy Frantz, Senior Policy Advisor, US Army Corps of Engineers (virtual)

- Amy leads WRDA 2022 implementation guidance development for USACE. ICWP will have an opportunity for input on the guidance.
- Section 118 has \$30M in appropriations through IIJA; the notice for proposals will come soon.

"Tribal and Interstate Water Management Collaboration" -- Peter Johnson, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers

- Only four states have tribal presence in the Great Lakes region out of 160 tribes and first nations.
- Lessons learned by working with tribes have focused on: Respecting tribal sovereignty, listening to the issues and concerns, looking for opportunities to further collaborate to build credibility, building trust, staying within your lane, and asking questions.
- Traditional ecological knowledge is an important aspect and should be acknowledged.

"Water Quality and Infrastructure" – Jeff Robichaud, Water Division Director, EPA Region 7

- This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. EPA's current focus is on adaptation and resilience.
- The EPA Office of Water's plan focuses on IIJA implementation, opportunities for green solutions and carbon footprint; protection of waters from the impacts of climate change; increasing water sector capacity and public knowledge
- IIJA allocated \$50B for water and wastewater upgrades. 39 states have grants in place
- Administrator Regan just stood up a new office focusing on Environmental Justice.
- There are more opportunities for states to receive State Revolving Fund money to use toward nonpoint source pollution remediation.

Panel #5 – Cross Pollination (Pooja Kanwar, Moderator)

This new panel format was designed as a 30-minute breakout session to gain feedback from meeting attendees about ICWP, its offerings, and opportunities for future growth. The following responses encapsulate the discussions between three breakout groups:

1. Where do you find the most value in ICWP?
 - Provides useful connections to other states and people who you normally don't get to meet
 - Increases opportunities for dialogue
 - Facilitates big picture thinking
 - Helps federal agencies see how their tools are being used
 - Connections with Washington DC leadership
 - Van Scoyoc's federal affairs contract is very valuable to members
 - Multi-state and regional organizational membership give a stronger voice to back up advocacy work
 - Helps generate ideas and learning by way of partnerships with federal agencies
 - Acts to tie into national issues and improves the ability to be innovative
2. How are we doing internally and externally? Where can we grow?
 - ICWP has an established function that relies on word of mouth to share our work. How do we grow beyond that?
 - We should focus on improving ICWP's branding and messaging to aid with communication our policy positions to key decisionmakers.
 - Membership categories should be more targeted so it is clear who can be a member. What is our target audience?
 - Consider honing ICWP's role as a facilitator to bring stakeholders together on particular water policy issues (i.e.- convener of states for USGS WUDR program feedback)
 - Social media accounts are outdated (Facebook, Twitter)
 - ICWP used to issue reports on specific topics. We should resurrect these efforts to showcase how the work that we do integrates a broad range of expertise in the water resources management field.

Panel #6 – USACE and USGS “Lightning Round” updates

USACE (virtual): “Flood Risk and Floodplain Management Program Updates” – Stephanie Bray, USACE NFRMP and Floodplain Management Services Program Manager

- USACE Technical Assistance Programs are focusing on environmental justice, climate needs to support priority areas.
- The budget is typically \$15M/year but USACE received \$45M from IJIA; USACE is working harder to serve disadvantaged communities and improving outreach.
- ICWP can help facilitate feedback from the Flood Risk Management Program's Silver Jackets program.

USGS (virtual):

“USGS Water Mission Area Streamflow Drought Prediction” – Roy Sando

- The USGS is developing more robust streamflow prediction models.
- Activities are building out real-time daily and monthly streamflow drought predictions. There is a task emphasis and generalized/consistent output. Also including ungagged locations for drought.
- FY2024-25 activities will explore potential data services.
- Some state drought plans have been integrated into USGS' work; some feedback from states would be helpful.

“Introducing the USGS 3D Hydrography Program” – Sue Buto

- This is a new program being stood up to look at the future of integrated elevation and topography to model the nation's topography in 3D. It's the first re-mapping of the nation's hydrography since 1992.
- The next generation 3D elevation program study was just completed. Direct edit access is available to NHD+ Watershed Boundary dataset for 41 states and Washington DC.
- It is time to rethink how the USGS does hydrography data. 3DHP supports the Internet of Water infrastructure.

“Next-Gen Water Use Information” – Jaime Painter

- The goal is to understand the impacts on supply from county level aggregation.
- There are four critical areas: completeness and collection enhancement, build data driven process models for national consistency, develop methods to trace water across landscapes, and ingrate forecasts.
- Next steps are to perform a reanalysis of the years 2000-2020 by HUC12 and to apply irrigation and consumptive use for thermal electric.

“Application of a multi-scale nested monitoring approach to support predictive modeling of harmful algae blooms in the Illinois River Basin” – Jim Dunker

- USGS looked at the following research questions:
 - What conditions trigger HABs occurrences and production of cyanotoxins and T&Os?
 - What is the fate and transport of cyanotoxins and T&Os?
 - Can we predict HABs with the correct equipment and monitoring?
 - What is the toxicity of HABs when they are not visible?
 - Is there a specific nutrient that may be limiting the production of cyanotoxins or excessive algal growth?

“Building capacity for assessment and prediction of post-wildfire water availability” – Brian Ebel

“Overview of the USGS National Water Quality Network” – Melissa Riskin

- The National Water Quality Network was formed in 2013.
- It houses data for 110 sites nationwide.

- It monitors physical properties, major ions and trace elements, nutrients, suspended sediment, pesticides, PFAs will be added in 2023.

October 27th Membership Meeting:

ICWP Chair Andrew Dehoff led the meeting by providing a summary of 2022 Board of Director activities and the strategic planning session held two days prior on October 25th. Executive Director Beth Callaway recapped the budget for and provided an overview of FY2023 fiscal activities FY2022 (refer to “FY2023 Approved_Tracking”). Beth also recapped ICWP’s accomplishments in 2022 (refer to the “ICWP 2022 Year in Review” handout).

The following Board of Directors members and offices for FY2023 were approved by unanimous vote:

Slate of Candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee to serve as Directors, with terms ending in 2025:

Wes Cattoor, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Erin Fanning, Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Kirsten Wallace, Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Mabel Jones, Wyoming Water Development Office
Vacant
Vacant

Slate of Candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee to serve as Officers in 2022-2023:

Chair: Matt Unruh, Kansas Water Office
1st Vice-Chair: Mabel Jones, Wyoming Water Development Office
2nd Vice-Chair: Pooja Kanwar, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
Treasurer: Andrew Dehoff, Susquehanna River Basin Commission
Secretary: Katherine Zitsch, Atlanta Regional Commission
Past-Chair: Andrew Dehoff, Susquehanna River Basin Commission

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