

**Minutes of the National Sign Advisory Work Group
Fort Worth District Office
Wednesday and Thursday, 28 – 29 January 2004**

Attendees:

Dennis Wallace, Kansas City District, Northwestern Division
Debra Stokes, Natural Resources Management Branch, HQUSACE
Karl Anderson, Office of Safety and Occupational Health, HQUSACE
Henrik Strandskov, National Sign Program Manager, St. Paul District
Tim Grundhoffer, National Sign Standards MCX, St. Paul District
Tom Sully, National Sign Standards MCX, St. Paul District
Michael Owen, Fort Worth District, Southwestern Division
Duane Johnson, Sacramento District, South Pacific Division
David Johnson, Pittsburgh District, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division
Jeffrey Mangum, New England District, North Atlantic Division
Scott Strotman, Rock Island District, Mississippi Valley Division
Jim Stanfield, Mobile District, South Atlantic Division

Members absent:

Mike Kidby, Navigation and Operations Branch, HQUSACE
Rand Pixa, Office of the Chief Counsel, HQUSACE
Steve Logan, Mobile District, South Atlantic Division

Introduction. Dennis Wallace, Chair of the Sign Advisory Work Group, opened the meeting, welcoming the members and thanking Mike Owen for hosting the meeting in the Fort Worth District Office. A special welcome was extended to Jim Stanfield, the Mobile District Sign Program Manager. Mr. Stanfield was representing South Atlantic Division on behalf of Steve Logan, who was unable to attend. Debra Stokes reported that Rand Pixa, who has replaced Karlissa Krombein as the Office of Counsel representative, was not able to attend the meeting. However, he would be available by telephone during the meeting as necessary. Stokes also reported that Mike Kidby, Operations and Navigation Branch, couldn't come because of weather conditions in the Washington, D.C., area. (Note: For the first time in more than two years, the Work Group has active representation from the four HQUSACE offices: Safety and Occupational Health, Office of the Chief Counsel, Natural Resources Management Branch, and Navigation and Operations Branch. This is a good thing.)

Mike Owen, Fort Worth District Sign Program Manager and Southwestern Division representative on the Work Group, welcomed us all to Fort Worth and provided logistical information to assist during our visit.

Corps SignPro software. Henrik Strandskov demonstrated Corps SignPro, the sign management software that is currently under development. Work group members had several comments and questions. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the software cannot really be considered ready for beta testing. For this status to be achieved, the software must be able to create all signs in the program, import the sign data from the old Sign Manager software, and prepare sign orders. Strandskov said that the MCX would proceed with the next phase of the contract to incorporate these functions as soon as possible.

Corps SignPro is Web based, and users will log on via the internet. It was suggested that it might be necessary to have a technical support employee always available to assist users. Strandskov said that SignPro has been designed so that technical support is very easy and efficient. Therefore, the Sign Program MCX could very likely absorb this responsibility without adding an employee.

The compatibility of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) with SignPro was discussed. Strandskov noted that it should be remembered that SignPro was primarily a sign management, design, and ordering program and that its function as an element of a district's overall GIS mapping should remain secondary. Owen responded that it would not be efficient if sign data already available in existing GIS could not be transferred directly into SignPro. Jeff Mangum pointed out that most GIS systems could read from SignPro if it is configured properly, and that capability to transfer data from SignPro into a district's GIS system was what was really important. He noted that a modern GIS can link from almost anything. Jim Stanfield said that the Mobile District GIS team would like the schema (list of data elements for in the SignPro database) so that they could work on the compatibility of the systems. Strandskov said he would ask the software vendor to send the information to Mobile. Stokes urged that the beta testing team include Corps employees involved in GIS programs. These testers should be consulted as to how SignPro and GIS systems can be melded. Strandskov noted that the GIS staff in St. Paul District is very capable, and the MCX can enlist their help in developing SignPro. Stokes noted that Corps SignPro must be completed this year. If there are special challenges associated with adding GIS capability to the software, Jeff Mangum will be able to help the MCX. The following were suggested as members of a sub-team for ensuring the compatibility of SignPro with GIS: Hal Gates, Mike Weber, Jeff Mangum, Don Morgan, and SignPro developer Peter Reedijk.

Duane Johnson noted that SignPro must be usable by those who don't have high-speed internet access. Stokes stressed that SignPro should have an effective backup capability.

Duane Johnson stressed the importance of being able to transfer existing sign data from a project to Corps SignPro. He asked to be put on the list of SignPro testers.

Because users will access Corps SignPro through the Internet, a web server is needed as a permanent host site for the software. (The contractor is providing a temporary host site so that SignPro can be tested.) The Corps' Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL, a part of the Engineer Research and Development Center) in Hanover, New Hampshire, has made a reasonable bid to provide the hosting service. It will be up to the MCX to undertake a formal agreement for hosting SignPro at CRREL.

Dennis Wallace suggested that all the Sign Advisory Work Group members be beta testers of the software.

Electronic version of the sign manual. Henrik Strandskov summarized the status of the digitization of the sign manual, reporting that progress has fallen behind schedule. Debra Stokes stressed that the digitization of the sign manual must be completed by the end of the fiscal year. The tasks for the MCX are to determine where ERDC is at this point; provide them with any additional material they need; obtain final copies of all sections; and review everything. Stokes suggested that a final editing session for the electronic version of the sign manual should be carried out by a team of Work Group members meeting in a special session to concentrate solely on that task. The small team could assemble in early May to do the final review. Tentative volunteers for the group include Duane Johnson, Tim Grundhoffer, and Mike Owen. It is

important that this be a dedicated session in which the group could work in more or less isolated circumstances with no interruptions. Meeting at HQUSACE or in St. Paul were suggested as options.

Dennis Wallace reported that he has talked with representatives of other agencies, who invariably say that the Corps sign manual is something they aspire to in their own sign programs. Stokes noted that the high quality of the sign program and the sign manual can be attributed to the contractor hired by the Corps to develop the program, Don Meeker.

There are several recent sign program changes that should be incorporated into the electronic version of the sign manual. These include the new recreation symbols the Work Group has agreed on, the standard ID sign with symbols, the use of the Corps Signature on approach directional signs, that changes to parking signs, and the new guidance on electronic signs with variable messages.

The suggested schedule for sign manual work is: February, MCX coordination with ERDC; March/April, review by Work Group members of the draft sign manual sections; May, a small group final review of the sections.

Mike Owen stressed that it would be very useful to have the actual sign specifications in electronic format and available on the internet. Dennis Wallace asked about the feasibility of providing sign specifications to vendors via electronic copies of pages in Volume 2 of the manual. It was noted that it would not be difficult to create electronic copies of the pages, but that some of the material in Volume 2 is obsolete. Dave Johnson volunteered to try scanning some of the pages in a Corel OCR format that would allow subsequent editing. It was agreed that the MCX would create .pdf files of the pages of Volume 2 of the sign and manual and make them accessible on the Gateway.

Tom Sully suggested that we obtain the Volume 1 files from ERDC as manipulable files. These would be retained by the MCX. Strandskov said that he would discuss this with ERDC.

Corps signature on directional signs. Dave Johnson presented several mock-ups of Corps approach directional (APRDIR) signs with the Corps signature (the logo plus the text *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*) in various sizes and locations. The Work Group had agreed earlier to a policy change allowing the use of the signature on these signs, and the change had been approved at HQUSACE. However, the exact appearance of the signs was still in question. (NOTE: The signature would never be used on project directional signs, i.e., those used on Corps roads within park boundaries.)

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the Corps signature should appear below the legend on the left. Dave Johnson agreed to do mockups of various versions of the sign showing single (left and right) and multiple destination directions. The MCX will send copies of the final versions to HQUSACE for approval. The MCX will also be responsible for including the signs in the electronic version of the sign manual.

A question was raised as to whether the use of the signature on directional signs would be optional or mandatory. Strandskov confirmed that the signature would be optional.

A final discussion concerned whether the Corps signature could be used on approach directional signs that carry symbols (signs APRS-3 and APRS-4 in the sign manual). If this is permitted, the signature would, in effect, take the place of the left-most symbol on the sign. The group determined that a decision on this could not be made without seeing what the signs would look like. Dave Johnson will make mockups of directional signs showing the signature and symbols and distribute it to the Work Group members for a final decision.

Sign orders, the DFARS, and UNICOR. There have been many questions in the Corps sign community during the past year about current rules on sign procurement. A 2001 law lessened Department of Defense requirements to buy from UNICOR (Federal Prison Industries, Inc.). This change was finally incorporated into the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) in June 2003. To explain the new rules and their implementation, the Work Group had invited Ms. Linda Eadie from the Fort Worth District Contracting Division to speak to us.

Dennis Wallace presented a summary of the guidance that the MCX has provided to sign program managers, both via direct emails and through material posted on the NRM Gateway website. Ms. Eadie confirmed the accuracy of this guidance. Briefly, here is the way the current rules are to be implemented:

- If a sign order is less than \$2,500, you may buy the signs from UNICOR or from a private vendor without consulting your contracting office.
- For larger sign orders, each district's contracting office will do market research to determine whether UNICOR signs are comparable to private sector signs in terms of price, quality, and time of delivery.
 - Market research is not the same as taking bids. It is a more general process, and it is up to the contracting office to decide how to do the research.
 - If the contracting office decides that UNICOR's signs are not comparable in any or all of the three criteria, then standard bidding procedures will be used to buy the signs.
 - UNICOR must be offered a chance to be one of the bidders.

There was a discussion of the difference between doing market research and taking bids. Eadie stressed that market research was the first step in the process and did not involve taking bids. The way the market research is carried out is up to each district's contracting office and would likely involve consultation with the Sign Program Manager or other district sign personnel.

Under the regulation, none of the three market research factors (cost, quality, and timeliness) is more important than the others. However, district sign personnel might specify that for particular jobs, one of the factors should carry more weight.

One problem with the new system concerns those situations where timeliness may be of most importance. If the contracting office determines that the UNICOR product is not comparable solely because of the time factor, and the result of this decision is carrying out a bidding procedure that lengthens the overall sign-ordering process, then the rationale for using a private vendor over UNICOR has been subverted.

Eadie confirmed that comparability with regard to the criterion of price does not mean that the UNICOR price must be an exact match with the price of a private vendor. A slightly higher UNICOR price would still be considered comparable.

As has been pointed out in the past, there is concern that local, smaller signmakers may not be able to meet Corps sign standards. We know that UNICOR provides good quality control. For instance, we can be assured that signs made by UNICOR will use the real Corps brown sheeting, which at the present time is only made by the Avery company. If private vendors are making Corps recreational signs, there is a likelihood that another brand of sheeting would be substituted. Several group members expressed approval for the generally high quality of service

that UNICOR provides. The memo to sign managers on purchasing should include a reminder about the importance of adhering to the Sign Standards Program and the specifications found in the sign manual.

Stokes suggested that the MCX update the information on the Gateway website by adding the purchasing/contracting summary listed above. Strandskov agreed, but noted that it would be good to precede the Gateway posting with a direct email to division and district sign program managers.

Waterway signs and Section 15 of the sign manual. Tim Grundhoffer of the MCX presented his draft of new text for Section 15 (*Aids to Navigation*) of the sign manual.

Grundhoffer has been working closely with the U.S. Coast Guard for two years on St. Paul District's effort to mark the restricted areas at the locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi River. He has used the expertise gained in this project to augment Section 15 with specific text and diagrams illustrating the use of Coast Guard buoys and other markings, as well as Corps daymarks (sign boards) using Coast Guard symbols. (Currently Section 15 consists only of two brief paragraphs explaining that the Corps can use Coast Guard aids to navigation at its facilities.) Along with his explanation of Section 15, Grundhoffer passed out photographs showing the way his marking concepts have been implemented at St. Paul locks and dams.

Grundhoffer emphasized the importance of partnering with local Coast Guard officials to plan, construct, and maintain daymarks and buoys at Corps facilities. He particularly cited the help the Coast Guard gives St. Paul District with buoys.

There was some discussion about how much detail about Coast Guard principles and procedures we should explain in our manual, as opposed to referencing Coast Guard regulations and other documents. It was agreed that it would be more efficient to add computer links so that users of our manual could read the actual Coast Guard documents if desired.

Grundhoffer said that a complete version of Section 15 could and should be included in the electronic manual. He says he can finish the text and graphics in two months. It was noted that this would mean there would be only minimal changes to Section 14, and it could therefore be included in the electronic manual. (It had previously been decided that changes to Section 14 would be so extensive that its electronic publication should be delayed.) Dave Johnson asked that we clarify what Section 14 will include so that he can work on what must be updated.

Compliance with the sign standards. Both Dennis Wallace and Debra Stokes suggested that a message should be sent from HQUSACE stressing the importance of the sign program. The message should include the importance of adherence to the quality standards established in the sign program. Wallace and Scott Strotman agreed to draft a letter from the Director of Civil Works concerning the importance of the sign program.

Duane Johnson suggested that an HQUSACE memo should say that the sign manual must be followed and that sign orders must be approved by the district Sign Program Manager. It was pointed out that different Sign Program Managers have different sign ordering policies depending on the needs and circumstances of their districts. If, as in the case Duane Johnson cited, a district Sign Program Manager wants all sign orders to be reviewed/approved by him or her, the sign program already grants the authority to require that. Scott Strotman, for example, said that in Rock Island District, all sign orders are routed through him. It is already a fundamental principle of the Sign Standards Program that the Sign Program Managers are to be

in control or the program in their districts. However, there is no question that a supportive HQUSACE memo about the sign program would be a good thing.

Wallace stressed that Corps sign users should accept the sign standards and not try new signs. He suggested that when we announce electronic sign manual, we should have strong letter affirming program standards. He acknowledged that it's hard to force people to comply, but we can strongly encourage them by tying the sign standards to the Corps brand; we can emphasize that we are a single organization presenting a single image to the world. It was noted that, in general, there seems to have been less compliance with the sign standards at navigation projects than at recreation projects. Strandskov gave the example of seeing a noncompliant sign identifying the lockmaster at every lock he has visited. Stokes noted that the lockmaster could be identified by using a custom recreation sign.

It was suggested that a good agenda topic for the next meeting of the Work Group would be the maintenance of quality control in the sign program.

Jetty signs. At several previous meetings, the need for new signs for coastal jetties had been discussed. (Portland has been the district most interested in new signs.) The Work Group had developed new signs with symbols that would show the unusual hazards associated with jetties. It had been our understanding that Portland District would adopt the new signs, but we had subsequently learned that other, district-created signs were about to be installed. These alternate signs had not yet been approved by the Work Group. Debra Stokes reported that she had discussed this with the Chief of Operations in Portland, who said they would not be using the unapproved signs. Stokes suggested that the jetty signs the Work Group created be incorporated in the sign manual after receiving final approval from HQUSACE. The MCX will forward the request for approval along with other recent approval issues to HQUSACE. It should be handled as if it were a safety sign waiver request.

Interagency issues. Strandskov presented a study by the U.S. Forest Service in California to determine how well members of the public understood the recreation symbol signs they were displaying at their parks. Most of the 20 symbols evaluated were almost identical to Corps symbols. The six most easily recognized positive symbols were those indicating fishing, swimming, restrooms, horse trail, hiking trail, and picnic area. All of these correspond closely to the Corps symbols. The four symbols least understood by Forest Service visitors were those for amphitheater, carry water back to site, fish hatchery, and conserve water. The Corps has amphitheater and fish hatchery symbols, but they are somewhat more detailed and may therefore be clearer to viewers.

Strandskov suggested that the MCX could explore with other agencies the possibility of organizing a Federal Sign Forum. Such a group could work on implementation of joint policies and agreements (such as the adoption of a standard federal brown sign color) that would improve the efficiency of the respective sign programs and provide better service to the public.

Wallace noted that both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are using the recreation brown manufactured by the 3M company, and they like it. It costs \$400 a roll for engineer grade. Those agencies also use Avery white sheeting. Strandskov explained that there have been discussions in the past about with the other agencies about using the same brown color. Wallace and Strandskov agreed to make a list of their agency contacts and approach them with the goal of setting up the forum. The initial goal of the effort would be to establish a "federal brown."

Safety manual. Karl Anderson discussed the implementation of the new Corps safety manual, *Safety and Health Requirements*, EM 385-1-1. The manual was published on 3 November 2003, and distribution has begun.

Prior to the issuance of the revised manual, the Work Group had identified several discrepancies between the draft text and the current Corps sign standards. These included the format of safety signs (those with Danger, Warning, or Caution headings), potable water signs, confined space signs, and no smoking/no open flame signs. The Safety and Occupational Health Office at HQUSACE had worked with the sign program proponents to resolve most of these issues, and the new safety manual reflects these changes as appropriate.

However, the manual still includes the material at the beginning of Section 8 that uses the current specifications of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for safety signs (i.e., Danger, Warning and Caution). The ANSI specifications, often used by private industry, are not the same as those for Corps signs. Anderson said that the Safety and Occupational Health Office would clarify that the safety sign descriptions in the safety manual are meant to apply to construction sites/contracts, not to Corps of Engineers civil works facilities, which will continue to comply with the National Sign Standards program. The safety office will put this clarification on their website. In the meantime, the MCX can announce the clarification directly to sign program managers.

Another discrepancy between the two manuals concerns signs marking confined spaces. This issue has been discussed in the past. Anderson explained the distinction between the language currently specified for Corps sign SDA-01 (“Danger, Confined Space – Entry by Permit Only”) and the language contained in the safety manual at paragraph at 06.I.01 d. (Danger – Permit-Required Confined Space – Do Not Enter”). We have agreed to modify SDA-01 so that the language matches that in the safety manual. Strandkov will add this item to the memo recommending sign policy changes for approval by HQUSACE. The other aspect of this issue is that the safety office does not recommend signage for confined spaces that are not dangerous enough to require a permit for entry. Such signage would dilute the impact of the Danger signs at entries where a permit is required. The MCX should prepare guidance about avoiding such signs. It was noted that marking the less-dangerous confined spaces is really a matter of providing guidance to our own employees. Perhaps this could be accomplished by combining an education campaign with a non-sign marking system, such as a red line or red circle posted near the entryways.

A final safety manual/sign manual issue was the general distinction between signs aimed at our own employees and signs found on, for instance, construction sites where a Corps contractor has brought a contingent of non-Corps employees onto a Corps facility. Corps sign managers have heard the argument that contractors’ employees are not as familiar with Corps safety sign formats as they are with private-vendor formats they are likely to have seen elsewhere on job sites. Karl Anderson noted that there is an important difference between protecting Corps employees and protecting a contractor’s employees. Stokes summed up by saying that Corps signs have been developed to protect our employees. Therefore, we should tell contractors that if they have different concerns/needs, then they might want to put up their own signs. In addition, Corps staff can hold preproject meetings or discussions with contractors to explain the Corps sign program.

Recreation symbols. Do we need a symbol sign to mark a disc golf course? It was noted that disc golf is in the OMBIL matrix, and we do have symbols for most of those. An alternative to a symbol would be to use a verbal sign. Dave Johnson has seen a disc golf symbol on the signs of another agency. He said he will check on what other agencies have and pass the information on by email.

Jeff Mangum led a discussion about the proposed dog sledding symbol. It was noted that the U.S. Park Service has its own symbol for this activity. There was a criticism that it might not be worth establishing a symbol for a relatively rare activity. The response was that we already recognize “rare” activities with some of our symbol signs. Mangum offered to “Corps-size” the dog symbol and make it a happy dog.

Security signs. Jeff Mangum reported that New England District had been ordered to put up “force protection” security signs that did not conform to the sign standards program. He felt that there might have been an added emphasis on such signage in his district because the District Office is next to an Air Force base. In the end, the district determined that the security signs were technically posters, and that any deviance from the sign program was partially mitigated because the posters were intended to inform employees, not visitors. Scott Strotman pointed out that an Army Regulation, AR 190-13, requires Army facilities to post warnings when the threat level reaches Charlie, Bravo, or Alpha. His district added to this requirement in 2001 with security sign language that included the words, “Use of deadly force authorized.” Strotman, working with the MCX, was able to create a fairly lengthy Notice sign that satisfied management.

It was noted that different districts have responded to heightened security concerns in different ways. For instance, Jim Stanfield reported that the RAM-D security team in Mobile District concentrated mainly on upgrading barriers to entry, such as fences, rather than on signs. Scott Strotman said that the team in Rock Island district did include signs in their recommendations. He also pointed out the Rock Island office is actually on a military base. Karl Anderson noted that security sign preferences often depend on the District Engineer, some of whom are less likely to distinguish between civil works and active Army facilities. The Work Group expressed the desire for national consistency on this issue.

Posters versus signs. Because some Corps projects consider security notifications as posters, rather than signs, the Work Group discussed the difference between a sign and a poster. It was acknowledged that posters were not subject to the requirements and guidelines of the sign standards program, but it was also noted that there are undoubtedly instances where signs are called posters to circumvent the sign standards.

Mike Owen suggested five general criteria to identify a poster. There may be exceptions, but applying these criteria and good common sense should usually provide an answer to the questions, “Is it a poster?” The answer is “yes” if:

- It is temporary
- It is mounted on a bulletin board or kiosk or directly on a wall
- It is made of nondurable material
- It concerns a topical subject such as an imminent event.
- Its subject matter or concern is not covered by something already in the sign manual

The MCX will send these criteria to the sign managers and publish them on the Gateway.

Sign training and Work Group meeting. There was discussion about the need for training in the SignPro software now that its completion is imminent. It was pointed out that it has also been several years since any general training was held for sign managers. The Work Group agreed to hold a combined software training session and district Sign Program Manager workshop this fall. The training should be combined with the next plenary meeting of the Work Group. A good location would be the training facilities in Huntsville. But we should keep our plans flexible; we may need one or more interim meetings, but perhaps not for the whole group.

The MCX will coordinate with the Huntsville training staff about reserving a space for the training and the meeting, sometime between mid-October and early December. We should plan for 50 workshop participants.

Dennis Wallace suggested that a topic for the Huntsville meeting should be: “Taking down unneeded signs.” He notes that some sign personnel don’t realized they are “allowed to take a sign out.” For instance, prohibition signs should be kept to a minimum. Wallace said he will do a test at one of his sites and develop a presentation on taking down signs.

Another agenda item suggested was the ongoing confusion in some quarters about the difference between Active Army facilities and Corps civil works facilities. Some Corps officials do not understand that the sign standards are different.

USACE 2012. Debra Stokes and Karl Anderson reported on the USACE 2012 initiative at HQUSACE. Stokes noted that there will be many changes when the program goes into effect on 13 February. She herself will have new job titles, some new responsibilities, and even a new telephone number. In performing her previous Natural Resources program duties, she will be part of the new Operations and Regulatory Community of Practice. These duties will take up 70% of her time. The remaining 30% will be spent carrying out her responsibilities as a member of the Mississippi Valley Division Regional Integration Team (RIT). Similarly, Karl Anderson will devote 70% of his time as a member of the Safety and Occupational Health Community of Practice and the remainder of his time on two RITs as the HQUSACE safety advisor.

Stokes and Anderson stressed that the new alignments are intended to improve communication between field elements and HQUSACE. Of special importance is that the Communities of Practice can be alerted early to problems that may be developing at Corps districts and projects. They also noted that implementation of USACE 2012 will result a reduction in the numbers of HQUSACE employees.

Miscellaneous issues.

Accessibility signage with raised lettering. Dennis Wallace led a discussion on the need for raised-letter accessibility signs (e.g., for restrooms) on building signs. He has done some research on what other agencies are doing, with inconclusive results. It was agreed that further research on this issue is needed.

Sign durability. Jim Stanfield reported that there have been complaints about sign fading in Mobile District. Work Group members noted that sign panels are usually guaranteed for seven years. Most instances of sign panel deterioration are on signs that are older than that.

Plastic substrate. There was discussion of the FiberBrite substrate material that had been demonstrated to the Work Group at the last meeting. Subsequently, Scott Strotman had carried out informal gunshot and flame tests on samples of the material and had sent pictures of the tests

to the Work Group. Strotman passed around the actual test samples. Dennis Wallace reported that his project had already ordered some boundary signs made of the material, and they will be evaluating its usefulness. Wallace said that he had already tested some of the material for flammability, and it didn't burn. A sample of the material produced to replicate Corps Brown was shown. It was agreed that there was a good color match, but not exact. However, the material is not retroreflective. Wallace noted that the manufacturer of the material is probably overestimating how much we would use. Duane Johnson and Wallace said they are going to test traffic signs made of the material at their projects. Should the MCX send out guidance reminding sign managers that they are allowed to use alternative substrate materials? There is already guidance to this effect on the NRM Gateway. Strandkov said he would review it. It was also noted that the SignPro software should include an "Other" category for specifying the substrate of a given sign panel.

Previously-approved safety signs. Scott Strotman led a discussion on the existence of previously-approved nonstandard safety signs that are not on the current lists of such signs. An example is a sign reading "Danger, Thin Ice, Keep Off," which is listed on a 1991 memo but doesn't appear currently. Strotman and Mike Owen will check on old lists, and we can then compare to determine if it is appropriate to keep the old legends.

Corps sign shops. Dennis Wallace led a brief discussion of Corps sign shops. There are only a handful remaining, a few of which are making signs for both their own and other districts. Dave Johnson noted that his shop in Pittsburgh has received some substantial orders from other districts.

Multiple prohibition signs. Jeff Mangum noted that the sign manual has only two options for multiple prohibition signs – use either separate signs or the slat system. He suggests a multi-prohibition panel sign in the same layout as the panel for multiple positive symbol signs. The reasoning is that if it is an acceptable format to show activities that are allowed, it should also be acceptable to use it to show things that are prohibited. Mangum also noted that using the slat system results in very large legend letters compared to the size of the symbol. Others in the group noted that the slat system is expensive. However, Mike Owen pointed out that slat signs still good for roads leading in to a project because of their big legend size. In general, Work Group members agreed that the multiple prohibition sign was a good idea.

Mangum asked whether – when using the slat system - the different prohibitions must be on actual "slats," or whether they could be on one panel? There was a consensus that there are advantages to slats, but it would be acceptable to put the elements on a single panel. The graphic in Volume 2 of the sign manual does show the slats as being separated slightly (1/2 inch), but most sign personnel butt them together for installation. It was suggested that we should have another specification page that shows the single panel to protect a project from liability. It was agreed to decide at a later date whether to add a new manual page about the multiple-prohibition panel. On a related note, it was pointed out that the legend under a prohibition sign can be changed.

No-fireworks symbol. There was discussion about the need for a no-fireworks symbol. Some members felt there was a real need for such a sign. However, many projects just use temporary posters to convey this message prior to Independence Day. The observation was made that we shouldn't be considering proposed symbols that do not look like good Corps symbols to start with. An example was the Forest Service symbol that had been used in the test of symbol recognizability; that symbol was not compatible with our standards. Dennis Wallace

volunteered to search for no-fireworks symbols that could be stylized to be appropriate in our scheme.

Changeability of the fee sign. Duane Johnson led a discussion about the fee sign and its changeable letters and numbers. He suggested a new format, perhaps one panel with general information and then a removable slat or panel section that could be replaced with current information. Duane offered to work on a new format and construction procedure.

Signing temporary beach closings. Group members discussed the appropriate signage for situations where bathers must be alerted to temporarily-contaminated water. Scott Strotman showed a notice sign reading “Swimming is Not Recommended.” Jim Stanfield reported that South Atlantic Division has alternate wording, which he will share with the group. There was a discussion of whether we should have consistent, Corps-wide wording to the effect that the water is dirty and swimming is not recommended. But this issue originally came up because a state had mandated certain language for such a sign, which is another problem. The group left this issue unresolved.

Electronic message signs. At a previous meeting, Scott Strotman had presented an explanation of electronic signs with variable messages and how they are used. He, Duane Johnson, and the MCX developed a good guidance paragraph on the acceptable use of such signs. It was agreed that the paragraph should be in the electronic version of the sign manual, but it was not immediately clear where it should be located. Probably the best location is near the beginning of the manual, perhaps in the Introduction.

Signs prohibiting archaeological digging and collecting. The MCX had submitted to the HQUSACE proponents a request for approval of the signs previously developed by the Work Group. According to Debra Stokes, this has not been acted on, and the MCX should submit the request in a memo with the other special approvals (no archaeological digging symbol signs, jetty signs, signature on directional sign, and confined space) that have been recommended by the Work Group.

Sign plans. It was suggested that we put a sign plan format on the NRM Gateway to help project-level sign managers complete their plans appropriately. Strandskov responded that Corps SignPro may fill that need when it is released; simply entering a project’s signs into the software will create an electronic record that the MCX considers a legitimate and complete sign plan. Debra Stokes said that a sign plan has to be signed to be official. Scott Strotman suggested that a formal memo be prepared recognizing that a completed SignPro sign inventory for a project be acceptable as a sign plan. The memo could be reviewed by the Office of the Chief Counsel and be signed by the sign program proponents at HQUSACE.

Other Gateway issues. Several members noted that the NRM Gateway website does not list the sign program in the “Glossary” section, and that many users go there first when searching for a subject. The MCX will direct Gateway personnel to add the sign program to the glossary. Mike Owen demonstrated how OMBIL updates the lake information on the public portion of the Gateway.

Sign colors. Jeff Mangum raised the issue of using different colored signs for district offices. Perhaps signs in other than Corps brown could be used to complement the interior colors. It was pointed out that this would depart from the concept of corporate branding. However, if the property is not owned by the Corps, then we have to abide by the sign plan of the private owners, other agency, or historic district, for example.

Restricted area studies. Mike Kidby discussed the issue of determining hydraulic lines and restricted areas around locks and dams. Carrying out these studies has nothing to do with

signs, but the need to mark the designated areas once they are designated leads some Corps employees to view this as a “sign problem.” Henrik Strandskov noted that he has seen examples of this in St. Paul District. Debra Stokes suggested this as a topic for the fall training workshop.

Respectfully submitted,

Henrik C. Strandskov
National Sign Program Manager