

# Facilitators Exchange

Your quarterly guide to Facilitators and Facilitation in USACE

Volume 4 • Fall Issue • 2013

**Welcome** to the fourth issue of the Facilitators' Exchange newsletter with a new look for a new fiscal year. It is your guide to all things facilitation related within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. You may find additional information at the Facilitators' Exchange webpage—<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/facilitator/facilitator.cfm>. The newsletter is intended to share information on facilitation webinars, case studies, process tools, facilitation resources, training opportunities, USACE facilitators and professional facilitation organizations. The Exchange is sponsored by Ms. Ada Benavides of the Civil Works Directorate.



*Mark Whitmore, Cornell, discusses Emerald Ash Borer*



## Upcoming Webinar: 24 October 2013 at 1:00 pm Central

Assuming we are fully operational, the Facilitators' Exchange will jointly host a webinar with the Collaboration and Public Participation Community of Practice on 24 October 2013 at 1 pm Central time. The topic is "Facilitating Large Virtual Conferences – Silver Jackets Case Study" by Hunter Merritt and Maria Placht. Hunter is a Study Manager, Sacramento District Planning Division, Water Resources Branch. Maria is a Collaboration Specialist with the Institute for Water Resources' Conflict Resolution and

Public Participation Center of Expertise. Call in/Web In and Access Codes are: 888-431-3632 and 6955157. You may access archives of past webinars at:

<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/facilitator/exchange.cfm?Option=ArchiveSchedule&CoP=facilitator>. If you have ideas for future webinar topics, please provide them to Julie.B.Marcy@usace.army.mil.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers.**

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## Fellow Facilitator: Hunter Merritt

Hunter is a Study Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Sacramento District Planning Division, Water Resources Branch, Watershed Assessment and Ecological Restoration section. He has 25 years total of facilitation experience (25 years since his first mediation training, 15 years professionally outside of the Corps, 10 years with the Corps, and 5 years as a USACE employee).

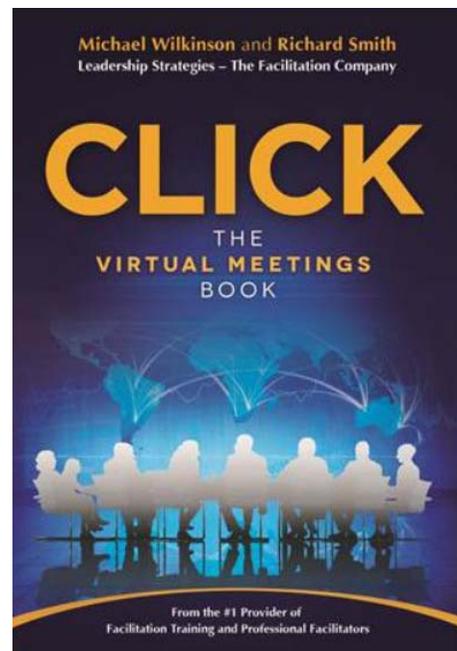
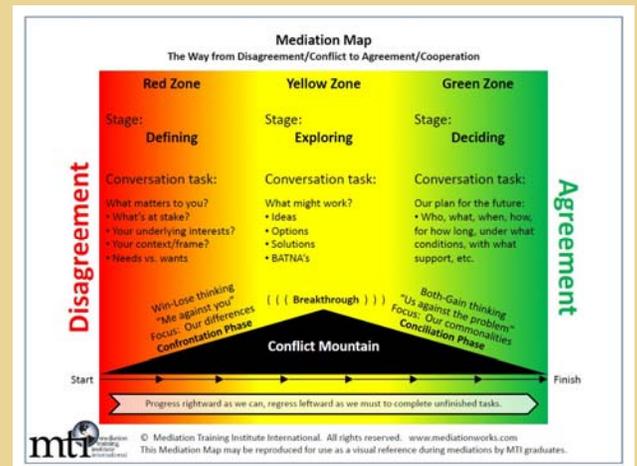
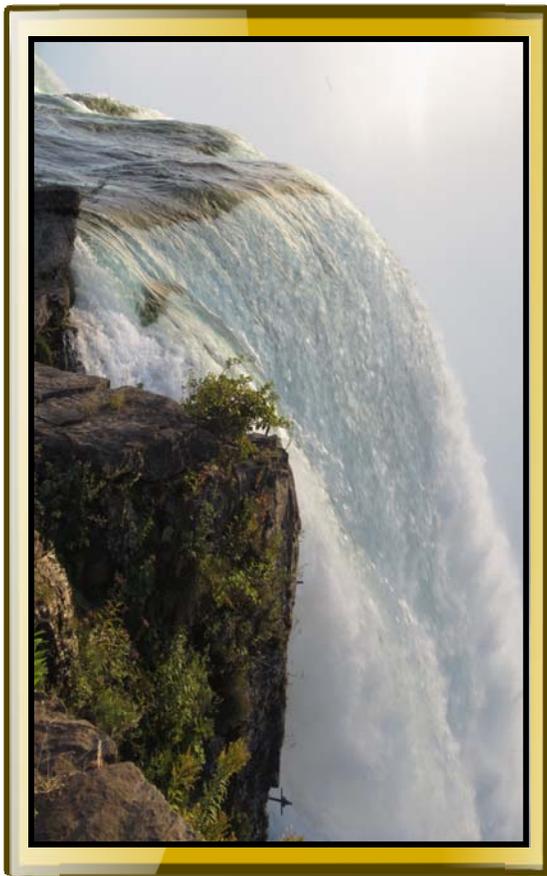
**Work Examples:** Within the Corps, I have been working on communication, outreach, and “in-reach” to our own organization, both in Public Affairs and in Planning Division, where I currently work. I have been operating under the SMART Planning paradigm and facilitating teams since the pilot studies first materialized (my first month in Planning). I was the facilitator for the 2011 Sutter Feasibility Critical Thinking Charette). Since coming to Planning from Public Affairs in 2011, I have facilitated or supported nearly a dozen charettes and IPRs, all of which had some component of virtual team collaboration. I also teach classes in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Department at California State University, Sacramento (8 years). Much of the work that I do as an instructor is akin to facilitation.

**Effective Facilitation Process/Tool:** Processing is a complex word – I think of group process (Tuckman) as well as individuals’ internal thinking and processing of information, often through metaphors (Gass). My default “model” for facilitating an understanding of differences between people is the Dimensions of Success, which is a simpler version of the Strengths Deployment Inventory (SDI). The Dimensions of Success highlights three components of a balanced team: Relationships, Process, and Goal. I believe that if a person can recognize, acknowledge, and capitalize on the differences between people in this regard, a team can be very effective at succeeding. More on Dimensions of Success can be found with a quick Google search. More on SDI can be found here: <http://personalstrengths.us/index.php/en/sdi/about-sdi-an-overview>.

**Advice for New Facilitators:** Always say yes to any opportunity. Do not be afraid of the facilitator role; especially, do not fear for your lack of expertise on the technical aspects of a meeting. No job is too small, or too big, for a facilitator to be of great value. Every experience has meaning. People are always paying attention to something.

## Process Prompt:

The Mediation Training Institute has an excellent graphic to assist with conversation flow when your group is experiencing conflict. It characterizes 3 zones - red for defining issues, yellow for exploring solutions, and green for deciding on a course of action—to move groups from disagreement to agreement. Each zone has suggested conversation starters such as “What matters to you?” You may access the graphic at [http://www.mediationworks.com/medcert3/Mediation\\_Map.pdf](http://www.mediationworks.com/medcert3/Mediation_Map.pdf).



## Relevant Resource:

Leadership Strategies recently released a new book, “Click—the Virtual Meetings Book” by Michael Wilkinson and Richard Smith. I met Michael for breakfast one day in June and our conversation included the increasing use of virtual meetings and the unique challenges they pose for facilitators. “Click” contains chapters on: why virtual, building a virtual meeting vision, choosing a platform, preparing/starting/running/closing the meeting, gathering information, and handling dysfunction and disagreement. It also provides 60 strategies for addressing specific challenges and sample graphics. If you facilitate virtual meetings or want to help sessions you attend run more smoothly, you may want to explore this book. Available at: <http://www.leadstrat.com/click-the-virtual-meetings-book>.



*Invasive Species Leadership Team Meeting at Buffalo District*

## Find A Facilitator

Are you an experienced Corps facilitator? If so, please add yourself to our facilitator database at:

[http://  
corpslakes.usace.army.mil/  
employees/facilitator/find.cfm.](http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/facilitator/find.cfm)



Please send your facilitation case studies, photos and newsletter ideas to [Julie.B.Marcy@usace.army.mil](mailto:Julie.B.Marcy@usace.army.mil).

## Proficiency Pick

The Southeast Association of Facilitators (SEAF) is offering a facilitation core skills e-learning course by Ingrid Bens. The curriculum consists of 10 online lessons on managing complex group interactions. It is a great introduction to facilitation basics if you know if someone interested in pursuing training. A self-paced course, it is offered at \$15-\$99 per person for a 3-month session depending on the number of attendees. A 6-month option is also available. See [http://  
www.seaf.org/Facilitation-Tutor-e-  
Learning-Course.php](http://www.seaf.org/Facilitation-Tutor-e-Learning-Course.php)

