



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

June 13, 2005

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Policy and Policy Compliance Division
Office of Water Projects Review

Mr. Kenneth M. Babcock
Chairman, Environmental Advisory Board
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Southern Regional Office
193 Business Park Drive, Suite E
Ridgeland, Mississippi 39157-6026

Dear Chairman Babcock:

I enjoyed our candid discussions last July and at the February public meeting. It is clear to me there is strong interest by the Board in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its mission areas. I thank the Board for its affirmation of and support for both our Civil Works Strategic Plan and Environmental Operating Principles. The Corps is taking major steps to implement the plan and will follow the Board's recommendation to improve communication on the plan and demonstrate fully our commitment to it.

During the February meeting, I asked the Board for its views on a number of areas and issues. Your response was to develop the enclosed working plan based upon a theme of ecosystem restoration through water resources management. After reviewing the plan, I believe it addresses my areas of interest and will contribute towards helping the Corps undertake ecosystem restoration in the context of water resources management.

At our next public meeting, please provide me a snapshot on how the Board might proceed on the work plan. I understand that each element is valuable. Some, such as independent scientific review, will be ready for early consideration, while others may naturally develop and progress over longer periods of time.

I look forward to the Board helping the Corps improve implementation of its missions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl A. Strock".

Carl A. Strock
Lieutenant General, US Army
Commanding

Enclosure

Chief of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board (EAB)

Work Plan¹

Theme: *Ecosystem Restoration through water resources management*

Sub Themes:

1) *Adaptive management* –

Board designees: **George Crozier (lead)**; Ted Hullar; Denise Reed
Corps contacts: **Lynn Martin (lead)** and Al Confrancesco

Is there current policy, guidance, doctrine, on monitoring and adaptive management, and if so, what do they say? What are the relevant authorities, if any? What, if any, explicit policy, guidance or authority is needed? How can we infuse programmatic adaptive mgt for the ecosystem restoration program to inform future restoration measures/approaches used, associated policy and technical guidance? Programmatic partners in adaptive management - what relationships are necessary? How is the Corps a learning organization? What are the data, info and monitoring needs to undertake adaptive mgt? Is “3%” realistic or meaningful? Discussion also included regulatory permits and mitigation success, along with implications for future process.

2) *Outreach/partnering*

Board designees **Ken Babcock (lead)**, Ted Hullar, George Crozier (re: Outreach component - Strategic plan promulgation and new policy re: weight of environment).
Corps contacts: Donna Ayres, Beverley Getzen

What ways does the Corps use to listen and hear and integrate input? Are there authorities, policy, and guidance? Who are the interested parties and how and when are their interests expressed? How do we relate a proposed project to governmental entities relevant to it – e.g. involvement of the state governors? How does/can the Corps communicate with the “no shows”, i.e., the disinterested/disenfranchised public?

What are/could be mechanisms for learning from others? -Corps learning/capture expertise from experts outside the Corps – e.g. partnering w/universities.

In what ways might the Corps *address “mis-information” – smear campaigns based on bad information?* At least need a *knowledge base for truth, even if there isn't a direct response.* Independent review might be useful in this. Local sponsors may at times be better positioned to handle this.

¹ Developed at 16 February 2005 Working Session at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, Tuscon, AZ. Members present: Drs. Donahue, Crozier (telephone), Hullar and Reed.

Caution against outreach to environmental non-governmental organizations as special interest groups. Assure equity and parity with all groups. Sharing information about the CW Strategic Plan. Regarding MOA's—how does the Corps manage and adapt them?

What type of team of Federal agencies do we need to meet restoration objectives?
The Upper Miss. principals group is perhaps a good model.

3) *Ecosystem Restoration Authority Gaps*

Board designees: **Mike Donahue (lead)**, Denise Reed

Corps contacts: Lynn Martin, Beverley Getzen

What are current Corps authorities related to ecosystem restoration? What are they intended to do and how effective are they? Are there gaps that are best filled by something besides new authorities? To what extent are current authorities exercised, and to what effect? Are there authorities of others that could be useful to the Corps (e.g. NRCS) – examples of commingling of authorities (not funding resources)? How do we relate to authorities of other agencies – some of which may be in conflict?

Other agencies don't feel an obligation to help us fulfill our missions, yet Gen. Strock has said that agencies are mutually responsible for carrying out Federal authorities. What are the barriers to new authorities?

4) *Regulatory Issues*

Board designees: **Courtney Hackney (lead)**, Mohammed Dahab

Corps contact: Bob Brumbaugh

How might the Corps improve consistency across districts, and streamlining of the permitting process in the Regulatory program? (The issue stemmed from the listening sessions). How consistent are we nationwide in our regulatory program?

How can the Corps reconcile the differences in perception and reality of consistency in permit decisions and overall missions and Strategic Plan? How has the Corps responded to the recommendations of the NRC report on the effectiveness of the Regulatory program?

Having a Regulatory Program provides an opportunity to contribute to ecosystem restoration. How can the Regulatory Program contributions to ecosystem restoration be enhanced? (e.g., promote good solutions; sound engineering). Can wetland mitigation banking contribute to ecosystem restoration? That is, effective banks could pool mitigation in effective ways. What current guidance is available to districts on linking regulatory program/processes and ecosystem restoration; e.g. though permit decisions and the conditions of granted permits? In what instances do Corps regulations run counter to ecosystem restoration and do they conflict with those of other agencies?

5) ***Independent Scientific Review (ISR)***

Board designees: **Mohammed Dahab (lead)**, Matt Kondolf.

Corps contacts: Rich Fristik

Use the existing EAB ISR document (on the web at http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/hot_topics/isrr.pdf); prepare some key findings in the context of ecosystem restoration; draft a communication strategy, and perhaps add a preface onto the report. What has the Corps done w/the EAB report relative to ecosystem restoration? Consider the EC on peer review now under preparation. Possibly link with topic #2. Be clear on independent technical review vs. independent scientific review (science, engineering and social); when in the project life cycle is independent review...?

6) ***Environmental Benefits Assessment***

Board designees: **Denise Reed (lead)**, George Crozier, Steve Farber, Courtney Hackney

Corps contact: Paul Scodari

How is environmental benefits analysis currently done in the context of eco restoration? Do the tools currently used adequately represent the range of eco-restoration functions? Does "biodiversity" adequately capture eco-restoration functions? What role(s) will the Corps play in improvements? Benefits assessment units vs. measurements of system changes.

Restoration metrics – Evaluation of environmental. Tools for assessing; the way you set the expectation; tools used to evaluate one thing against another; evaluation vs. assessment. Environmental outputs – return on investment.

7) ***Performance measures or indicators***

Board designees: **Steve Farber (lead)**, Matt Kondolf

Corps contacts: Rennie Sherman

How are they are currently established and applied? Important to know what are they going to be used for. Milestones and endpoints. Use in budget development; OMB interest in \$/acre and \$/river mile (...never exceed \$3,900/acre). How do we establish performance measures that adequately represent a range of ecosystem functions?

Ecological economics. Valuing environmental benefits (\$) – e.g., Robert Costanza; Gretchen Daily. What data and info are available and needed? How to institutionalize this knowledge and share it? How do we ensure that long-term performance measures are embedded? How should project management be linked to adaptive management? How might post audit results be used to inform future Ecosystem Restoration projects?