**Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee Wildlife Tech Section**

**Wednesday, October 04, 2017**

* **Beta-testing vegetation sampling and Refuge Habitat Management Plan update-Stephen Winter-USFWS**
  + Second call for volunteers to help test website with UMRCC aquatic vegetation data
  + If interested in beta-testing contact [stephen\_winter@fws.gov](mailto:stephen_winter@fws.gov)
  + Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is ready for partnership input
  + HMP sets the priority resources of concern for the Refuge for the next 15 years
  + HMP has objectives for priority resources of concern but could use partnership to improve objectives especially for floodplain forest
  + Stephen will be contacting different partners about setting up in-person meeting to go over the plan and handing out the draft for comments
* **Forest Inventory on Pool 21-Ben Vandermyde-USACE**
  + Over the summer, UMRCC participated in forest inventory on Pool 21
  + The area sample was a part of a 1,300 acres of pecan grove in Great River National Wildlife Refuge
  + Area was selected due to the importance of maintaining the site’s richness in species composition and diversity of age structure
  + There were five teams that covered 300 acres with 120 plot locations completed
* **Floodplain Forest and Reed Canary Grass Discussion**
  + Difference in dynamics of RCG and floodplain forest between northern and southern portion
  + Challenges are access to the site, scale, deer browse and beavers affecting survival of tree planting, hydrology, and monetary
  + Important to remove thatch level, fire on federal lands is a huge barrier
  + A key component is the breakup the rhizomes
  + More research is needed to develop best management practice for establishing forest in RCG dominated area
* **Muskrat Decline in the United States- Adam Ahlers-Kanas State University**
  + Lower harvest numbers and anecdotal reports suggest widespread decline of muskrat population declines
  + Obtaining information at large spatial scale is difficult leaving reliance on harvest data
  + Issue with harvest data is biased such as economic drive especially pelt price
  + Looking at harvest data from Association of Wildlife and Fish Agencies from 1970-2012 (when corrected for pelt prices) show a decline across the United States especially in the southeast
  + Not all states showed a decline such as North Dakota and Wisconsin
  + Scale of measurement was at a state scale and will mask trends on smaller scales
  + Why are we seeing these declines? Habitat loss, degradation, hydrology, predation, disease, and harvest changes could be playing a part
* **Fox and Gray Squirrel hunting mortality in SE Minnesota-Ryan Tebo-MN DNR**
  + Decline in harvest and hunters since late 1990’s
  + Perceived decline in squirrel numbers from the small game hunting community in Minnesota
  + Study site was Whitewater Wildlife Management Area (allows hunting) and Whitewater State Park (doesn’t allow hunting)
  + Around 50 squirrels were radio collared at each site for each year (2015 and 2016)
  + Data augmentation was used due to large amount of unrecovered and missing collars
  + Annual survival rate was 49.3% at Whitewater State Park and 25.9% at Whitewater WMA
  + No indication that sex or age influence survival