

INFORMATION SHEET
Civic Engagement Meetings in the Public Scoping Process for the
Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have adopted a collaborative approach with stakeholders throughout the Missouri Basin for the development of the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan. This approach includes holding Civic Engagement meetings, also referred to as focus group meetings, as part of public involvement activities for the plan. Civic Engagement consists of a series of public meetings throughout the basin, intended to further engage public stakeholders on the plan. The purpose of these meetings is also to gather input on key elements of the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan, foster dialogue, and help ensure the government provides the opportunity for public involvement as part of the overall public scoping process.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) is organizing and facilitating the Civic Engagement meetings, in partnership with an established network of organizers specializing in providing effective community dialogue and public deliberation. The organizers were selected on a state-by-state basis and evaluated expressly on their professional expertise and knowledge of statewide issues, helping to provide a neutral setting for meetings and enhance the sense of fairness and equality in the Civic Engagement process.

Civic Engagement meetings further exemplify the effort to meet the spirit and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in a unique setting allowing for face-to-face discussions with a suite of identified participants intended to represent diverse perspectives from the community. The organizers, who were provided a general set of guidelines provided by USACE and FWS, will identify stakeholder participants. Additionally, observers are encouraged to attend the meetings and contribute at the end of the session by providing questions or comments (verbally or written).

Civic Engagement meetings are designed to augment, not replace, feedback gathered at public scoping meetings. These meetings are just one of several tools used throughout the process to gather stakeholder input. Results are not weighed any differently than other input received during the scoping process. Exercises have been developed to elicit information related to three key areas including: (1) Social, Cultural, and Economic Values, (2) Purpose, Need, and Natural Resource Issues, and (3) Future Visioning Scenarios. With this information, USACE and FWS hope to better understand what basin communities value about the river and envision for its future.

The first series of Civic Engagement meetings are scheduled in seven states throughout the basin (see table below). Direct participation will be limited to between 20 to 40 participants. Each meeting is scheduled to last 6 hours. An unlimited number of observers are allowed and encouraged to attend.

Table 1. Civic Engagement Meeting Schedule

Date	State	City	Time	Convener
18-Aug.	Montana	Poplar and Great Falls	4PM-10PM	Place Matters and Univ. of Montana Center for Nat. Resources and Environmental Policy.
17-Sep	Nebraska	Omaha	10AM-4PM	The Werner Institute
18-Sep.	Iowa	Sioux City	10:30AM-4:30PM	The Werner Institute
28-Sep.	South Dakota	Chamberlain/Oacoma	10:30AM-4:30PM	South Dakota Public Policy Institute
30-Sep.	North Dakota	Bismarck	10:30AM-4:30PM	The Consensus Council
2-Oct.	Missouri	Jefferson City	10AM-4PM	Consensus
3-Oct.	Kansas	Atchison	10AM-4PM	The Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy (ICDD) Kansas State