

**USACE, Galveston District Stakeholder Partnership Forum
Facilitator Synopsis, 27 August 2015**

The summer session of the Galveston District’s (SWG) Stakeholder Partnership Forum was held on 27 August 2015, in the Jadwin Building, as a continuation of the successful initial engagement of February 2015. The event was attended by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) personnel, non-federal sponsors, agency partners, customers, and other attendees. The purposes of the now bi-annual forum are to provide a venue for stakeholders to understand and interact on the latest news and information about USACE programs, projects, business processes, and capabilities, as well as identify opportunities for better synchronizing and integrating USACE support on stakeholder commitments and emerging interests.

The day’s agenda included a number of presentations and facilitated discussions on several topics relating to the SWG Civil Works mission (see Enclosure 1). Four concurrent breakout sessions were held in the afternoon to foster interaction on key topics. The sessions included presentations by USACE personnel intended to provide information and context for facilitated discussions led by non-federal sponsor and stakeholder representatives. The SWG posed four open-ended questions for the participants to discuss within each of the breakout groups:

- What did we hear last time from stakeholders?
- What is SWG doing with recommendations and what actions remain?
- What action items are most important and needed now to be addressed?
- What can stakeholders do to achieve our common objectives?

The topics and names of presenters and facilitators are listed in the table that follows.

Breakout Session	Presenters/ Facilitator
Negotiating the planning and project management processes: Charting new territory in the WRRDA 2014 era	Sheri Willey and Cheryl Jaynes, USACE / Tony Williams, Texas General Land Office
Meeting milestone schedule and product delivery commitments: An active management approach	Ricky Villagomez and Eddie Irigoyen, USACE / Ariel Chávez II, Port of Brownsville
Partner communications: Inclusiveness and transparency from SWG to the Vertical USACE	Isidro Reyna and Bernice Taylor, USACE / Clayton Henderson, Sabine Neches Navigation District
Setting and measuring SWG organizational performance objectives/standards: Improving business acumen to execute proficiently, build trust, and improve working relationships	Nick Laskowski, Art Janecka and Katie Parks, USACE / Matthew Mahoney, TX Dept of Transportation

At the conclusion of the four breakout sessions, the forum attendees reconvened for a plenary session to summarize and synthesize the respective discussion points and findings of each session, as well as overall perspectives on the four posed questions. Summary reports prepared by the facilitators are provided as Enclosure 2.

What did we hear last time from stakeholders?

The feedback from the February 2015 stakeholder forum included many positive comments on the leadership engagement, emergency responsiveness, and project execution. Areas for improvement focused on communication and accountability. Communication remains a concern, which is why this regular engagement is critical. Other highlights of discussions are listed below.

- Commitment to schedule. There were concerns about projects that did not adhere to publish schedules, giving the appearance that the Corps was not really committed to completion the project as per the schedule.
- No apparent accountability for lack of progress. If a project suffered delay, there was no one that could address concerns if there wasn't progress as per the published schedule, nor any substantive explanation for apparent lack of progress.
- Integration of vertical team early in the process was recommended with face-to-face meetings including the sponsor. When the vertical team can provide comments on issues of concern early, those issues can be addressed early as well, thus minimizing the impact in the critical path.
- Timely communication, returning phone calls and emails was still an issue identified by participants.
- When meetings are set up with industry, Corps and the sponsor, those are tremendously helpful; everyone in the same room trying to get a 408, e.g. on the right track. Those are good and helpful.

What is SWG doing with recommendations and what actions remain?

- Change management / project initiation. SWG should attempt to minimize turnover of personnel on a particular project, especially at the management level. If the PM keeps changing, the new manager must familiarize himself/herself with the project, which results in unnecessary delays.
- Critical path. Focus on addressing critical path risk items first, then resolve other risk items.

- SWG seems to be doing a good job of relaying information as it comes available. The Stakeholder meeting is a good example of SWG working to make sure sponsors have the necessary information.
- SWG appears to be limited by slow release of implementation guidance from HQ. This applies to issues for planning and regulatory.

What action items are most important and needed now to be addressed?

- Better integration of vertical team with sponsor/include sponsor in communication process to create better understanding of process; HQ seems separated from the rest of the PDT; Stakeholders seem to be kept separate from PDT; Stakeholders seem to not be getting first line communication; horizontal communication separate from vertical communication.
- More interaction with team, more face to face. E.g. informal meetings/field trips are a good way to have more interaction with team; Include sponsor in training e.g. team building exercise.
- Informing sponsor that the original schedule is based on a best-case scenario. A Sponsor may think that the original project completion date is set in concrete, when SWG and those with experience know that it is a moving target. This will result in more realistic expectations on the part of the Sponsor.
- Implementation guidance needs to be a priority at the national level. District and sponsors are unsure what is required to move forward.
- Lack of data availability - Utilize SharePoint website for access to data.
- Inability to measure successes - Create metrics for measuring success.
- Changing criteria/processes - Need more stability with criteria/processes.
- The Corps does have a high turnover. Staff members transfer, quit, or retire. Paula Wise, Operations Manager, is retiring. She is doing something unique. She's writing a pass-down log. If the new person has skill and ability, they can read this book and take on the project. Sponsor may even be able to give funding for that kind of effort. Continuity is key.
- Risk Matrix must be maintained and updated for the entire life of the project. This will insure that the risks that can be addressed are resolved as early as practicable.

What can stakeholders do to achieve our common objectives?

- Stakeholders want to be more involved.
- Leverage expertise of sponsors and stakeholders instead of pushing them to the side.
- Let Sponsors advocate for projects in Washington. Sponsors should not just meet with HQ, but include ASA and OMB. Work with the district to have a synchronized message.
- Hold the USACE accountable. Use the risk register and other tools to document concurrence at decision points.
- Get involved early in the process so as to be more knowledgeable throughout.
- Stakeholders should attend as many USACE events as possible, or if unable to attend, participate via web meeting or similar on-line technology. If PRB's were conducted online, there would undoubtedly be more participation on the part of the Sponsors.
- Be proactive in suggesting solutions to USACE, namely, stakeholder/sponsor involvement in consultations that utilizes local resources (such as local contractors and consultants) as part of the participants in the project. One such example with the BIH Feasibility Study was the marine-based borings, where the SWG contractor had submitted a proposal in the \$279,000 range. At the behest of the Sponsor, the Brownsville Navigation District, a proposal was requested from a local qualified geotechnical laboratory. Their price was in the \$163,000, and the project was ultimately completed for about \$106,000. Local economy was benefitted. Figures provided are rounded.
- Include sponsor in processes with out-grants.
- Greater stakeholder involvement during planning process.
- Preferred ways for involvement, Participating in PRB – Provide PowerPoint in advance; dial in for webinar; make sure that presenters can be heard (speaking with microphone).
- Actively make suggestions/requests for what you want.

What should be included in future forums?

During the closing session, ideas for future forums were elicited, as well as suggestions for improving communications about the event.

- Suggested topics for future forums include organizational metrics, measuring performance, quality; Levee safety; Processes, e.g. Sec 408, 7001; stakeholder experience presentations to best practices and lessons learned.
- Advertise next forum earlier, by putting notice on the SWG website and provide early agenda.
- Hold forum in conjunction with PRB where sponsors are already in attendance.

The winter session for the SWG Stakeholder Forum is tentatively scheduled for 24 February 2016.

Enclosure 1

Agenda

USACE, Galveston District (SWG) – Stakeholder¹ Partnering Forum

27 AUG 2015

Jadwin Building, 2000 Fort Point Road, Galveston, TX 77550

Purpose:

- Foster effective communications, collaboration, service, and relationships of SWG with its stakeholders as an inter-related Community of Practice
- Provide a venue for stakeholders to understand and interact on the latest news and information about USACE programs, projects, business processes, and capabilities
- Identify opportunities for better synchronizing and integrating USACE support on stakeholder commitments and emerging interests

Seminar Session I (Rm 175): USACE Civil Works Program Basics and Updates.
Becky Moyer, Seminar Lead – 0800-0930 hrs

Seminar Session II (Rm 180): USACE Regulatory Program Basics and Updates.
Felicity Dodson, Seminar Lead; Non-Federal Use of Federal Dredged Materials Placement Areas and Lands. Joe Hrametz, Felicity Dodson, and Tim Nelson, Seminar Leads – 0800-0930 hrs

Seminar Session III (Rm 185): USACE Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies Program Basics and Updates. Mike deMasi, Seminar Lead – 0800-0930 hrs

Registration and Partner Networking Coffee Social – 0930-1000 hrs (Rm 185)

Plenary Session (Rm 175-185):

1. Welcome, introductions, overview of purpose, recap from Winter Forum, and formulation of Summer Forum, Edmond Russo – 1000-1015 hrs
2. Update on FY 15 priorities, strategies, progress on key management issues, and a view towards FY 16, COL Richard Pannell – 1015-1030 hrs
3. Program Management FY 15 execution status, plans to year-end closeout, and FY 16 outlook, Val Miller – 1030-1045 hrs
4. Project Management FY 15 progress, ongoing actions, and FY16 workload forecast, Byron Williams – 1045-1100 hrs

¹ Includes Non-Federal Sponsors, customers, agency partners, Non-Governmental Organizations, and academia, for the purpose of this event.

5. O&M Program FY 15 progress, ongoing actions, and FY16 workload forecast, Joe Hrametz – 1100-1115 hrs

6. Regulatory Program update, Kim Baggette – 1115-1130 hrs

7. Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies Program update, Mike deMasi – 1130-1145 hrs

Lunch – 1145-1300 hrs

Breakout Sessions:

8. Partnering successes, current issues, and formulation of strategies/actions – 1300-1400 hrs (Lead Facilitator: Becky Moyer, USACE, Southwestern Division)

In each breakout session, USACE staff will review the issues raised at the Winter Stakeholder Partnering Forum (February 25, 2015), with discussion of strategies and actions proposed and being undertaken to address the issues. Stakeholder facilitators will lead the breakout discussions, refine and clarify the issues, and then work with USACE staff to evolve strategy and action plans. Key breakout questions:

- *What did we hear last time from stakeholders?*
- *What is SWG doing with recommendations and what actions remain?*
- *What action items are most important and needed now to be addressed?*
- *What can stakeholders do to achieve our common objectives?*

a. Partner communications: Inclusiveness and transparency from SWG to the Vertical USACE Team (Rm 175) – USACE presenters (Isidro Reyna and Bernice Taylor) and stakeholder facilitator (Clayton Henderson, Sabine Neches Navigation District)

b. Navigating the planning and project management processes: Charting new territory in the WRRDA 2014 era (Rm 180) – USACE presenters (Sheri Willey and Cheryl Jaynes) and stakeholder facilitator (Tony Williams, Texas General Land Office)

c. Meeting milestone schedule and product delivery commitments: An active management approach (Rm 185) – USACE presenters (Ricky Villagomez and Eddie Irigoyen) and stakeholder facilitator (Ariel Chavez, Port of Brownsville)

d. Setting and measuring SWG organizational performance objectives/standards: Improving business acumen to execute proficiently, build trust, and improve working relationships (Rm 308a) – USACE presenters (Nick Laskowski, Katie Parks, and Art Janecka) and stakeholder facilitator (Matt Mahoney, Texas Department of Transportation)

Break – 1400-1430 hrs

Plenary Session (Rm 175-185):

9. Facilitated partnering panel summary of breakout sessions with discussion and synthesis to meet a shared vision for the Texas coast – 1430-1530 hrs, Lead and breakout session stakeholder facilitators

10. Key findings, expectations for next stakeholder forum, and closing remarks – 1530-1600 hrs, COL Richard Pannell

Enclosure 2

Session A.

Negotiating the planning and project management processes: Charting new territory in the WRRDA 2014 era (Room 180) – USACE presenters (Sheri Willey and Cheryl Jaynes) and stakeholder facilitator (Tony Williams, Texas General Land Office)

USACE staff to evolve strategy and action plans. Key breakout questions:

- *What did we hear last time from stakeholders?*

The impacts of WRRDA 2014 were unknown at the time of the last stakeholders meeting. We are now trying to determine how to move forward under the new requirements.

- *What is SWG doing with recommendations and what actions remain?*

What SWG is doing: SWG seems to be doing a good job of relaying information as it comes available. The Stakeholder meeting is a good example of SWG working to make sure sponsors have the necessary information.

What actions remain: SWG appears to be limited by slow release of implementation guidance from HQ. This applies to issues for planning and regulatory.

- *What action items are most important and needed now to be addressed?*

Implementation guidance needs to be a priority at the national level. District and sponsors are unsure what is required to move forward.

Will there be a streamlined approach to completing NEPA under the 3X3X3 limitation?
Will resource agencies be included in a streamlined process?

For studies that receive a 3X3X3 exemption, what is the mechanism for increasing funding if necessary to complete the study?

- *What can stakeholders do to achieve our common objectives?*

Advocate for projects in Washington. Sponsors should not just meet with HQ, but include ASA and OMB. Work with the district to have a synchronized message.

Hold the USACE accountable. Use the risk register and other tools to document concurrence at decision points.

- Parking Lot:

What kind of appropriations have to exist for a project to receive contributed non-federal funds per Sec 1015/1123?

USACE should advertise the Continuing Authorities Program. Possibly treat them like a grant program.

Session B.

Meeting milestone schedule and product delivery commitments: An active management approach. Ricky Villagomez and Eddie Irigoyen, USACE / Ariel Chávez II, Port of Brownsville

Summary of Key breakout questions, with comments:

What did we hear last time from stakeholders?

- Commitment to schedule. There were concerns about projects that did not adhere to published schedules, giving the appearance that the Corps was not really committed to completion the project as per the schedule.
- No apparent accountability for lack of progress. If a project suffered delay, there was no one that could address concerns if there wasn't progress as per the published schedule, nor any substantive explanation for apparent lack of progress.
- Integration of vertical team early in the process was recommended with face-to-face meetings including the sponsor. When the vertical team can provide comments on issues of concern early, those issues can be addressed early as well, thus minimizing the impact in the critical path.

What is SWG doing with recommendations and what actions remain?

- Change management / project initiation. SWG should minimize turnover of personnel on a particular project, especially at the management level. If the PM keeps changing, the new manager must familiarize himself/herself with the project, which results in unnecessary delays.
- Critical path. Focus on addressing critical path risk items first, then resolve other risk items.

What action items are most important and needed now to be addressed?

- Risk Matrix must be maintained and updated for the entire life of the project. This will insure that the risks that can be addressed are resolved as early as practicable.
- Informing sponsor that the original schedule is based on a best-case scenario. A Sponsor may think that the original project completion date is set in concrete, when SWG and those with experience know that it is a moving target. This will result in more realistic expectations on the part of the Sponsor.

Session B. (cont'd)

What can stakeholders do to achieve our common objectives?

- Get involved early in the process so as to be more knowledgeable throughout.
- Stakeholders should attend as many USACE events as possible, or if unable to attend participate via web meeting or similar on-line technology. If PRB's were conducted online, there would undoubtedly be more participation on the part of the Sponsors.
- Be proactive in suggesting solutions to USACE, namely, stakeholder/sponsor involvement in consultations that utilizes local resources (such as local contractors and consultants) as part of the participants in the project. One such example with the BIH Feasibility Study was the Marine Borings, where the SWG contractor had submitted a proposal in the \$279,000 range. At the behest of the Sponsor, the Brownsville Navigation District, a proposal was requested from a local qualified Geotechnical laboratory. Their price was in the \$163,000, and the project was ultimately completed for about \$106,000. Local economy was benefitted. Figures provided are round.

Session C.

Partner communications: Inclusiveness and transparency from SWG to the Vertical USACE. Isidro Reyna and Bernice Taylor, USACE/ Clayton Henderson, Sabine Neches Navigation District

Isidro Reyna, APR, Public Affairs Office
Bernice Taylor, Scheduling

Breakout Group Facilitator:
Clayton Henderson, Sabine Neches Navigation District

Partners in Attendance:

- Sabine Neches Navigation District
- Greater Houston Port Bureau
- Fort Bend Levee Improvement District
- Jefferson County Drainage District 7
- Velasco Drainage District
- Port of Houston Authority

Public affairs posed the question, how many of you have called or emailed the Corps and have not heard back from someone in days? Answer: The entire room; there are issues with people answering phones and email.

How are we doing addressing issues regarding transparency?

Focus on transparency; Asymmetric differences between business lines.

From Fort Bend Levee Improvement District: Problems with regulatory; Permit applications go in (specifically Sec 404 permit); no response.

From Jefferson County Drainage District 7: Positive from Scott Leimer; good at communication, keeping people abreast of studies, items with levee inspection program. Negative from other offices, no response from the Corps when trying to set up a meeting regarding Sec 408 permits. Manpower issue; people are being moved around and reassigned.

From Sabine Neches Navigation District: Realignment with the Corps. Everything has turned vertical – business line wise. The horizontal; things that have district control have more hands-on approach. ASA has to sign letter to dredge a dock. It gets lost once it leaves the district.

Key point: Vertical decision making is slowing down the process. Need answer if that is true.

When meetings are set up with industry, Corps and the drainage district, those are tremendously helpful; everyone in the same room trying to get a Sec 408 permit on the right track. Those are good and helpful. When you can't even set up a meeting, that's a problem.

Good feedback from Phillips 66 with Corps working with drainage district.

Key point: Issue with how the Corps manages manpower.

Look at levee district projects in a unique way. They manage life and safety.

Question: Are we outsourcing outside the district?

Accountability.

What can stakeholders do to achieve common objectives?

Solutions:

- The Corps does have a high turnover. Staff members transfer, quit, or retire. Paula Wise is retiring. She is doing something unique. She's writing a pass-down log. If the new person has skill and ability, they can read this book and take on the project. Sponsor may even be able to give funding for that effort. Continuity is key.

- Specific point. Why we dredge, when we dredge? Putting to paper the nuances so the project can continue.
- Meeting notes don't matter. You need to know the project has been stuck in the mud for 16 years. Run the New Orleans model on projects; get things done in two years. The idea of three, three, three is a good step. It doesn't always fit.
- There are improvements in some areas; but not in others. Maybe the Corps needs some more training. More seminars for project intervention.
- Reduce hot-cold nature of performance through process improvement.
- Include sponsor in processes with outgrants.
- Greater stakeholder involvement during planning process.
- Leverage expertise of sponsors and stakeholders instead of pushing them to the side.

Session D.

Setting and measuring SWG organizational performance objectives/standards: Improving business acumen to execute proficiently, build trust, and improve working relationships. Nick Laskowski, Art Janecka and Katie Parks, USACE / Matthew Mahoney, TX Dept of Transportation

The breakout session consisted of three topics; improve business acumen, enhance communications and build trust and improve working relationships.

Overall comments were positive but there were some issues that were brought up. The issues seem to all have to do with communication. Specific items related to communication were:

- Stakeholders seem to be kept separate from PDT
- HQ seems separated from the rest of the PDT
- Stakeholders seem to no be getting first line communication
- Horizontal communication separate from vertical communication
- Lack of data availability
- Inability to measure successes
- Changing criteria/processes

Things the stakeholders would like to see happen (possible solutions to concerns)

- Greater authority at the District level.
- Better integration of vertical team with sponsor/include sponsor in communication process to create better understanding of process.
- More interaction with team, more face to face. E.g., informal meetings/field trips are a good way to have more interaction with team.
- Include sponsor in training Ex: team building exercise.
- Utilize Sharepoint website for access to data.
- Create metrics for measuring success.
- Need more stability with criteria/processes.