



**Missouri River Flood Task Force
Doubletree Hotel, Overland Park, KS
December 12, 2011
Meeting Summary**

Meeting Objectives:

1. Discuss the status of flood recovery.
2. Update the Task Force on the flood recovery efforts of the MRFTF working groups, coordinate the various activities of each work group, and give the working groups input and feedback.
3. Raise flood recovery issues for consideration by the task force and co-chairs, highlighting areas that need more attention.
4. Identify and undertake any Task Force course corrections.
5. Enable the working group members to meet face to face, discuss the input from the Task Force, and move their efforts forward.

I. Opening Remarks

Welcoming and opening remarks were made by the Co-chairs for the Missouri River Flood Task Force (MRFTF): General John McMahan, Northwestern Division Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps or USACE); Ms. Beth Freeman, Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VII, and Mr. Tom Christensen, Regional Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Central Region, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The co-chairs each expressed concern over the uncertainties surrounding future funding and weather and the impacts of each on the Missouri River. General McMahan discussed the vulnerability in the system due to insufficient funding and the need to concentrate on the four C's - cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and communication among all parties. Ms. Freeman reminded all that there is much work to do and that we need to brace ourselves for the spring. Mr. Christensen suggested the promotion of renewed partnerships and coordination of programs.

II. Introductions and Plan for the Day

Following the opening remarks, the Facilitator, Sheila Shockey introduced herself and her team and outlined the agenda for the day. Participants each introduced themselves and the organizations that they represent.

III. Status of flood recovery updates

USACE Kansas City and Omaha Districts, FEMA Region VII and VIII, and USDA gave presentations detailing the programs, funding, activities, and challenges related to their ongoing flood recovery and restoration efforts. State representatives gave updates to the group on the status of their current programs, activities and potential shortfalls as they relate to 2011 flooding impacts, recovery efforts and potential impacts of the 2012 season. Presentations were provided by Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Presentations from the federal agencies and Iowa are available here: <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/docs/FloodRecoveryStatusFedsStatesDec12.pdf>

IV. MRFTF Ground Rules Presentation

Matt Jepson, USACE, and Leesa Morrison, FEMA VII, provided a reminder of restrictions and exceptions faced by the MRFTF and its working groups due to The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). To avoid implicating the requirements of the Act, it is understood that this Task Force is not seeking consensus, just collaborating and discussing issues of mutual importance. Their key points:

- MRFTF and working group “members” are only federal employees and elected officials (or designated representatives) of states and Tribes
- MRFTF and working groups do not provide consensus opinions or specific recommendations for agency action
- Partners, contributors, and observers may attend MRFTF and working group meetings, present relevant information, and provide comments and ideas
- Partners, contributors, and observers cannot participate in federal agency decision making or be a working group lead

V. Presentations of Working Groups

The following working groups provided overviews of their mission and activities since the groups were formed in October: Floodplain Management, River Management, Tribal Support/Outreach, Regulatory/Permitting, Communications, Levee Repair, Infrastructure, and Agriculture. The Hydropower and Navigation working groups did not present as their function is to monitor and provide input to the other working groups. Their presentations are available on the MRFTF website at <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/docs/WorkingGroupPresentationsDec12.pdf>

VI. General Discussion of Recovery and Working Group Efforts

Participants discussed recovery efforts and working group activities. The facilitator asked participants to consider:

- Where are the gaps in our efforts to collaborate?
- Where is there overlap? Is it okay to have overlap?
- How do we prepare for the next flood season?
- What can our working group do to speed up recovery through collaboration and coordination efforts?
- How can our working group respond to the discussion items generated today?
- How does our work relate to the work of the other working groups?
- How can the Federal agencies be more responsive to the needs of the states?
- What are the next steps and structure ideas?

The participants generated the following thoughts or ideas in response to the questions posed and these were given to the Working Groups for consideration during their breakout session:

- There are too many federal agencies conducting tribal outreach efforts for recovery. How can we coordinate outreach efforts to help tribes to participate more effectively?
- We need to link to other recovery efforts.
- We need to paint the picture of how the Missouri River feeds the economy. This will help bring more resources to these efforts.
- We need to streamline information sharing – use of Geographic Information System (GIS) layers, LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) mapping and other data.
- The Corps needs to consider how to better reimburse work of others and how to account for work in-kind.
- We need to make sure information available and decision-making is transparent.
- Consider how to interface with, and incorporate, Missouri River degradation work/studies.
- Consider how to better coordinate efforts on damage assessments and surveys.
- Consider how to manage hazards collectively.
- When releasing water, joint conversations need to take place earlier in the decision-making process.
- Better involve hydropower interest in decisions regarding river management.
- Need to identify the obstacles of those “on the ground” completing the jobs.
- Improve direct communication during flood events by reaching out to those who need the information. Technology is used by some, but it cannot be the only method.
- Consider climate change assessments in the basin.
- Determine why projects can’t be completed more quickly. How do we understand and get through the red tape?
- Manage expectations so citizens know what their responsibility is and about the responsibilities of the agencies.
- Identify programmatic approaches that can be used during future planning and recovery efforts.
- Take a more team approach to emergency situations.
- Consider exemptions to the Missouri River Mainstem Master Manual.
- Remember the Missouri River is constantly changing.
- Consider how to reduce runoff in upper end of basin in reduce flows in Missouri River.
- Develop pilot projects where creative and innovative solutions can be tested.

- Look for opportunities to coordinate with other efforts going on (e.g. using resources that are being discarded in one area and use them in an area where that resource is needed.)
- Evaluate how the Missouri River Basin is used and what it should and shouldn't be used for more long-term.
- Look for ways to mitigate hazards and consider options beyond buyouts and explore alternatives.
- Work with Tribal communities to prepare hazard mitigation plans. Working Groups can be a good resource for this work.

A question was asked about whether the levees were being rebuilt to pre-flood levels and how this impacted floodplain and flood insurance for property owners. The answer was that the levees will be rebuilt to pre-flood levels when funding becomes available and the floodplain maps will be revised on schedule and not moved up as a result of the levee reconstruction.

VII. **Working groups report back**

The working groups met individually. Below is a summary of what they discussed and reported back to the Task Force.

Floodplain Management

During their discussions, this working group focused on the four questions brought up earlier that dealt with speeding up recovery, responding to items generated from today's discussion, how this group relates to the other working groups, and next steps.

Their plan is to:

- Make sure that we don't leave anyone behind by including certain groups not currently represented.
- Develop a focal group for technical support to identify and share specific tools and technology such as maps, etc.
- Create a "Mitigation toolbox" to share information in a timely fashion.
- Determine which group would handle policies.

The next steps for this working group will be to create the toolboxes and develop a technical information sharing focus group.

Question by General McMahon: To what extent are agencies redundant or complimentary with regard to data collection like LIDAR? Should we move quickly to understand this to not waste resources?

Answer: The working group is developing the technology focus group to address this area. We will send an invite to all members of the task force in an effort to gain a broader understanding.

Missouri River Management

During their discussions, this working group focused on the Master Manual. The Master Manual offers a great deal of flexibility. If there is a need for a minor or major deviation the USACE has a policy to address this need. A modification requires direction from Gen. McMahan and will not require a change in the manual.

The working group had a question on the status of the independent expert panel report. When will it be out for the public to review? In addition, what is the status of the technical analysis with regards to 2011 run-off?

Response by General McMahan: The independent external panel report is due out next week and will be vetted with internal audiences prior to public release. The panel will be available for questions as the report is released. Because the report is independent, the US Army Corps of Engineers is being hands-off as to the substance of the report to keep it external and independent.

With reference to the study on how much space should be reserved for flood control/storage, this study is being coordinated with multiple agencies and has an expected completion date of March 31, 2012. The final report will form the basis of further discussion.

The working group stated that we need better coordinated, accurate and timely data on the topics of soil moisture and channel conveyance. First we must define our baseline for information and then we can move forward with making it better.

The working group posed a question to the group regarding post flood assessment. When will the lower basin information be available? We need to take the entire river into consideration. Post flood assessments must include a holistic analysis of the total river basin to gain a full understanding of the floods impact on the river.

Agricultural

The working group discussed how they can become more responsive to other ideas and to the stakeholders. The working group also discussed the potential value of shared GIS information and access to data assessments that have already been completed and improvements that have been made. Producers have a great interest in this information. The working group also discussed having other interactions and a webinar with groups to discuss what might be missing and the following additional topics:

- Regulatory issues on reparation.
- Scour areas, procedures for 404 permitting - more strenuous and formal in certain areas - threatened and endangered species, must keep ears open to this issue in other working groups.
- Crop insurance updates which is of particular interest to agricultural groups.
- What other questions or issues we should be asking? Simply ask the producers what they are facing. Ask the producers themselves what we are missing. We may look at doing some public engagement.
- In general, what can we do to increase our relevance to the agricultural community? Upon completion of the webinar, we will use USDA status to continue discussing issues.

Question from General McMahon: Will crop insurance rates be modified? Will rates change on the basis of level of protection?

Answer: Actuarial rates for this year were established by November 30. If repairs are made by a certain date (March 30th), then modifications to the rates can take place.

Tribal Support/Outreach

The working group discussed steps in moving forward, including the need to identify specific tribal liaisons. This list will include the areas of responsibility for each liaison. The working group sees a need to help tribes develop emergency response plans or emergency action plans and follow up with a virtual exercise to test its effectiveness. The working group feels that there needs to be a balance of the working relationships between tribes, states and federal agencies; these groups need to work together. Those involved need to be able to step up and overcome differences. The working group discussed some next steps including the possibility of facilitating some tribal meetings.

Regulatory/ Permitting

During their discussions, this working group discussed having a pilot project where new ideas can be seeded. They discussed how the USDA Service Centers should be better utilized to disperse information. The recovery in Iowa went well because of how they prepared. Their experience should be used as a model for others. Other topics discussed include:

- Some states are using joint permit application packages; encourage all states to do that.
- Discuss permitting issues. Omaha District is looking at a new regional permit.
- Permitting extensions- tracking permits tied to recovery activities from this year's occurrences.
- No rise certificates –proper approvals should be requested so that any activity in the floodplain does not cause a rise in levels.

Communications

The working group discussed targeting additional media, communication and outreach activities. They will also suggest utilizing the large number of field offices to disseminate materials with a focus on information truly getting to those in need. The working group will develop one page hand-outs and marketing materials and a form for all working groups to share information and efforts among each other. Distribution lists will also be developed for both mail and email for multiple stakeholder organizations. The working group will develop a communication and outreach strategy which will include information on developing press releases and ideas to promote successes and accomplishments.

Comment by General McMahon: As progress is made (by the Flood Task Force), take credit for that by press releases through other working groups or feed the

information to the communication group. It seems to be an important tool to connect to the people who are potentially directly impacted by future events.

Response: Part of this was discussed in the outreach activities and utilization of field offices.

Levee Repair

The working group discussed work-in-kind and that it should be limited to the 20% maximum for non-federal levees; this could even be cash. They also discussed work for others. There are certain restraints associated with this, however, for example the Kansas Dept. of Corrections. The working group discussed obstacles in moving forward such as the small tax base at the local level and the agricultural levees. For instance, you could have an area with a highway truck stop that does not pay into the system, but does benefit from the levee.

The working group focused on levee rehab and the crop insurance program and discussed timeframes; the levees must be repaired by March 1. The working group discussed gaps in information which included decision points of various actors in the basin and how to get information together that respects critical dates each organization needs to meet. There needs to be a timeline and operational rhythm.

The working group also discussed items and issues that may have an overlap with other groups. They would like to have feedback on the levee repair spreadsheet. They tried to keep the information to one page to be very concise. They feel it's a good tool. The repairs list is on both the Corps and the Task force web sites at <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/levee.asp>.

Infrastructure

During their discussions, this working group discussed the degradation and aggregation of channels as well as channel capacity. Due to the overlap with the River Management Working Group, this group will disband and some will join the River Management group.

Navigation

This working group reported that their meetings are just beginning. They need to develop a mission statement and add additional members. They would like to engage with other groups to share expertise. The working group reported that the navigation channel is weakened and in some areas should be investigated with reports following.

Comment from General McMahon: I am concerned that the Mississippi River would get greater funding as there is not as visible of a concern on the Missouri River.

The working group discussed the concern and the worry that the Missouri River channel will be short shifted when compared with the Mississippi River. The formation of The Missouri River Navigation working group will help in the vetting of the issues. One of the very

important commodities supplied by the Missouri River is water, something the Mississippi river needs.

VIII. Closing remarks

Beth Freeman, Tom Christensen, and General John McMahon thanked everyone for their participation and addressed the benefits of the relationships that were being developed through the group. The co-chairs complemented the amount of progress that was made in a very short time. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for mid-February in Omaha. A press release capturing the meeting is available at <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/news.asp>.