



**Chief of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board (EAB)  
Public Meeting Summary Minutes  
27 April 2016  
Washington, DC**

**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 27 April 2016 at the Marriott Residence Inn Washington DC Downtown, 1199 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 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  
SAMUEL ATKINSON, Vice Chair  
MARY C. BARBER, Member  
MELINDA D. DANIELS, Member  
TAMMY NEWCOMB, Member  
CHARLES A. SIMENSTAD, Member  
FRED H. SKLAR, Member  
CHARLES SOMERVILLE, Member

Also Present:

LTG THOMAS BOSTICK, Chief, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
MINDY SIMMONS, Designated Federal Officer  
KAREN BAKER, Acting Chief, Environmental Division, USACE Headquarters  
THEODORE A. BROWN, Chief, Policy and Planning Division, USACE Headquarters  
JAMES DALTON, Chief Engineering and Construction, USACE Headquarters  
DR. BETH FLEMING, Director, Environmental Laboratory, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center  
Al Cofrancesco, USACE  
Robert Brumbaugh, USACE  
Others from List

**2. INTRODUCTION OF EAB MEMBERS AND CHIEF'S STAFF**

Chairman Hotchkiss thanked Ms. Simmons for the introduction, introduced himself, and had each EAB member introduce themselves. Eight of the current nine EAB members were

present. Senior Corps staff who were present (Ms. Karen Baker, Dr. Bob Brumbaugh, Mr. Tab Brown, Dr. Beth Fleming) introduced themselves.

### **3. OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHIEF**

LTG Bostick opened by thanking the Institute for Water Resources staff who made arrangements for the meeting. He acknowledged members of the public in attendance and looked forward to their comments. He thanked EAB members for updating their work plan and for taking on new tasks related to future directions and our aging infrastructure. He was pleased to hear the recommendation from the last EAB work session to add a standing agenda item in which the host district or division will talk about how they are implementing the Environmental Operating Principles in their work. Since this meeting is in Washington, he has asked Ms. Karen Baker to talk about how the Corps is living the Environmental Operating Principles nationwide. He looks forward to hearing EAB members present two new reports at this meeting, on the Prioritization of Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects and on Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Corps Decisionmaking. And following up on a suggestion he made at the last meeting, he has invited Mr. James Dalton to make a presentation on the Corps' Resilience initiative.

### **4. OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR**

Dr. Rollin Hotchkiss said that it was a pleasure to meet with the Chief and the public. He recalled that the EAB's charter states that their purpose is to advise the Chief of Engineers by providing independent advice and recommendations on matters relating to environmental issues for the Corps. The Board continues to fulfill that purpose, offering time and effort unselfishly. He hopes that as the Chief concludes his exemplary service and career, that the EAB's work has matched the Chief's passion for the restoration of the environment in and beyond the Corps' extensive infrastructure. He said that while the EAB serves at a healthy arm's length from the Corps, this morning, those arms pull them a bit closer as they acknowledge their working relationship with the Chief.

### **5. LIVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATING PRINCIPLES - HEADQUARTERS**

Ms. Karen Baker opened by pulling out her EOP card, which she carries with her to remain mindful of the EOPs every day. Corps leaders hand these cards out to employees, and they continue to reinforce 'living the Environmental Operating Principles' in their day to day work. The EOPs are also prominently featured on the Corps website, Corps social media, and the Corps Environment newsletter.

Ms. Baker focused her presentation on the first EOP, "Foster sustainability as a way of life throughout the Corps." She displayed the sustainability scorecard, and showed the progress which has been made since 2011. There is a high level of reporting and monitoring, with sustainability program managers in each division. She also recognized the Detroit District which recently received the GreenGov Award given by the Council on Environmental Quality.

LTG Bostick reinforced the significance of the GreenGov Award, since it comes from the White House.

## **6. FOLLOW UP ON EAB RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MEETING**

LTG Bostic reviewed progress on the EAB's previous recommendations. First was the STEM report presented at the December meeting. Since then, he has gone to the Engineer School and asked how the engineer soldiers can receive credit at local universities for the work completed at the Engineer School. His approach is to work it at the local level and develop a solution which he will then present to the Department of the Army.

Action: Provide update on STEM efforts at the next meeting.

The second EAB report/recommendation was the nationwide permit on low head dam removal. LTG Bostick reported that this is under review by OMB at this time. The next steps are that OMB will make a proposal, it will be published in the Federal Register and undergo a 60 day period of public comment.

The third EAB report/recommendation was on Environmental Flows. LTG Bostick reported good news on this. For the first time, the Sustainable Rivers Program, which is one way in which the Corps implements environmental flows, now has its own separate line item in the FY 17 budget. This means not only direct funding for the program, but greater visibility.

A milestone on the ground in terms of accomplishments is the E-Flow Implementation Plan for the Willamette Basin in Oregon. E-Flow recommendations are now incorporated into the water control manuals, which is a significant accomplishment.

The fourth EAB follow up action was including the EAB at the Pre-Command Courses and Executive Governance Meetings. LTG Bostick reported that the EAB will be on the agenda at the May 5 Executive Governance meeting, and EAB member Dr. Melinda Daniels will be making the presentation.

## **7. OVERVIEW/STATUS OF EAB WORK PLAN**

Dr. Hotchkiss said that it is very gratifying for EAB members to hear updates and actions that have taken place as a result of their recommendations. He referenced the EAB Work Plan, which includes both things which the Chief has asked the EAB to consider (reactive issues) as well as things which the EAB believes the Corps should be considering (proactive issues). Some of the topics have recently been completed, and will be reported later in the meeting.

The major ongoing project is "The Nation's Aging Infrastructure". Dr. Somerville discussed the EAB's approach to this topic. They are still scoping this issue. Dr. Hotchkiss has met with staff from the Pittsburgh District. Dr. Somerville has been involved in producing a report card with America's Watershed Initiative in which transportation infrastructure received a grade of D-. The EAB is very concerned about how aging infrastructure impacts flood control, transportation, and the economy. The EAB will also be thinking about aging infrastructure in the context of changing future conditions, such as climate and precipitation.

Dr. Daniels added that another overarching concept which the EAB will consider for all of their projects is invasive species.

Dr. Hotchkiss and EAB members then outlined three new tasks upon which the EAB is embarking: 1) Coordinating NEPA and Corps regulatory activities, especially with respect to reservoir sedimentation; 2) Future Strategic Opportunities/Directions; and 3) Adaptive Management.

**Action:** LTG Bostick suggested that the EAB meet with Alex Dornstauder who leads the Strategic Planning Group at HQ as they delve into the Future Opportunities/Directions task.

## **8. PRESENTATION OF ECOSYSTEM GOOD AND SERVICES REPORT AND DISCUSSION**

Dr. Sam Atkinson presented the report on “Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Communication, Collaboration, and Decision Making within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers”. All EAB members contributed to this report, but the leader was Dr. Lydia Olander, who unfortunately could not attend the meeting.

The three recommendations are:

1. Use an internal Corps team to explore and develop decision appropriate methods for integrating ecosystem services into current decision making and policy processes across business lines and Corps activities. This team should look for opportunities to use integrated water resource management and a balanced and integrated approach across business lines as activities that address multiple business lines may better support ecosystem services and public welfare.
2. Build awareness of and capacity for using ecosystem services in Corps decision making across the Corps engaging all divisions.
3. Work in partnership with other federal agencies to coordinate the development and collection of necessary ecosystem services data and models and the computing infrastructure necessary to maintain, distribute, and update them over time.

The full report is available on the EAB website at \_\_\_\_\_

LTG Bostick thanked the EAB for the report. He agreed that ecosystem goods and services is a cross-cutting issue which affects all business lines and can help bring them together.

## **9. PRESENTATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION BUDGET CRITERIA REPORT**

Prof. Simenstad acknowledged the critical contributions of Ms. Mindy Simmons and Mr. Tab Brown and Institute for Water Resources staff who patiently explained how the process currently works. He and Dr. Sam Atkinson were the primary investigators on this task, and they found a lack of an objective, standardized process that was transparent and easily repeated. Many of the criteria were subjective and this led to a lack of consistency. There was also a lack of independent review, and no explicit recognition of watershed scale and cross business line and interagency planning that would assess cumulative benefits from ecosystem restoration projects.

Professor Si Simenstad then presented the report on “Recommendations for Improving the Process of Setting Priorities for Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects.” This report is the second phase of EAB work on setting priorities for proposed aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. The first phase was completed in 2013 and included four criteria for consideration: use of an ecosystem approach; sustainable major ecosystem benefits; benefits derived primarily via hydrologic and geomorphic modifications; and recognition of the federal role for any project selected for potential funding.

This second phase recommends changes to the current process of selecting projects to include in the Corps’ recommendations to the President’s Budget. The recommendations are:

1. Separation of consideration of existing/continuing projects from consideration of newly proposed projects (which are the focus of the report);
2. Preparation of a three-page fact sheet and two independent reviews of each proposed new study/project, one at the District level “preproposal” stage and one at the Headquarters level prior to inclusion of a proposed project in a budget request;
3. Development of a computerized template applied to all proposed aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that prompts for specific information in order to generate facts covering the environmental context of the proposed location;
4. Inclusion of ecosystem goods and services metrics for evaluating proposed projects;
5. Changes to the importance weighting of the environmental metrics for developing an overall environmental score for a proposed project; and
6. Inclusion of a metric(s) that recognizes when proposed projects include integrated water resource planning across multiple business lines.

The full report is available on the EAB website at \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr. Brown commented during the discussion that the Corps can’t do independent reviews in the budget process, since it is internal. Dr. Atkinson added that the intended consequence of the recommendation is for Districts and Divisions to develop better proposals.

Ms. Simmons noted appreciation for the efforts of Prof. Simenstad and Dr. Atkinson, and she felt that many of the recommendations will improve the process. In fact she has begun to implement some of them with this year’s budget development. For example, in addition to the usual ‘justification sheets’ for each proposed project, a fact sheet is now required. She is also beginning to have other divisions and districts review proposals.

LTG Bostick supported the development of a standard objective process that can be repeated. He stated that the Corps really needs this.

## **10. RESILIENCE INITIATIVE AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM OVERVIEWS**

Mr. James Dalton made a presentation on the Corps’ initiatives on resilience and sustainability. He acknowledged Ms. Sheri Moore and Ms. Heather Morgan, who lead these programs. (note: can we just attach his ppt?)

A major point in the ensuing discussion was that resilience does not necessarily need to be structural and expensive. There are informational, social, nonstructural actions which can increase resilience as well.

## **11. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Simmons reported the receipt of some written comments which will be placed on the website as part of the public record. There were also five members of the public present at the meeting. Their comments are summarized here.

Allison Golden with Restore America's Estuaries expressed concerns about Nationwide Permit 13 for bank stabilization. This permit is often used to build bulkheads, sea walls, and other types of hard structures on shorelines. Restore America's Estuaries would like to see a hierarchy which would move these shoreline armoring projects down in favor of natural or nature-based solutions such as living shorelines, marsh restoration, etc. She also urged the Corps to re-energize the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council as a great vehicle for interagency collaboration on ecosystem restoration.

Eileen Shader from American Rivers discussed aging infrastructure. She encouraged the Corps to not just dispose of outdated infrastructure by transferring it to another entity, but to actually remove infrastructure which is no longer needed. This would benefit streams and rivers as well as improve public health and safety.

Marissa Escudero from the Water Protection Network strongly encouraged the Corps to implement environmental flows in the Appalachian-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin. She said the recent changes to the water control manual do not provide sufficiently for environmental flows downstream.

Gretchen Benjamin with the Nature Conservancy expressed gratitude to the Corps and the EAB and strong support for the Sustainable Rivers Project on behalf of his organization.

Diane Hoskins from the Pew Charitable Trusts commended the Administration's Executive Order establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. She also commented on the structural bias in Nationwide Permit 13. She stated that living shorelines which achieve full face stabilization and provision of a natural shoreline habitat cannot qualify for either Nationwide Permit 13 or 27, and strongly urged the addition of a new living shoreline nationwide permit.

## **12. CLOSING REMARKS**

LTG Bostick thanked all members of the public for providing these comments, and thanked the EAB for continuing to encourage the Corps to move in the right direction. He also thanked Ms. Simmons for her support and the rest of the team from USACE who have done a great job in bringing the EAB and the USACE team together to solve or to attempt to solve these really difficult national issues. He noted that this would be his last EAB meeting, and he will miss these interactions with the EAB, and provided strong endorsement of the new Chief, LTG Semonite.

Dr. Hotchkiss said that it had been a very productive meeting, and thanked all for participating. He said that the EAB is ready to tackle the Resilience and Sustainability issues at the invitation of LTG Bostick, or the incoming Chief, LTG Semonite. Each requires a little bit different approach

### 13.ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Mindy Simmons adjourned the meeting at 12:06PM.

 \_\_\_\_\_ date 30 Sep 16

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