



## Oacoma, South Dakota September 28, 2009 MRERP Civic Engagement Report

### Introduction

On September 28, 2009 forty-two citizens gathered at the Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma, South Dakota for the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP) civic engagement meeting. The group included 26 participants, 12 observers, and 4 facilitators. Although 35 citizens had responded positively to attend and participate in the meeting, the 26 individuals who did make it to the meeting represented a wide range of occupations and interests in the river restoration. They included ranchers, farmers, business leaders, educators, water managers, tribal leaders, and retired residents. They represented 15 of the 17 counties and two of the five reservations contiguous to the river in addition to citizens from across the state (Appendix A).

The observers were composed of individuals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Service, South Dakota Environment and Resources, representatives from nonprofit organizations, and environmental consultants. Two facilitators were from the South Dakota Public Policy Institute, a project of the Chiesman Center for Democracy, and two facilitators were from the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

### Methodology

In order to obtain a list of potential participants, a majority of the County Extension Service agencies and Chambers of Commerce in the counties contiguous to the river and past SDPPI workshop participants were contacted for names of individuals who might be interested in participating in the MRERP meeting. In addition, representatives from the U.S. Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Fish & Wildlife, CAT, and MRRIC were contacted for possible participants. A list of 125 persons was developed. Appendix B provides examples of letters sent to the participants to invite them to participate and notification of their names being added to the participants' list. Care was taken to make sure that there was wide representation of citizens based on geography, occupation, level of interest, and any conflict of interest.

Appendix C shows an advertisement of the notification of the meeting in the Chamberlain newspaper. The wording of the notice was provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was printed two weeks before the meeting in the Chamberlain/Oacoma Sun newspaper.

In preparation for the meeting, at least 10 conference and one-on-one telephone calls were held with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Each meeting was aligned to one of the five tasks determined to help develop and implement questions, protocol, and expectations for the MRERP Meeting. Representatives from the seven sites in which meetings were to be held participated in the discussions. As a result of these conference calls and communications, the SDPPI was able to align its meeting outcomes and outputs with the other sites. The format for the South Dakota civic engagement meeting was the product of the planning meeting discussions and consensus regarding the

questions to be asked and the procedures for holding the meeting. The day was divided into seven sessions beginning at 10:30 am and ending at 4:30 pm.

Session I was a welcome and introduction of all the participants and observers. There was a short explanation of the purpose of the MRERP civic engagement meeting with a highlight on the objectives. Ground rules were given for the meeting and an overview of how information would be collected and shared throughout the day. The participants were divided into four small groups of 8 persons with two or more observers. A facilitator was assigned to each group to guide the discussions based on the questions developed by the planning team. The observers were not to participate in the small group discussions, but could serve as an information source if there was a need. The small groups, depending upon the session, met for 30 to 35 minutes. Then the groups reconvened into a plenary session in which participants were designated as reporters to the large group. All information gathered was recorded on flip chart paper.

In Session II the focus groups answered a series of questions on the values surrounding restoration in three areas: (1) social context and identity, (2) community, and (3) economic vitality. Appendix E contains the document used for this session. After 35 minutes, the groups reconvened into a large group in which their discussion conclusions were shared. Participants continued their discussions in the large group with more clarification of any ideas or concepts presented by each of the focus group reporters.

In Session III Mr. Wayne Nelson-Stastny from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented a *PowerPoint* presentation regarding the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan. He explained the law, timeline, and expectations for the various levels of discussion taking place in the Missouri River basin. Questions from the participants were answered by the presenter. The presentation took about one hour.

In Session IV the focus groups were asked to describe a future in which the Missouri River ecosystem had been completed. In their discussion the groups formulated the conditions and features of the future ecosystem if full implementation was successful. After a 35 minute small group discussion, the results were presented to the large group with additional clarification and input from all the participants.

In Session V the focus groups discussed the following topics: (1) issues and problems that affect the Missouri River basin, (2) potential opportunities, and (3) some possible actions related to the natural resources. Over 30 minutes was spent in the small groups with a large group presentation and discussion. (Appendix D)

In Session VI input from the observers was welcomed. Only two observers made comments regarding the meeting. The first comment was a thank you to everyone for participating in the meeting and providing valuable input and ideas to the proposed ecosystem plan. The second comment was a compliment to the participants and the process. It was evident that everyone was committed to the future of the Missouri River and that their personal experiences had contributed to ideas and issues not presented in other groups. The SDPPI process appeared to provide a mechanism and space for open and innovative discussions.

Session VII was spent reflecting upon the meeting and determining if the day's meeting had value. There was consensus that the meeting had achieved the objectives it had set for itself and that everyone had learned not only about the MRERP but also additional issues and concerns regarding the river and the basin. Participants were provided an opportunity to write additional comments on prepared forms if their values, vision, concerns, or proposed actions were not addressed in the small or large group discussions.

## Values Surrounding Restoration

### ***Social Context and Identity***

The river and its basin has had a history that continues to provide a reliable source of quality potable water for people, animals, and communities; an irrigation water source for crops; a flood management and protection function; a source of food (fishing); and recreation for all citizens. Additionally, the dams have provided a source for low cost electricity throughout the region and western states. Initially the river had a transportation role, but with the creation of the dams in the past 60 years, navigation has been limited to local sites. The participants believe the river has an identity aspect that not only divides South Dakota into two distinct regions, but provides cultural boundaries that have contributed to diversity and preservation of a variety of indigenous and immigrated cultures.

The participants valued the aesthetic and ecological elements the river basin has contributed to South Dakotans and visitors. The beauty and recreational potential of the river has made it a site for short and long term residence. Thus, there is value in preserving the natural habitats, vegetation, and feeder streams into the Missouri River. Any environmental threats to the current ecosystem are a threat to the quality of life for South Dakotans and the other states that depend on the river.

There are many archeological and paleontological sites along the river that must be studied and preserved. These sites provide a historical perspective that could be lost if not recovered and documented. Many tribes resided along the river before 1800 that do not exist today. With the establishment of reservations in the late 1800s, there has been a gradual disconnect between the indigenous peoples and the Missouri River. The participants believed that there must be an emphasis on the preservation of these traditional values and sources of life for all people - past, present, and future.

### ***Community***

The major contributions of the river to a community's quality of life have included resources and economic opportunities. The river is an attraction for newcomers to South Dakota and a reason for minimizing outmigration. It encourages the expansion of river-based communities and attracts individuals to reside after retirement, to create new businesses, and to raise their children. The river provides primary water sources that are affordable and safe. It creates agricultural communities that can rely on water sources and electricity to help their operations become successful. It is a recreational source for in-state, out-of-state, and international individuals because of fishing, boating, and hunting opportunities.

The participants reported that the multifunctional aspects of the river contribute to marketing a community that is interested in preserving and expanding any ecological initiative that makes the river better and available for all people. Many businesses and homes have been built along the river. There is a positive outlook that this will continue as long as there is an effort to preserve, expand, and restore the river basin.

### ***Economic Vitality***

Participants reported that individuals residing along the river had a large diversity of jobs available to them. These included jobs in the areas of hunting, fishing, arts, recreation, tourism, water management, wildlife and fishery management, hydroelectricity, etc. The opportunities for new businesses create an economic impact for any county or community along the river. Without the river, these positions and opportunities would have a disastrous impact on the state of South Dakota. Ranchers and farmers along the river basin rely on the water source for irrigation of crops and watering of their animals.

Originally, the river was used for transportation, a source of food for the indigenous population, and a means for trading of goods between tribes and communities. The current economic source of the river is tourism, agriculture, recreation, electric power, fishing, and hunting. The economic vitality of any river-based community is heavily dependent upon these resources. The participants agreed upon the value of the river as an economic strength for the preservation and growth of any river community. Thus an ecosystem restoration plan must take into consideration the impact it has on a community.

Another economic impact of the river is how it is able to manage downstream flooding. The dams are able to control the river flow and thus prevent any extensive flooding and loss of property and land downriver. The hydroelectric plants provide a source of low-cost electricity to residents along and beyond the river. This serves as an economic boost for the area and reduces the cost for any industry requiring high electrical demand. Having the river as a water source reduces the cost to individuals and businesses for water. Additionally, the quality and location of the water requires minimal processing and transportation.

### ***Life-Supporting/Biocentric Values***

Overall, the participants realized an ethical and moral responsibility for the preservation of the river and assuring the development and protection of the ecological habitats. Without an active and on-going commitment to protecting the river basin, the economic, social, and environmental elements would be lost to all peoples and communities. There is an inherent responsibility of all citizens to assure that the quality of the river and its habitats are preserved, protected, and restored. Individuals and communities can do their part, but it requires the state and federal agencies such as the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, to provide the leadership and resources to make this a reality. All of the participants realized that there were funding as well as public policy issues that needed to be addressed, but there was an expression for expediency and short-term action as opposed to the long-term plans being proposed.

### **Purpose and Need Statements**

#### ***Concerns and Barriers***

The participants listed a series of issues and concerns regarding the development of ecosystem plans that would contribute to the preservation and restoration of the river. One of the major concerns focused on the sedimentation within the river and the dams. Sedimentation is rapidly filling the dam areas, but also contributing to hampering and blocking of many river intake and outtake systems. Another concern is the erosion of the river banks and tributaries. The combination of sedimentation and erosion has created the change of the river flow and the destruction and elimination of farm acreage along the river. The creation of river islands and sandbars can have mixed benefits, but their opportunities are short lived.

Another concern is the loss of the trees and vegetation along the river due to the erosion of the banks. The loss of the vegetation accelerates the erosion process which in turn contributes to more sedimentation problems along the river. The fine silt produced from the erosion and tributary runoffs affect the water quality and must be monitored by communities that use the river as a water source. The dams might serve as flood control devices, but they also contribute to temperature modifications, rate of water flow, and release of quantifiable amounts of silt.

Other concerns included the lack of funding sources, bureaucracy, laws and regulations, political, and geographic interests. Without a river education program, incorrect information about what is going on with the river can generate a stop gap in doing what is needed to preserve and restore the river. The consequences of not making accurate information available about the river produce an emotional response that might not be beneficial to the river basin. There was concern whether a plan would be

inclusive of all the river users from Montana to Missouri, from the farmers to the residents of the river communities, from towns to federal government.

Barriers to the implementation of any plan included the U. S. Congress, state legislatures, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services. A lack or minimal public input could serve as a barrier, especially if the correct information is not made available to the citizens. For those not living along the river, they could view a restoration or preservation effort as a waste of financial and human resources. “What is wrong with the river? It looks great.” Another barrier would be the forces of nature or geology. Changes in weather can be unpredictable from excessive rain to drought. Extreme weather changes could impact any ecosystem plan if not anticipated. The same could be true of an unforeseen geological event – earthquake or land shift due to subterranean phenomena. The best the engineers and scientists can do is to create a plan based on geological history of the area undergoing restoration.

### ***Opportunities***

With the available new technology and the numerous scientific studies, the Corps has an opportunity to develop a successful and meaningful plan for the entire Missouri River basin. There are procedures for preserving and restoring ecological habitats that can sustain themselves for future generations. These habitats can contribute to increasing the quantity of fish, animals, and plants on the endangered species list. New species could be introduced to reduce erosion, provide more fish and wildlife varieties, and elevate the aesthetic views of the river. The participants discussed that the river could continue and expand being a renewable energy resource. The Gregory County pump storage system was designed to use wind energy to move water for irrigation, drinking, and turning electrical turbines. The wind would generate energy to assist pumping water to a higher level which in turn would be used to turn turbines as water is released to lower levels.

The participants saw this planning effort as a time to educate the public citizenry about the river and its impact on the quality of life of South Dakotans. They felt that education would generate support for any planning effort being proposed and would create better understanding of the importance of this endeavor for current and future generations. Additionally, a river education program would make citizens, user and non users, aware of the importance of good management of the river by being environmentally sensitive to the impact of waste, destruction, and misuse of the river resources.

### ***Natural Resources and Restoration Issues***

The participants were aware of the quantity and type of natural resources available along the river. The major issue was not necessarily restoration, but preservation and protection of the natural resources. There was a question about what was being restored. Was there a time baseline that the river was being restored to? The importance of balance between the natural resources and the use of the river was discussed. Using the river for recreation, a water source, fishing, hunting, and living puts a demand on the natural resources of the river. What is that balance and are there tradeoffs that must be considered as a plan is developed?

Developing resource laboratories and information centers along the river was seen as an effective way to educate citizens about the river and to study ways that contribute to the preservation of the river basin. Many scientific studies are difficult to understand and the center could serve as an interpretation facility. Such facilities currently exist in Nebraska.

Using the watershed district concept to have local people have a say on how the river is being managed was discussed by the participants. Local citizens, landowners, business owners, etc. would have a responsibility for protecting and preserving the natural resources within their respective districts. These local districts could serve as part of an advisory council to assure the implementation of MRERP or other regulations that contribute to the improvement and preservation of natural resources. If a vision

or plan is to be fully implemented, the citizens and users of the river basin have to be collaborative and cooperating partners.

There was discussion about the planning process. Some participants believed that the MRERP planning period was too long. Additionally, implementing a plan has to be a matter of expediency (short-term) versus something that would take thirty or more years. The participants believed there was urgency for developing and implementing a preservation or restoration plan for the river basin.

### **Visioning the Future of the River**

The participants' vision for the river was one of sustaining the beauty and functionality of the river. The river has a multifunctional reality and any vision for the future of the Missouri River basin must assure citizens that it will be available for generations to come. When considering the vision it must include the elements of recreation, fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and residency as critical uses for the river. The river must continue to serve as a water source for communities and farms. It should be a place where wildlife habitat protects and provides an ecologically balanced environment for animals and plants. It should serve as source of renewable energy and flood control.

In building a vision for the river, there must be a way to educate all citizens about these important natural and physical resources. Without this component, only individuals living along the river will be the agents for preserving the basin. Visitors and non-resident users of the river have to value the importance of their efforts and responsibility in treating the river as a limited resource if abused.

The participants echoed a vision in which there was a check on erosion and sedimentation using plants and other proven technologies. Without this check, the river direction, dam use, and agricultural land use would cease to be of any value. Having good sedimentation control would provide deeper channels for improved fish life and boating.

A vision for the river included the protection of archeological and paleontological sites. These sites are important for the understanding and study of the peoples who resided and used the river before the settlement of recent groups of people.

There was a previous plan to have roads that paralleled the river. Some participants had a vision of these roads being built so that citizens could have access to the river at various sites throughout the 17 contiguous counties in South Dakota. Additionally, the river would be accessible to the five tribes along the river. The river serves as a cultural link to the past and future for the tribes. With the reintroduction of the watershed districts and the tribal management councils, the river could be seen as a resource that belongs to the people and not to a government agency.



## Appendix A

# Participants & Observers List

## Participants

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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**Observer & Presenter:**

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**Meeting Facilitator:**

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Director, South Dakota Public Policy Institute  
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**Small Group Facilitators:**

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South Dakota Public Policy Institute  
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605-341-4311

Brian Manwaring  
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict  
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Tuscon, Arizona 85701  
520-901-8529

Sasha Stortz  
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict  
Resolution  
130 South Scott Avenue  
Tuscon, Arizona 85701  
520-901-8529



## **Appendix B**

# **Letter of Invitation Letter of Acceptance**

August 27, 2009

Ms. Pat Harer  
South Whitlock Resort  
29500 US Highway 212  
Gettysburg, SD 57442

Dear Ms. Harer:

The South Dakota Public Policy Institute (SDPPI), a project of the Chiesman Center for Democracy, has contracted with the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to conduct a civic engagement meeting regarding the U. S. Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan.

You have been selected to receive an invitation to participate in this meeting to give input on the Corps' plan. This meeting will be on Monday, September 28 at the Cedar Shore Resort in Oacoma. Space at this meeting is limited and is by invitation only.

Our charge is to gather citizens whose voices have not yet been heard on how the Missouri River affects them or their community. We are inviting a diverse group of individuals with varying interests and geographical locations along the river. We are inviting you to provide input and be part of this dialogue.

An RSVP is required by September 4. You can contact me or Jeanmarie Heriba at 605-341-4311 ([jusera@chiesman.org](mailto:jusera@chiesman.org), [jheriba@chiesman.org](mailto:jheriba@chiesman.org)) with your RSVP or for further information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Usera  
Director

Enclosure

September 10, 2009

Mr. Tom Oster  
PO Box 407  
Avon, SD 57315

Dear Mr. Oster:

Thank you for your acceptance of the South Dakota Public Policy Institute's invitation to participate in a civic engagement meeting to give input on the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP). Logistics are:

- Meeting Date: Monday, September 28
- Location: Cedar Shore Resort, 1500 Shoreline Drive, Oacoma
- Time: 10:30 am – to approximately 4:30 pm

Enclosed are: 1) draft meeting agenda, 2) MRERP Environmental Impact Statement fact sheet. An Army Corps representative will give a presentation on the restoration plan during lunch.

To view a slide presentation on the Corps' Environmental Impact Statement, please visit: <http://www.mo-rast.org/Meetings/12-07/MR%20Ecosystem%20Restoration%20Plan.pdf>. Other information can be found at [www.mrerp.org](http://www.mrerp.org).

The meeting invitation was extended to you as a private citizen and your views will represent your own, not those of your workplace or organization membership. We look forward to hearing your input on September 28. Meanwhile, if you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Usera  
Director

Enclosures

September 10, 2009

Mr. Tom Oster  
PO Box 407  
Avon, SD 57315

Dear Mr. Oster:

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We look forward to seeing you on September 28.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Usera  
Director

Enclosures





## Appendix C

# Notification of Meeting

## **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS NOTICE OF FOCUS GROUP MEETING**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is initiating a collaborative long-term study authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. The name of this study is the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (MRERP EIS). The result will be a fully integrated plan and environmental impact statement (EIS), prepared following National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and USACE planning guidance. Once completed, the MRERP will result in a policy/programmatic-level plan that will determine and describe high-level priorities and criteria for projects that address mitigation, recovery, and restoration of the Missouri River.

The USACE will hold focus group meetings for the MRERP EIS in locations throughout the Missouri River Basin to describe the project and the planning process, and to solicit input on the project scope, purpose and need, issues, and other related matters.

One of the focus group meetings will be held on September 28, 2009 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Oacoma, South Dakota. This focus group meeting will include a small group of active participants accompanied by group of observers. This focus group activity is an exercise to trigger both active participants and observers to consider key scoping elements and hear different viewpoints. Participants for the focus groups will be identified beforehand and will reflect a diverse range of communities and interests in the basin. This focus group meeting is also open to observers. Although observers will not actively participate in the exercise, they will have an opportunity to provide input on the content and process they observed. Obtaining input from active participants as well as observers is a central purpose of these meetings. Space is limited. To reserve your space as an observer or for additional information about this focus group meeting, please send an e-mail to [jusera@chiesman.org](mailto:jusera@chiesman.org) or 605-341-4311 by September 21, 2009

Information pertaining to scoping and the overall project can be found on the web at [www.mrerp.org](http://www.mrerp.org). Written comments for scoping will be accepted until December 1, 2009.

Questions and comments specific to the project and EIS should be addressed to:

Jennifer Switzer

Project Manager

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

601 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street

Kansas City, MO 64106

Email Address to Submit Comments: [comments@mrerp.org](mailto:comments@mrerp.org)

## **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS NOTICE OF FOCUS GROUP MEETING**

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of observers. This focus group activity is an exercise to trigger both active participants and observers to consider key scoping elements and hear different viewpoints. Participants for the focus groups will be identified beforehand and will reflect a diverse range of communities and interests in the basin. This focus group meeting is also open to observers. Although observers will not actively participate in the exercise, they will have an opportunity to provide input on the content and process they observed. Obtaining input from active participants as well as observers is a central purpose of these meetings. Space is limited. To reserve your space as an observer or for additional information about this focus group meeting, please send an e-mail to [jheriba@chiesman.org](mailto:jheriba@chiesman.org) or 605-341-4311 by September 21, 2009.

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Questions and comments specific to the project and EIS should be addressed to:

Jennifer Switzer  
Project Manager  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
601 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kansas City, MO 64106

Email Address to Submit  
Comments: [comments@mrerp.org](mailto:comments@mrerp.org)

Published once on 9-16-2009  
at the total approximate cost of \$28.47



## Appendix D

# Session Information & Guides



## **Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan Session II: Values Surrounding Restoration**

### **Instructions:**

In this session the focus groups will be asked to discuss the values surrounding restoration in three areas: (1) social context and identity, (2) community, and (3) economic vitality. Using the guiding questions, on separate flip chart paper for each area, summarize your responses in a bullet format. The results of your discussions will be shared with the large group.

### **Social Context and Identity (15 minutes)**

1. Knowing your history (oral or written), what are the values and benefits of the Missouri River and its ecosystem?
2. What are your needs related to the Missouri River? Are your needs being met?
3. What is the most important benefit you get from the river?
4. What is your connection to the Missouri River?
5. What are the specific practices and traditions that are central to these values?

### **Community (10 minutes)**

1. How does the Missouri River affect your community's quality of life?
2. How has the Missouri River shaped the culture of your community?
3. How might the Missouri River share the culture of your community into the future?

### **Economic Vitality (10 minutes)**

1. What does the Missouri River mean to your own and your community's (or state's) economic vitality, diversity, and sustainability?
2. How would your community be economically impacted without the use of the Missouri River?



## Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan Session IV: Future Scenario Visioning

### Instructions:

In this session the focus groups will be asked to describe a future in which the Missouri River ecosystem has been completed. In describing the future, how does the ecosystem look different from today? Use the following questions to guide the discussion and record the group's response on the flip chart paper. You will be asked to share your scenario with the large group. (35 minutes)

1. What is your vision for a restored Missouri River?
2. What conditions and features would be present?
3. What actions or plans need to take place to get us to your vision for the Missouri River?
4. If your vision becomes a reality, how is the Missouri River different from today? How do people connect to it?
5. How would you measure successful restoration of the Missouri River ecosystem?
6. What would full implementation of the plan look like?



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## Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan Session V: Moving Forward – Restoration Actions

### Instructions:

In this session the focus groups will be asked to discuss the following topics: (1) issues and problems that affect the Missouri River, (2) potential opportunities, and (3) some possible actions. Use the following questions to guide the discussion and record the group's response on the flip chart paper. You will be asked to share the results of your discussions with the large group. (30 minutes)

### Issues and Problems

1. What do you think are the issues and problems that affect the Missouri River ecosystems?
2. What are some barriers to fixing these problems?
3. What should be changed or fixed?

### Opportunities

1. What are some opportunities that exist that relate to the problem?
2. What does the restoration mean to you and the opportunities?

### Possible Actions

1. What are the trade-offs with respect to restoration?
2. What natural resources should be addressed or considered?
3. What action would you like to see taken that is related to these natural resources?
4. What should a restoration plan do?



## Appendix E

# MRERP Civic Engagement Small Group Meeting Comments

## **Transcript from Small & Large Group Sessions (Notes were copied from flipcharts used to record the major points of discussion.)**

### **Session II: Values Surrounding Restoration**

#### *Social Context and Identity*

- River brought us here-history
- Recreation: fishing, boating
- Water quality and quantity: potable water, water for 33K people
- Flood protection
- Identify not just the river, but banks, bluffs, environment has changed
- All economic activities started around river
- History is the big picture
- River itself is our identity
- East and west river identity (west: agriculture, rural, not glacial) (east: populated, urban, glacial till)
- Needs: irrigation, fresh water, recreation, flood control
- In long term-priorities have changed, use has expanded
- Are needs being met?
- Recreation partially- communities suffer when water is low, power production is a problem when water is low
- River connection to weather adds value to farmland, crops
- Adequate supply of fresh/clean water
- Sedimentation affecting recreation, water supply
- Degradation of river banks: farm land, vegetation, loss of habitat
- Beauty, aesthetics
- Natural “view” versus artificial “bank” (soft stabilization)
- Water intakes: require more maintenance, changing locations of intakes, quality of water?
- Irrigation systems are impacted-sedimentation
- Magnet for population growth
- Source of life
- Source of transportation
- Grew up next to river
- Source of water: domestic/drinking
- Tribe has no quantifiable right to Missouri River water. Economic potential not allowed to tap
- Having water in landscape is as natural as breathing. “It is who you are.”
- Recreation
- Educational aspect of river: paleontological digs
- Drinking water is clean and abundant, has improved since dam
- Water quality. We don't spend enough energy with
- Aging of system: things have changed, have been dramatic. Sedimentation. Now there are green algae blooms
- Campsite had to be moved because of erosion
- Farming: erosion cuts away land, bank stabilization would be beneficial in certain areas
- Losing cottonwoods
- Need to save what's there from erosion
- Some restoration actions have negative effect on other river uses (sandbar islands: waste of ??)
- Boating/hunting: wide and shallow (is continuing). Pouka, Nebraska to Yankton is dangerous to travel
- Values and benefits
  - Water source: agriculture - irrigation, recreation – fishing & boating, jobs, hydropower, drinking water, irrigation, flood control
- Needs

- Fix sedimentation, sediment control, more power generation, stable level, model above White River delta
- Benefits
  - Drinking water, irrigation, recreation, low cost power, jobs, tourism, navigation downstream
- Connection
  - Jobs, irrigation, drinking water, tourism (recreation and fishing), quality of life
- Practices and traditions
  - Fishing/ice fishing, ranching 100 years along river, sustainable water supply (domestic irrigation)

### *Community*

- Able to get clean, affordable potable water. Used to be wells
- Quality of life is the river (Pierre): boating, skiing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, goose hunting, aesthetics- it's beautiful!. This brings people to the town
- Missouri River is a selling point/draw to Burke. Moving there and tourism
- Used in interviews and recruiting for jobs
- Hydropower-everyone gets an allocation. Keeps rates affordable
- Future-community
- Sedimentation issues, sandbars
- Water quality, flood control, recreation
- Could use the river more for education, history-teach our own story
- Pick-Sloane promises were not realized: irrigation
- Economic vitality
- Hydropower-majority of electricity: affordable power, affects communities across the state
- River provides primary water source for most communities: affordability, community health and livestock because of water quality better than wells
- Tourism is big part of economy: major second biggest industry from instate and out, brings people from other towns to river, fishing
- Erosion contributes to loss of taxes/revenue
- Habitat for wildlife is decreasing, moving away
- Rising water table converting crop land to wet land
- Recreation: camping, boating, fishing, etc.
- River has seemed to help people downstream in other states
- Affects social and economic aspects of communication
- River dictates everything we do
- Every type of habitat you could want in one area
- Community – Quality
  - Jobs: higher income, availability of jobs, casino jobs, RWS jobs
  - Natural beauty, drinking water (existence), water conservation, tourism
- Community - Culture
  - Recreation centers on river, tourism
  - Made community bigger because of flooding, pumped storage
  - Types of jobs: hunting and fishing guides, arts, recreation, visiting monuments
- How impacted without use: loss of jobs, lower population

### *Economic vitality*

- Historically transportation of goods now, dams
- Without use of river
- Many communities would not be there without tourism, and recreation
- Would have to revamp water supply
- Summer homes/retirement homes
- Permanent residency
- Recreation: economic impact for river communities
- Camping, fishing, boating, etc.
- Tourism: visit historical sites/parks

- Development of new communities along river (trophy homes)
- Dams and sedimentation contributed to loss of farm land
  
- Economic: tourism has become important
- Recreation trails
- Missouri River has shaped culture. Originally with trade
- Come full circle working together to move state forward
- Tribe has lost “way of life” following reservoir: no fishing, can’t grow trees, people don’t swim, don’t have “means” to use river, lost economic use of river
- Sedimentation has impacted drinking water system needs \$ = up arrow
- Even the thought of the river impacts community activities
- Affects decisions of local governments
- Access (public versus private) can be an issue
- Limited boat docks on west side
- Used to have island with recreation opportunities. It was taken away, not the same
- Hydro power – energy to communities
- Communities have changed: agriculture to recreation
- Canals could benefit local agriculture
- Sport fishing is second biggest economic impact
- Irrigation use
- Flood control

## Session IV

### *Future Scenario Visioning*

- River that is:
  - friendly: recreation, improved access
  - healthy, not polluting (not undue)
  - stable: bank stabilization to check erosion, siltation control
  - efficient: hydropower, better production
  - beauty: keep natural beauty as much as possible. This is our history
- River that is sustainable
- Money
  - Balance between wildlife and people needs aren’t always compatible. Keep quality of life
  - Current conditions as baseline for preservation. Dams have lifespan – review goals, time span
  - Reforestation and bank stabilization. Cottonwoods lined the river. Deer, beaver
  - Stable water levels: affects vegetation, erosion
- Actions and plans
  - Money is needed
    - Long term planning. Is 30-50 years long enough?
    - Not politicized, bureaucracy
    - Include master manual
    - “Preserve and improve”
- Quality of life
- Maintain dams
- Sediment control
- Not billions of dollars to save pallid sturgeon, etc.
- Can’t and don’t want at original state
- Maintain fisheries
- Do everything to maintain current river
- More access for fishing boats, walking
- Designated development
- Protect and maintain the natural river below Ft. Peck, below Garrison to Bismarck, Ft. Randall
- Gainers and losers
- Upgrade power plants

- Recycle power
- Renewable energy
- Coupling wind and hydro
- More check dams in small tributaries
- Protect cultural sites
- More emphasis on watersheds
- How would it look different?
  - More check dams and trees, cottonwoods
  - Beaver dams
  - More shelter belts
  - Riparian areas
  - Managed by areas/ecosystems
- Sediment traps: improved water quality, improved capacity of reservoirs
- Improved sedimentation management: basin wide
- Maintain quality and quantity of system as it is today
- Boat races = economic
- Improve bank erosion
- More return to native prairie grass
- Holistic Missouri River basin management to return natural function i.e. flooding for cottonwoods
- Minimize farm erosion
- Manage reservoirs for spawning habitat (native and non native)
- Recreation opportunities
- Maintain flood control ??
- Boat ramps increase recreation
- Goose pits equal hunting and increased economy
- Good water quality
- More islands: habitat, summer recreation
- Fishing derbys and other events boost community
- More water flow reserves for conservation and hunting
- Recover beneficial species including beavers, check dams and wetlands
- Education of the people about river basin as a naturally changing/evolving system
- Continuous evaluation system and ability to make changes
- Energy production i.e. hydro, wind, renewable
- Extra basin usage i.e. outside of basin
- How to understand threats/opportunities and how to participate in process
- Development of pump storage using renewable sources (wind) to move water uphill for electrical generation
- System for providing municipal areas having a lack of water sources. Also, could be used for irrigation
- Natural resource conservation in the watershed
- More public access: trail along river, recreation areas, residences
- Balance between user and manager: consequences should be two pronged
- Everyone in the watershed will have quality and quantity water
- More irrigation for food production to feed the future populations
- Education of all people, residents, regarding the river and its impact on quality of life and survival
- Oil roads on either side of the river
- Fishing access points (expansion and functional)

## Session V

### *Issues and Problems*

- Balance everyone's needs
- Pollution: local and from downstream, big stuff and runoff, dredging disturbs contaminants
- Sedimentation biggest issue?
- Water levels are a two edged sword

- Endangered species: we're losing species, habitat loss, but ESA law not always conclusive, is species loss inevitable?
- Hydroelectric efficiency: opportunity is available technology
- Balance with out of state use
- Out of state uses continued: opportunity to do things on our terms
- Barriers
  - People – individual interests, geographic differences
  - Money
  - Political will/bureaucracy/autonomy
  - Laws and restriction
- Nature: what do you do in drought/flood years?
- Sedimentation: bank and tributary erosion
- Water quality
- Flow from dams affects water fluctuation, water temperature, habitat
- Fish spawning habitat
- River access
- Opportunities
- Targeted approach
- Create islands and sandbars/cottonwoods
- Holistic plan that takes into account unique local/regional management plans
- Maintain flood control benefits
- To define net zero impact (baseline)
- Maintain/improve energy production
- Watershed management
- “Do nothing” is not viable: need to educate next generation(s) on river evolution, start marketing changes
- Public education about MR
- Cost for restoration
- Ethical issues (accountability)
- Too long planning and implementation period
- Need short term plan with immediate implementation
- What is this scientific evidence? Need more information
- The Corps of Engineers
- Congress
- More input from local people!
- Barge traffic
- Navigation?
- Sedimentation
- Flooding/sedimentation/level control
- Non adherence to 44 flood control act amendment
- Lack of local input
- Lack of political clout

#### *Opportunities*

- Create Mo River basin district with states and provinces. Heavy citizen input, regular meetings
- Basin wide recognition that sedimentation is an issue. Recognized need, limited by funding, make revenue source-valuable nutrients-move efficiently
- Quantify savings through water projects, look for revenue sources eg. flood prevention, water storage
- Increase turbine efficiency through technology
- Gregory county pump storage, Blunt reservoir
- Natural resources
- Fish species monitoring: native and nonnative pollution effects
- Native vegetation on banks, stabilization
- Energy
- Beauty, views

- Natural habitat
- Access to natural resources: camping, fishing, boating, dispersed throughout reservoir system as needed
- Continued beneficial use of water: quality, quantity, availability to rural communities and agriculture
- Restoration plan should balance needs/efficient uses with natural resources
- To define “success”
- To determine what the river uses are
- Potential solutions
- Lower water levels, water always flows
- Education
- Collaboration
- Natural Resources
- Cottonwood islands
- Cottonwood overbanks
- Walleye
- Water (quantity)
- Native prairie
- Fish and wildlife
- Deer
- Wetlands
- Wild turkey
- Restoration means “putting it back the way it was”
- Restoration is “odd” for this type of plan. There is an evolution that needs to be managed
- Proactive/finding the best path forward
- An informed and educated public is restoration
  
- Tradeoffs:
  - Making MR accessible to everyone along the whole river
  - Renewable energy and water access using pump storage
  - Transportation using MR from Montana to Missouri
  - Bottom land: restore forest and wildlife habitat
  - Preference power (utilities) lower cost energy
  - Power/irrigation
  - Wildlife enhancement
  - Citizen input through organizational meeting similar to Equip. Dollars: input on how money is spent

#### *Possible Actions*

- More facilities (resource labs) for education, research, conferences and recreation (NE)
- Advisory council (public/citizen) to assure the implementation of MRERP
- Watershed districts: local people manage the area and work with local landowners
- Valid survey to get grassroot input with reason
- Update 44<sup>th</sup> amendment
- Corps people won’t listen!
- Access to citizen liaison to Corp
- Achieving the Vision
- More public input
- More partners/cooperation
- To pay for the implementation of the vision: fee structures should be investigated
- Develop a benefit/loss ratio to prorate the cost by state for improvement of MR e.g. one year flood control has a value
- Public advisory council should be created to assure the implementation of the MRERP
- What makes it successful?
  - Balance
    - Keeping a high level view
    - The 8 authorized purposes

- Continued communication and planning, continued stakeholder involvement
- Ongoing representation of all stakeholders and public
- Preserve hydroelectric aspect: green and cheap

#### **Session VI: Input from Observers**

- They were impressed by the group's care for the river.
- The discussions were broad base and included topics from recreation to wildlife management to economics.
- There were many ideas expressed today that have not been heard in other civic engagement meetings. This information and input provides us (the observers) with many new ideas and perspectives.