

AGENDA and MINUTES
A-Team Conference Call
July 30, 2009
9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

1. Roll call and introductions

Present: MNDNR: Kevin Stauffer, Walt Popp ; WIDNR: J.T. Dukerschein, Jim Fischer ; IADNR: Kirk Hansen, Dave Bierman INHS: John Chick, Greg Sass, ILDNR; Rob Maher, MODOC: Janet Sternburg, Kat McCain; USGS/UMESC: Jennie Sauer, Barry Johnson; USACE: Karen Hagerty, Marv Hubbell, Mark Cornish, David Potter USFWS: Rick Frietsche, Eric Nelson

2. Approval or additions to Agenda.

KH suggested we switch the order of items 7 and 8, and the chair agreed.

3. Strategic and Operational Plan for Fiscal Years 2010-2014 (Hubbell)

Many people participated and Hubbell encouraged us to chime in with relevant items. EMPCC in May adopted with language changes. Barry Johnson – changes are reflected in the final document. Questions? none.

How we'll use it—first will make it easier to read for those not involved in program—high gloss version.

Stauffer noted the copy sent out that highlighted all specific references to A-TEAM and asked if we think there sufficient direction and/or enough items to occupy A-TEAM for the duration of the plan.

Hubbell - looks at value of adding individuals with different or pertinent disciplines as needed for decisions/discussions.

Sternburg - we do not necessarily need to add full time members, but for disciplines such as mussels and flood plain forests bring additional experts to participate and add information/insights. Still in state of flux, but as we move into new areas very important to have broader representation of those areas.

Fischer - in past as we've reviewed projects, natural tendency for everyone to go to area of expertise—we tend to all have our own personal biases and has driven direction of group as a whole—it will benefit us to expand our expertise.

Stauffer agreed. Should we leave it up to each state and agency to determine who they want to participate, or do we want to do it more broadly and solicit others to participate when needed?

Hubbell - anticipate a couple steps—ultimately each state/agency makes that decisions, but sit down with draft charter, roles and expectations document for EMPCC, A-TEAM. 2 levels—Roles and Expectations and actual Implementation. To some extent EMPCC should weigh in, examine the roles each plays—value in that. Capturing and codifying our good working system would help MH to communicate to others how these groups function. Address at the general level, but when it comes down to who participates when, we need to be very flexible how we implement it.

Stauffer will e-mail the Roles and Expectations document to the group for review right after the call.

Sternburg suggested at EMPCC meeting next week, make suggestion that on page two of strategic plan, subset from both ATEAM and EMPCC get together and look at previous documents, then take a look at how they might want to bring in these other groups of expertise. Consensus reached a good starting point—esp. if start with Roles and Expectations.

Stauffer asked Fisher and Sternburg, as dual reps on both bodies, to help with this task. Both agreed.

Sternberg - a couple questions on roles of ATEAM in strategic plan. Again, page 2, bullet 3, indicates annual review at November meeting—who's in charge of writing that? Are we doing it this coming year? Do we need to discuss at October A-TEAM meeting?

Hubbell - wanted to make sure S/O Plan didn't get shelved—established review of previous year, also for coming year planning—making sure faithful that SP. Anticipated corps and USGS would take lead in preparing those documents—they are involved with Scope of Work (SOW)—take first cut and give it to the group chosen to look at it for input and feedback and make adjustments based on that. Sternberg - this year? Hubbell - YES, reason being SP already has yielded many important results—LIDAR plan, LCU, etc—in many ways we've made a lot of progress already and useful for us to mark this progress right away this year. Cut our teeth see how it goes have our first one under our belt.

Fischer - how well group on S/O Plan worked as team—in annual review have maybe a subset of S/O Plan, as the diversity of that functioned very well. Try to maintain in annual review doing ourselves a favor.

Hubbell - good news is it is not massive undertaking. SOW we already have gets reduced to: 1. matrix of milestones—foundation document to look at what was accomplished for the past year—tracks status, due dates, etc. 2. SOW for coming year is other foundation document. Won't know budget but will have targets, 3. Anticipated fiscal breakdown and can talk about that.

Stauffer – summarized other items specific to A-Team in S/O Plan.

Short discussion on LTRM and HREP working together more (from Page 12 of S/O Plan).

Sternburg - gave an overview of some discussions that took place at EMPCC on how program might participate more with HREP managers—is there a defined need for ATEAM to work with HREP mgrs?

Hubbell - raises some interesting discussion points—should we do an S/O Plan for the project HREP side? Within each district (FWWG, RATT, RRRRC, etc.) there are opportunities for LTRMP staff to participate. We try at the project level to make sure our project delivery teams include as many as possible but may be missing some of you. I've been looking at role of science as it relates to the projects. At Field Stations and states, agencies we probably have around 40-45 scientists and scientist/managers that we haven't been taking full advantage of and this is just another area where we can.

4. All Things Budget (Hubbell):

Hubbell - earlier we talked about fact there are a lot of moving parts that are hard to track. FY09 has been an amazing year for the program. This program is one of 3 national priorities since 2001 and still were in 2009 - Administration thinks great deal of work you guys are doing. Ended up with almost \$17 mil, which was lower than expected, but 2 things happened—flood damage money in FY08 and then over \$14 in economic stimulus money (ERA funds). All together put us to about \$38 million—lots of activity this year. In middle of that, the no new construction restriction means we are in process of developing SOW for FY10 (LTRMP, UMESC side) will issue MPR for state side for this FY—state money will be in place at beginning of Fed FY Oct. 1. Makes developing that SOW easier -- \$2.4 million will go into that. Other side of this—Hubbell can move 20% of \$ from HREP to LTRMP side. This plan provides relief to Field Stations and in FY10 that money used for project construction. SOW for extra projects will come from this year's funding and no FY10 \$ expended. Bathymetry plan—things came together --\$2.5 million to do LIDAR and Bathymetry. Should be able to finish the entire system, bluff to bluff, IL River, everything. Pressure to get it spent and under contract by mid-September 2009 and done by September 30, 2010. Exciting—S/O Plan and advance planning paying off big time.

Hagerty – provided details of contracting process and timelines.

Sternburg - asked how long after work is done it will take before people can use that info?

Hagerty/Hubbell - IADNR does first cut—a lot to produce—not sure of schedule yet but will investigate it and it will be a topic for a future meeting. Larry Robinson is providing specs for computers that will crank this data out—what will we need for equipment to be able to do that? We'll need to insure that 4-8 computers acquired at USGS and COE offices and give others specs on what it takes. Larry's looking at making it servable by chunks—very data intense—depends on level you want. Quick and dirty is easy, but more intensive is harder.

Chick - asked where the data will be housed? Some new supercomputing facility being built at U of I somewhere—happy to look into it if you think it's something that could be helpful.

Hubbell - Starts at UMESC, put a call out to 3 corps districts as to capability to use. Computer purchases complicated.

Johnson - working on SOW for GIS and linking up the 3—LCU, bathymetry, LIDAR—do things systemically. \$300K to start GIS/Landscape analysis. Larry Robinson working to produce GIS elevation data layers for use by anyone with a GIS. 1. Simple GIS data layers 2. More complex analyses if people want to do it on their own. Needs expertise and supercomputer.

Johnson - stimulus funding target value of \$300K--SOW --anticipating development of hydrodynamic models to describe habitat characteristics with changing water levels. Create a seamless elevation model for entire system which will be basis for this hydrodynamic modeling. Can do status modeling now where run segment of discharge through pool. We will be able to do that dynamically after this work is done. U of IA will fund students 15-18 months.

FY10 Budget update—

Hubbell - budget targets somewhere between 18 and 20 million \$ range (House and Senate) last year got slightly less. From Senate markup last 2 years - no new construction contracts. FY10 can't execute projects if this is not lifted. Discussion held at February EMPCC meeting -after hard work on behalf of partnership appears from senate language leaning towards lifting that restriction and letting us resume as normal program.

5. NESP/EMP Transition update (Hubbell)

Conflicting messages last few years from President and Congress. President's budget funds EMP — Congress for transition to NESP, hence no new starts on HREP side. Developed transition plan on how to move EMP into NESP. USACOE Administration decision for 1st year would not honor that request—not budgeted. FY09 Congress restated interest—worked hard to come up with one to offer to Administration. 3-4 highlights in plan—value of ecosystem restoration, LTRMP not getting lost in shuffle, 3rd one is functioning of program—transition should be at point where NESP receives \$75 million in construction general pot of money, where EMP is.

NESP is dual purpose authorization-linked to inland waterway improvements and mandates comparable progress in both. Inland waterway trust match is creating an issue with comparable progress— in that trust fund needs to be “healthy” to accomplish comparable progress. Senate language recognizes all those things are important and transition from EMP to NESP contingent on solving all those problems. There will likely be 2 years for transition once those problems addressed. Appears major issues have been recognized in Senate now and probably by House. Transition plan was widely circulated. Bottom line: restores EMP to full-function program and recognizes transition of EMP into NESP. Good news for us as a region.

6. Research projects for 2010--life after APE's! (Johnson, Sauer)

Sauer -everyone's aware APEs taking new route under strategic plan—science plans will be developed for 4 years for current focus areas. For 2010 not in place yet, will be developed. It's a transition year – proposals requested for extensions of current or previous APE's. Proposals due by September 4 – no exceptions. Teresa Newton has mussel research plan underway w/help of mussel ad hoc UMRCC. Also have \$ to develop umbrella document science plan of how those 5 areas in sp will be developed.

Sternburg/others – so how much will be available for research in FY10

Johnson/Hubbell - FY10 LTRMP funding expected is \$5.4 million from a \$18 mil EMP budget--similar to FY09 which funded around 7 or 8 APE projects. How much \$, how many projects we receive as well as availability of people to put together plan for next year. Have to play that by ear as we get more information. MH-we may have a little \$ to get some work under SOW under FY9 \$ for FY10work. Mussel work is on that list for Teresa Newton.

Sternburg—just not sure of process as research plans developed—who participates? Role for A-TEAM? Hubbell - a couple levels in that—give people as much opportunity for input as possible. S/O Plan deliberately vague on detail. Probably use subgroup of S/O Plan folks to help in develop and review plans.

Sauer—good role for A-TEAM pursuing research plan and also bringing in other folks. Mussel research plan needs A-TEAM review as well. Learning process as we go—

Stauffer – what are the plans for reviewing research proposals for FY10?

Sauer – similar to APE process. Send it out to A-TEAM folks for review and ranking.

7. Indicators ad hoc update (Hagerty, Johnson)

Hagerty - quick update on status of Indicators group. Continuing discussion at end of full conference call. Initially, group is doing 2 things: Barry Johnson put a draft purpose statement together which will be main focus of discussion later today. Hagerty will be adding timeline and next steps. The group also plans to discuss publication “The myth of paradise to human restoration” during conference call. Anyone beyond the ad hoc is certainly welcome to stay on for Indicators group discussion.

8. Open discussion, other topics, agency updates, etc.

Hagerty - David Potter is the new A-Team rep for the St. Paul District, taking over for Dan Wilcox.

McCain - new hierarchy at Open River Field Station. Kat is new project manager and supervising WQ and Fish LTRMP-funded staff. New Center of Applied River Science building on hold.

John Chick - hosting Chinese delegation next week. River Conference begins Aug. 10. Hopes everyone can attend.

Fischer - WIDNR: in difficult budget-staying alive— internal budgets 25% hit for next FY. Staff required 8 days furlough per year. River Team looking at number of potential retirees in next few years. Future of WI presence on river uncertain. DNR going through workload evaluation and if people out there feel there are important things that WI should continue to participate in, their input would be welcome. The other thing that's exciting is that the Secretary wants to visit MR, bring more attention as a whole to the river and also to issue of aquatic nuisance species.

Sternburg - MO not in dire budget, but like WI but is reducing work staff by about 10%--130-150 position. Also doing workload evaluation, will be coming out this fall. Some folks who participate in river issues may not be able to do so at same level as in past.

Rob Maher, Illinois- New director appointed - Mark Miller. Has been supportive of river issues, especially IL river. Expanding Long Term Electrofishing to Miss. River. Looking at moving folks from some inland positions to cover more riverine job responsibilities. Greg Sass —expanded LTF program—LTRMP protocols will be carried over to Chain of Rocks, Pool 19 reach now. In future hope is to grow to also include other major areas of UMR. Hubbell asked if data will be part of LTRMP database? Data is Sportfish Restoration Project, and will be house in IL—available to interested people. Pulsed DC in addition to AC has been run since late 50's. John Chick said, "We're at embryonic stage of expansion—there is a desire to come up with mechanism for efficient transfer of LTRMP protocol collected data, but we're a few years away for a number of internal reasons. Right now there is main channel border electrofishing only, not any of the other strata."

Stauffer - MNDNR- Ecological Resources and Waters Divisions are merging. It's not likely to have big effect on river staff, but may change roles slightly. During next few months email system and addresses will be changing. No furlough days are planned in Minnesota, but there is a 5-10% operating reduction across most functions and they are more limited, especially travel.

Hansen – IADNR has 10-12% reductions and they are getting by w/attrition.

Stauffer—Jim Fischer and others suggested we use the A-TEAM Corner on website more. We'll try to do that and post minutes, Milestones, agendas etc.

Nelson and Frietsche USFWS reported they are reviewing applications for Don Hultman's Directory position . Jason Wilson is new manager at Great River Wildlife refuge

9. Next meeting: Stauffer suggested that the October meeting is typically face to face—"Do we have topics for a face to face meeting?" Hagerty suggested update on 2010 S/O Plan.

Project presentations? John Chick was going to check with people doing floodplain forest work. The group agreed that next meeting should focus on presentations and learning. Stauffer will get idea of what could be presented and look for times and places. Mussel research plan was suggested as a topic to have presented/discussed.

Stauffer will get information out in about a month and look for times and locations to meet. He will also look into possibility of using "webinar" format for this and other future meetings. Hubbell said Rock Island COE has hosted webinars and could do that for the A-TEAM.

The general call adjourned at 10:54 am and the Indicators ad hoc group call began shortly after.