



**DRAFT Summary Minutes
Chief of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board
Doubletree Hilton Jacksonville Riverfront
1201 River Place Blvd
Jacksonville, Florida
January 10, 2018**

1. Call to Order

Ms. Mindy Simmons, the Designated Federal Officer (DFO), called the Chief of Engineers' Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) meeting to order at 9:00 AM on 10 January 2018 at the Doubletree Hilton Jacksonville Riverfront Hotel, 1201 River Place Blvd, Jacksonville, Florida, Dr. Rollin Hotchkiss, Chairman, presiding. Ms. Simmons read for the record that the EAB was created by the Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Frederick Clarke, in April of 1970 as a means to gain outside expert and independent advice on environmental issues facing the Corps of Engineers. The board is subject to the rules and regulations of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972. This is a Sunshine in the Government Act meeting and, as such, is open to the public. The Army Corps of Engineers is the sponsor of the board and provides support for the activities of the board.

EAB Members Present:

DR. ROLLIN H. HOTCHKISS, Chair
DR. MARY C. BARBER, Vice Chair
DR. SAMUEL ATKINSON, Member
DR. TAMMY NEWCOMB, Member
PROF. CHARLES A. SIMENSTAD, Member
DR. FRED H. SKLAR, Member
DR. CHARLES SOMERVILLE, Member

Also Present:

LTG TODD SEMONITE, Chief, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
MINDY SIMMONS, Designated Federal Officer, USACE
KAREN BAKER, Chief, Environmental Division, USACE Headquarters
NOEL CLAY, Acting Chief, Policy and Planning Division, USACE Headquarters
DR. ILKER ADIGUZEL, Director, Environmental Laboratory, U.S. Army Engineer
Research and Development Center
Anne Cann, USACE
COL Jason Kirk, Jacksonville District Commander, USACE
MAJ Covington, USACE
Al Cofrancesco, USACE
Linda Lillycrop, USACE
Aubrey Hirshorin, USACE
Eric Summa, USACE

Jackie Keiser, USACE
Lisa Clark, USACE
Todd Bridges, USACE
Matt Schrader, USACE
Amanda Parker, USACE
Katie Brutsche, USACE
Sean Smith, USACE
Stephen Gallagher
Scott Levy, www.bluefish.org
Don McNeil, Caterpillar
Leon J. Carrero, Aerostar SES LLC
Gregory Scott Hughes, Aerostar SES LLC
Lisa Rinaman, St. John's River Keeper

2. Introduction of EAB Members and USACE Senior Leaders

Each of the seven EAB members present introduced themselves, as well as USACE Senior Leaders Karen Baker, Noel Clay, and Dr. Ilker Adiguzel. Ms. Baker is Chief of the Environmental Division at USACE HQ, and also leads the Environmental Community of Practice. Ms. Clay is Acting Chief of Planning and Policy at USACE HQ. Dr. Adiguzel is the Director of the Environmental Laboratory at the Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, MS.

3. Opening Remarks

LTG Todd Semonite, Chief of Engineers, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He is looking forward to hearing from EAB members as well as the public. He thanked Jacksonville District staff for making all the arrangements for the meeting and field visits.

LTG Semonite then described where he wants the Corps to go during his tenure as the Chief. He said that the credibility of the Corps is measured by the organization's ability to deliver results that are on time, on budget, and of exceptional quality. To do this and to maintain the Corps' status as a world class engineering organization, now and into the future, the Corps needs to focus on three fundamentals: 1) strengthen the foundation; 2) deliver the program; and 3) achieve the vision.

He talked about the response to the three major hurricanes of 2017 and the USACE efforts to provide emergency power and to rebuild the power grid in Puerto Rico. Also the fires in California – debris removal so that people can begin to rebuild their homes. More recently the mudslides – cleanup of that. He emphasized adherence to environmental principles in all this work.

LTG Semonite expressed a general desire to move from powerpoint to implementation. He wants to translate knowledge into actionable items that can be used on the ground.

LTG Semonite made a commitment to listen to the feedback offered at the meeting and to find ways that USACE can continue to try to address the concerns raised.

Dr. Rollin Hotchkiss thanked Jacksonville District staff and other USACE staff for all of their support to the EAB. He said that the EAB is a verb; not a noun. They are completely committed to fulfilling their charge: providing unbiased and scientifically sound advice across the environmental issues the Corps wants to solve. On behalf of all EAB members, he said that they are enthused to learn more today together and to exchange ideas about future directions.

4. Welcome and ‘Living the Environmental Operating Principles’ in Jacksonville District

COL Jason Kirk, Commander of the Jacksonville District, welcomed all to the meeting, and provided an overview of the work of his district, especially how they are dealing with environmental issues. Jacksonville District is actively engaged in response and recovery from the recent hurricanes in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Florida, and ensuring that the environmental operating principles are guiding those efforts. Regional sediment management is implemented to benefit navigation projects, beach nourishment, and ecosystem restoration. And, of course there is the Everglades, the largest ecosystem restoration project in the world.

Eric Summa, Chief of Planning and Policy for Jacksonville District, gave a powerpoint presentation on how his district is living the Environmental Operating Principles. These principles foster unity of purpose on environmental issues and ensure that conservation and environmental preservation and restoration are considered in all USACE activities. He used several examples to illustrate this. One was developing ways to carry out dredging at night without endangering any manatees. This was accomplished by having extra observers, different lighting, and slowing of the dredge bucket as it enters to ensure that the observers could tell there were no manatees in the area. ([link to ppt on website](#))

5. USACE News

Ms. Karen Baker, Chief of the Environmental Division, USACE Headquarters, provided updates on the Environmental Division and Environmental Community of Practice, which she leads. They are emphasizing communication at all levels, within and outside of the organization. USACE has improved on the sustainability scorecard and is now green on all but two parameters.

Ms. Noel Clay, Acting Chief of Policy and Planning Division, USACE Headquarters, shared some news from the planning community, including efforts to transcend stovepipes, developing strategic assessments, and some of the provisions of 2016 WRDA which are now being implemented.

Dr. Ilker Adiguzel, Director of the Environmental Lab at the Engineering Research and Development Center, USACE is new to this particular position. The emphasis at the Environmental Lab is on finding solutions – bringing scientific and engineering principles to bear on real world problems. He also discussed briefly the Engineering with Nature initiative with respect to beneficial use of dredged materials.

7. EAB Work Plan Updates

Regional Strategic Assessments: Dr. Barber reported that the EAB has reviewed the South Atlantic Division Regional Assessment, and will be providing a letter report to the Chief at the end of February. Their initial thoughts are that the purpose of the assessment needs to be clearly stated, including how the assessment will be used and by whom. Also, the time frame of analysis may need to be extended to capture the impact of all drivers. The EAB encourages divisions to consider the challenges to public health and other issues which intersect with USACE missions and responsibilities. It would also be helpful to include a risk assessment framework.

Sustainability Training: Dr. Atkinson delivered to LTG Semonite a list of 66 universities which offer some form of sustainability training. He encouraged USACE to define what is meant by a career path in sustainability and to look at existing Prospect courses to see if some might constitute a certificate program for sustainability and develop some new courses if needed. LTG Semonite and Ms. Baker will follow up on these recommendations.

Invasive Species: Dr. Newcomb discussed the ecosystem disruption that is occurring due to invasive species. She believes that USACE can deliver world class leadership under their authorities and with their partners for invasive species management. The EAB task is currently in the data collection stage. A letter report will be delivered in August. LTG Semonite suggested that USACE may be able to integrate and synchronize the federal agencies on invasive species management.

Environmental Metrics: Professor Simenstad reported progress on this task. They are looking at creating better metrics, better capturing environmental benefits across business lines (not just in the ecosystem restoration business line). LTG Semonite emphasized the critical importance of this task.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management: Dr. Sklar reported that the EAB has identified some issues with Adaptive Management training and expertise in USACE and there is little use of conceptual models in the development of monitoring and adaptive management plans. A phase one report will be delivered in April which will recommend finalization of the ERDC technical guide for monitoring and adaptive management and making it more applicable to small restoration projects. Other recommendations will include adaptive management training and an adaptive management hotline where project managers can access expertise and assistance.

Streamlining Regulatory processes for reservoir sediment management: Dr. Hotchkiss described the increasing problem of sediment accumulation in reservoirs behind dams and the need to move it somewhere. However, it is not always clear how to permit that activity and that leads to permitting inefficiencies. He stated that the next step is for him to meet with key officials at USACE Headquarters. This meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Infrastructure: Dr. Somerville reported that the EAB goal in this task is to ensure that sound environmental principles are used in the process of deciding how finite resources are allocated to infrastructure operation and maintenance, and even disposition. The EAB will be reviewing a value model designed to inform decision-making relative to infrastructure management.

8. Sediment Management and Beneficial Use for Collaborative, Sustainable Natural Infrastructure

Dr. Todd Bridges and Dr. Linda Lillycrop of the Engineer Research and Development Center, USACE, made a presentation on this topic. The overarching theme was creating conditions that enable project teams in the field to discover and implement new positive solutions to sediment management problems, and driving forces behind this are the rapidly rising costs of dredging and the desire to be more sustainable. Dr. Bridges and Dr. Lillycrop discussed the Engineering with Nature Program and the National Regional Sediment Management Program and examined several case studies. ([link to ppt on website](#))

9. Field Level Regional Sediment Management Applications

Ms. Keiser of South Atlantic Division delivered a presentation on how Regional Sediment Management is being operationalized in the South Atlantic Division. Her major point was that a good business case is required in order to implement regional sediment management. She used the example of dredging Jacksonville Harbor to illustrate this point. By combining projects and authorities they were able to show huge savings as well as additional benefits. ([link to ppt on website](#)).

10. Environmental Metrics and Valuation

Dr. Hirshorin made a presentation on the business case for restoring ecosystems with regional sediment management. She discussed how to describe and quantify the benefits of combining a navigation dredging project with an ecosystem restoration project, using ecosystem goods and services analysis, ([link to ppt on website](#)).

11. Public Comments

Ms. Simmons summarized six written comments which had been submitted.

The first was from Ms. Jean Public who stated that the Corps needs to give better consideration to ethical, moral, and life sustaining elements of our plans.

The second was from Mr. Jim Waddell who submitted four documents which presented evidence (2017 fish returns) and expressed support for breaching the Lower Snake River dams in the near term. The first was a cover letter. The second was a letter from the Sierra Club. The third was a document outlining five ways that he views as possible for breaching the Snake River Dams in the near future and different methods for doing that. And the fourth was a summary of the 2017 fish returns that illustrates the situation with Snake River fish stocks.

The third written comment was from Ms. Joyce Parks who discussed the same topic of low salmon returns to the Snake River and also impacts on the Orca populations that traditionally have preyed on those salmon. It also discusses some of the changes in the energy production in the region with a focus towards wind and solar that have replaced some of the need for the hydropower of the dams.

The fourth written comment was from Mr. Don McNeill of Caterpillar, who also made an oral statement at the meeting on the natural infrastructure initiative with The Nature Conservancy and Great Lakes Dredge and Dock, which is summarized below. The fifth written comment was from Mr. Kenneth Balcomb who discussed concern about survivability of Endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

And the sixth written comment was from Mr. Michael Parks who commented on the need to breach the lower Snake River dams. He focused on the fact that they are earthen dams, so breaching them would not be an irreversible action.

Three persons were present at the meeting and made oral comments.

Mr. Steve Gallagher spoke on behalf of Mr. Kenneth Balcomb, who submitted a written comment. Mr. Balcomb runs the Center for Whale Research in Friday Harbor, Washington. He has whale data for more than a 40 year period, and has documented a severe reduction in the numbers of whales related directly to the reduction in their primary prey, chinook salmon. The whales are dying of starvation. It is feared that 2018 will be the year that they pass the point of no return. Mitigation efforts to help the salmon have been ineffective, so he strongly urges breaching of the dams this year.

Mr. Don McNeil of Caterpillar leads the natural infrastructure initiative with the Nature Conservancy and Great Lakes Dredge and Dock. He encouraged USACE to take natural infrastructure to the next level. Natural infrastructure can either do the same work for less and generate other benefits and outputs, or with the same budget it can produce more benefits. He wants it to become mainstream.

Mr. Scott Levy of Bluefish spoke in favor of removing the Lower Snake River dams and said that there is no reason why they cannot be breached tomorrow. It is easier to

mitigate the irrigation, the navigation, and the hydropower than it is to mitigate for a collapse in the ecosystem. He said that the steelhead experienced the second worst decline on record last year. Also discussed the whale populations. He distributed the following documents to the EAB and LTG Semonite:

- Review of NOAA Fisheries' Interior Columbia basin life-cycle model
- "The Early Warning indicator" excerpts from the Supplemental Biological Opinion Consultation of Remand for Operations of the Federal Columbia River hydro System
- Information on railroads and grain in SE Washington
- Bluefish.org's comments on the Columbia River System Operations Review
- Comments from numerous other entities on the Columbia River System Operation Review, including supporters of leaving the lower Snake dams in place, and others who support breaching.

LTG Semonite thanked all for their comments and submissions and said that he would read them and share with others in USACE.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 PM.

_____ date _____

Dr. Rollin Hotchkiss, PhD., P.E., D. WRE, F. ASCE
Chairman, Chief of Engineers' Environmental Advisory Board