

Minutes of the National Sign Advisory Work Group Meeting  
HQUSACE, Washington, D.C.  
25 & 26 July 2007

**Attendees:**

Jeffrey Mangum, New England District, North Atlantic Division, Chair  
Adèle Braun, National Sign Standards MCX, St. Paul District  
Debra Stokes, Natural Resources Management CoP, HQUSACE Sign Proponent  
Dennis Wallace, Kansas City District, Northwestern Division  
Duane Johnson, Sacramento District, South Pacific Division  
Jack Johnson, Little Rock District, Southwestern Division  
Jack Nichol, Lakes & Rivers Division  
Karl Anderson, Safety Office, HQUSACE  
Kimberly Rea, St. Louis District, Mississippi Valley Division  
Mike Kidby, Navigation Proponent, HQUSACE  
Rick Magee, National Sign Program Manager, St. Paul District  
Stephen Logan, Mobile District, South Atlantic Division  
Tim Grundhoffer, National Sign Standards MCX, St. Paul District  
Absent: Tracy Gruis, Office of the Chief Counsel, HQUSACE  
Visitors were Mary Coulombe and Phil Sheffield (CAP), HQUSACE

Wednesday, July 25  
Based on notes taken by Steve Logan

SAWG chairman Jeff Mangum welcomed the group to the 2007 meeting of the Sign Advisory Work Group at Corps of Engineers Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

**Headquarters Perspective**

Debra Stokes was asked by Jeff to provide remarks from the HQ perspective. Some of these were:

- *America The Beautiful Pass* – the Corps cannot sell these passes. Other agencies are beginning to complain that they have to sell for us. So far this hasn't been a big problem for the Corps. Because the issue is unresolved, permanent changes to the fee signs (ENT-05) are not recommended at this time. In a related issue, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act prevents the Corps from retaining collected user fees. There is verbiage in the proposed Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) to allow the Corps to use collected user fees for payment of NRRS services. So far it is getting favorable support with Congress.
- *Water Safety Issues* – Major General Riley has appointed a task force to investigate the possibility of requiring mandatory personal flotation device (PFD) use on all Corps projects.
- *Sign Compliance Data* – With reference to General Riley's data call last year about the numbers of Standard Identification signs and how many were compliant, no action has been taken yet.

Mary Coulombe, Chief of the Natural Resource Management Section, was invited to speak to the group about her recent arrival with the Corps and issues of interest from her perspective.

- She shared her background with us – US Forest Service (USFS) and private enterprise work.
- She sees that many are unaware of the Corps Natural Resources program and we need to raise the visibility to the American people. This will not be easy. Education and marketing are a must.

#### **Sign Manual Revisions:**

- *Volume 1* – The electronic manual has been completed and is available. However some corrections are needed and will be accomplished by the end of September. It was agreed that the Sign Manual must remain hot-linked to the NRM Gateway, Sign Program page.
- *Sign Manual Volume 2* – Extensive discussion regarding what should be done and how to revise this manual. Tim shared a cost estimate that was worked up some time ago that should be revised. An engineering estimate was \$90K. In his opinion, a total re-engineering would be double. Just what exactly needs to be revised? Jeff advised that all symbols have been updated. Debra said it should be place on the NRM Gateway – since this site is available to the public (not behind the firewall), it would be available to UNICOR and other sign makers. Jeff recommended MCX do all the changes to Volume 2 and not use EDRC. This would be much easier and faster. Debra suggested the MCX include the cost of revising Volume 2 in the FY2009 budget request. A scanned version of sections A through E in PDF format is currently available on the gateway. The question was raised about how the group would go about the review. Jack Nichols will draft a memorandum for Rick’s use to request a review of Volume 2 from sign managers in the field.

#### **SignPro**

- *Status* – SignPro program is still in the soft launch mode pending resolution of some on-going problems.
- *User comments* – Rick is getting good comments from the field from the many people using the software. When reporting a problem, please e-mail a description along with the sign id number found in gray near the upper right of the screen.
- *The import function* is not working. It continues to “time out” on most users. Even when functioning, there will be much missing data for most signs that will need to be entered because the new program is more comprehensive than the old.
- *Orders* –
  - All orders for a district appear on the overview screen to all users in the district. There have been cases reported of confusion when entering signs into the orders. Each project should come up with a numbering system with a unique prefix to help resolve this problem when preparing orders

- The District Sign Manager should be able to view all orders. However, we will investigate making available for viewing only orders for those projects the user has authority to read/write/delete.
- *Training*: So far this fiscal year the MCX conducted sign workshops in Portland, Savannah, and Kansas City Districts. Sign Managers attended from other districts including Seattle, Walla Walla, Jacksonville, Mobile, and Wilmington.
- *Adding Users* – Discussion was held about setting up accounts in SignPro. Jack Nichol worked up instructions which will be made available to District Sign Managers.
- *Sign Status* – Jeff advises that users of SignPro differentiate between what is in inventory and what is actually on the ground.
- MCX (Tim) has been getting a number of requests to see other project’s signs, specifically aids to navigation. SignPro allows anyone with access to the program to look at the inventory of signs for any other location in the system. Signs can be copied from one location to another but not moved or deleted.
- *Mapping feature* – presently the lat/long can be inserted. There are future capabilities existing in the program to expand in this area so that SignPro will work in tandem with GIS.
- *Contract modification* – There are several changes, including the reports feature that will be changed under a contract mod. The mod is in the works.

#### **Waterway Signs:**

- *Excessive glare issue* –
  - Tim and Adele presented a Power Point slide show to the group illustrating the glare problem with signs encountered by towboat operators on the lock approaches. Field testing took place this past spring. Tipping the sign forward helped little, but the problem persists.
  - Much discussion took place regarding how to handle the problem. We agreed that we should communicate with the industry to learn more about the problem as a first step.
  - Debra asked that a “white paper” memo be prepared to describe the problem and outline potential solutions for consideration. This memo will be issued from HQ through the MSC to the Field. Lockmasters will be encouraged to find out from the industry if and where problem signs exist at each lock.
- *Guide wall reflectors* – New Orleans District has tested the use of inexpensive reflectors along the guide walls of their locks. This could reduce signage and improve target area visibility at night. Suggested made to put this on the Gateway’s “Good Enough To Share.”

#### **Corps Brown**

- *Changing technology* – 3-M representatives have told Jeff that they plan to eventually discontinue glass bead reflective materials (engineer grade) with prismatic vinyl. Avery, however, has no plans to discontinue engineer grade products at this time. Avery is the sole supplier of Corps Brown vinyl sheeting.

- This old chestnut returned to the agenda.

*Advantages:*

- It's unusual shade provides "branding" for the Corps.
- According to UNICOR, its price is competitive with other brown sheeting materials.
- Engineer grade material is relatively easy to work with at the sign shop.
- White on Corps Brown is one of the easiest color combinations to read.

*Disadvantages:*

- In the past there have been problems with color consistency.
- Only one vendor provides the product.
- Some Corps managers prefer we use a brown similar to the Forest Service or as used by their state park system.

The new (2006) National Park Service (NPS) sign standards have 3 shades of brown specified for that agency to use, including one remarkably similar to Corps Brown. There is no standard shade of brown being used by Federal agencies. No changes in our policy regarding Corps Brown came from the discussion.

**UNICOR and Corps Sign Shops:**

- *Truman Lake* – There is a new sign shop manager in the Kansas City District – Lisa Freshlear. She is an experienced sign maker who is looking for work for her sign shop.
- *Tully Lake* – James West is the sign maker at Tully. He is very knowledgeable and has recently refinished redwood STANDIDs, used new sign foam material to make another STANDID.
- *Other Corps Sign Shops* exist at Coralville Lake in Rock Island District, and Traverse Lake in St. Paul District. They do work for their own district.
- *Ordering* – Contact information for the two shops that will accept orders from outside their district is found on the NRM Gateway at:  
<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/sign/corps.html>
- *UNICOR* now prefers receiving emails rather than Faxes. Their quality is much improved since they moved to the new shop outside the maximum security penitentiary a few years ago. For more information on dealing with UNICOR, see the Gateway at <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/sign/unicor.html>.

### Miscellaneous Issues

- *Fee signs* – Members of the SAWG have drafted some suggested changes should we obtain the okay to deal with the America the Beautiful Pass.
- *Reservation signs* – The Web address on the campground sign has changed twice since the revisions to the Manual. Now the correct web address for use on all materials, including signs, is Recreation.gov. Rick will see about changing both the manual (Section 7) and SignPro as appropriate. There is no web address on picnic sign (the manual should show this).
- ® -- A question was addressed regarding the use of the registration symbol (®) with the Corps Signature. The sign manual states the registration symbol is not required on signs and Debra concurs. When the Signature appears on items that are easily reproducible, such as publications, the registration symbol is necessary. Signs are deemed too large to go through a copy machine and the registration mark is not required.
- *Construction ID signs*
  - *Partner logos* -- Two districts, Anchorage and Honolulu, requested partner logos be placed on CID-01 signs. The proposal was to place the sponsoring agency logo, in this case the USAF, on the sign as well as the Corps Signature. This issue was discussed, but no changes to the Corps standards were recommended at this time.
  - *CAD format* – Chicago District requested CID-01 signs in a CAD format. Jeff will prepare one to be made available.
- *Sign Posts* – The issue of signs posts came from several districts. For most signs the manual calls for pressure treated lumber posts. Photos of signs posts were shown including twisting and bending wood posts, breakaway galvanized posts, and tall pipes. Projects do have the option to use other materials, as long as the overall spirit of the sign standards are adhered to. Any sign that is along a roadway needs to be on breakaway posts for safety reasons. For signs in coastal zones subject to extreme winds and waves, there are bendable or “tip over” posts that may work. In light of changing technology in materials including different pressure-treatments of lumber, new composite materials, and varying conditions depending upon the location of the sign, materials should be reevaluated. This topic will be addressed during revision of Volume 2 of the Sign Manual. An interim bulletin or article for *The Sign Post* should be written as we learn of new recommendations on sign post materials. For special sign posts needs, such as on the coast, the MCX can be contacted for engineering advice.
- *Electronic Display Signs* –
  - *Background* – Electronic Display Signs (EDS) were briefly mentioned in the revised sign manual. Two districts are looking for additional guidelines. Rick had polled districts and found that most EDS in use by the Corps were the construction site trailer variety. One of the examples shown in the manual is no longer commercially available.

- St. Louis District has a proposal by a partner organization to erect a more elaborate, permanent EDS. We viewed several early proposals.
- Recommendations: EDS must not bear a Corps castle. It is not appropriate to incorporate an identification sign together with the EDS. Project can erect a standard ID sign with an electronic message board on a separate stand. Debra and the SAWG would like to see pictures of the final EDS that St. Louis installs, and any lessons learned.
- Kimberly volunteered to draft a Q/A for electronic signs.

### **Safety and Signs**

- *Safety Manual* – EM385-1-1 is currently being revised. Rick has been working with a small committee to rewrite Section 8 pertaining to signs. The most important change will be to emphasize that safety critical signs used at Corps facilities must comply with the Sign Manual. Contractors may post signs on a temporary basis complying with either the ANSI or the Corps standards.
- *Safety Performance Signs* –
  - Do the safety manual and sign manual match as far as the signs referring to the number of days since last accident? (See CID-02.) The safety manual, EM385-1-1 states what information should be posted at a worksite, but does not call for a specific sign. Karl mentioned that the green safety logo on our sign is copyrighted by another organization.
  - An example of a safety sign that was seriously not in compliance with Corps standards was shown. The sign was procured against the efforts of the project and district sign managers who sought to obtain a compliant sign. Rick provided a copy to Debra for further action. \*Note - this sign could be used as an example of misappropriation of funds\*
- *LED lighted signs* – Jack Nichol reported on LED lights on traffic control signs. A commercial sign company is advertising traffic control signs with blinking LEDs around the perimeter. The intent is to bring extra visibility and attention to signs so embellished. (Rick has since seen one in place in Wisconsin. The LEDs were more of a distraction than an improvement.) LED signs are briefly mentioned and allowed by the MUTCD. Because we have adopted those standards, we will allow but not encourage the judicious use of signs with LEDs.
- *Hazard symbols* – Buffalo District requested a symbol sign for use on their lock wall to discourage people from the wall. They have a very international visitor base, and text signs have been ineffective. They were thinking of using the symbol recently adopted for jetty hazards, only use solid black color not rocks. Could they use the red circle with a slash? The SAWG requested that Rick contact the District for a formal request to include photos and drawings of the situation, as well as a proposed sign.
- *Water safety signs* –
  - *Fatality sign* -- Some district commanders have seen and requested a sign that shows the number of fatalities at a Corps lake. Jack Nichol said his district used them and they did not seem to work. Jeff Mangum had requested more information from the Water Safety Committee but they

- had not got back to him prior to the SAWG meeting. This particular sign could be either an interpretative or custom recreation sign at the discretion of the district. The SAWG recommends interpretative signage
- *Stencils and other water safety signs.* James West at the Tully Lake sign shop has 2 stencil designs available. They are for painting directly on hard surface boat ramps a reminder to wear one's PFD. Jeff mentioned there is an issue regarding old versus new life jacket on signs and other images.
  - *Applicability of Sign Standards* – A reminder that the Corps of Engineers Sign Standards apply to all Civil Works projects. District Sign Program Managers, who are required to come from the Natural Resource Management CoP by ER1130-2-500, are reminded to be sure to keep security, construction, navigation, office of counsel, and others apprised of the sign program. District Sign Program Managers are urged to disseminate *The Sign Post* and other communications on the program widely. Please make sure that sign information goes beyond the Natural Resources CoP.
  - *Cable Crossing* – A question arose from Norfolk District regarding utility company and Corps sign standards. The Corps has become involved in a court case involving a barge operator, a utility company, and local authorities. The question: If the Corps permits a utility to put cables under our waterways/lakes can we require them to follow our sign standards? There are laws that require particular signs when a utility is placed. Such signs are normally the responsibility of the utility company. We can not require them to use our sign manual because it is a real estate issue. However, the district real estate can require the utility to use our signs as part of the agreement between the Corps and the utility. Apparently the incident that sparked the question is really a navigation issue rather than a sign issue.

### Recreation Symbol Issues

- *SEGD* – The new National Park Service (NPS) Sign Manual credits the Corps of Engineers for sponsoring the Society for Environmental Graphic Design (SEGD) to come up with a set of recreation symbols for our sign program. NPS has adopted the SEGD set, with some modifications and additions. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USFS are still using the older, rounded edge symbols. The BLM website states they are trying to coordinate with other agencies. We will try to initiate a conversation with BLM and NPS.
- *Interpretive trail* symbol, RS-113 – The USACE catalog does not include interpretive trail symbols. The UNICOR sign catalog includes an interpretative trail symbol. The new NPS manual includes a different interpretive trail symbol designed by SEDG. Other agencies have other versions. Recommend that we adopt the SEGD.
- *Group camping symbol*, Neither the USACE nor NPS manuals contain a group camping symbol. The MUTCD does have a group camping symbol. The MUTCD may be a source of other symbols.
- *Visitor Center symbol* – The search for an effective visitor information center symbol continues. Portland District reports that the international symbol for

Comment [b1]: I need to verify, once I find the NPS manual.

information uses an “i” with a circle around it. The tourism industry in Oregon is going to this and it seems to be gaining in favor elsewhere such as airports. BLM uses a letter “V” We have a “?” for information, but still have not found something suitable for a museum quality visitor center.

#### **District Sign Manager Workshop Session**

- *Why?* Several District Sign Program Managers have requested another workshop. The last was in March of 2005. Since then we have had a significant changeover in District Sign Managers, a revised sign manual, and the development of Corps SignPro.
- *When?* Late winter seems to be a good time. The actual dates will depend upon meeting room availability and other factors.
- *Where?* Several venues were suggested including a return to Huntsville, a visit to the Bureau of Prisons training facility at Lompoc, California, (outside the fence), a hotel between a major airport and a Corps project or sign shop, or an off-season ski resort. Members were encouraged to check into various possibilities and get back to Rick.
- *Funding?* Meeting room and other planning costs will come from MCX budget. Participants will have to be funded by their district to attend. Will anyone have the funding to attend?
- Anyone interested in helping to plan it?

#### **Review of Year’s Progress**

- *2006 SAWG Action Items* – The minutes from the previous meeting of the SAWG were reviewed for action items completed or with work remaining.
- *NRM Gateway* – The Sign Program section of the Gateway was reviewed. Much has been updated or added in the past year. Members of the SAWG made suggestions for further improvements. Ginny Dickerson has been very helpful in posting items to the Gateway.

#### **Wrap up**

- Document decisions made and action suspense dates
- Everyone send Ginny a thank you email for her work on the Gateway.
- Meeting was adjourned *sine die*.

- End of Minutes -

## Acronyms Used

ANSI – American National Standards Institute  
BLM – Bureau of Land Management; however, in our sign program means  
“Boundary Line Marker.”  
CAD – Computer Aided Design, software popular with engineers & architects  
CID – Construction Identification signs in this context.  
CoP – Community of Practice  
EM – Engineer Manual, i.e. EM385-1-1 is the Safety Manual  
EP – Engineer Publication, i.e. EP310-1-6 is the Sign Manual  
ER – Engineer Regulation, i.e. ER1130-2-500 Chapter 6 addresses signs  
ERDC – Environmental Resource Development Center, formerly “WES”.  
GIS – Geographic Information System, computer-aided mapping  
HQ, HQUSACE – Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
LED – Light Emitting Diode, little blinky things  
MCX – Mandatory Center of Expertise, in this case sign central  
MSC – USACE Divisions  
MUTCD – Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices  
NPS – National Park Service, our younger sister agency  
NRM – Natural Resources Management, a CoP  
NRRS – National Recreation Reservation Service  
PDF – Portable Document Format, a computer term not to be confused with PFD  
PFD – Personal Flotation Device, a.k.a. a life jacket  
RS-000 – Recreation Symbol  
SAWG – Sign Advisory Work Group, or “Signs Are Wicked Good”  
SEGD – Society for Environmental Graphic Design  
STANDID – Standard Identification Signs, sometimes known as “entrance signs.”  
3M – Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing, a supplier of sticky stuff for signs  
UNICOR – The business name of Federal Prison Industries  
USACE – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a.k.a. COE, ACE, ACOE, CE, the Corps  
USFS – U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service  
WRDA – Water Resource Development Act