Sign Advisory Work Group (SAWG) Meeting Notes
Seattle District Office
12-14 April 2016
Prepared by Kimberly Rea & AJ Jensen

Attendees: Jack Nichol (LRD), Paul Harris (SPD), Steve Logan (SAD), Jeff Mangum (NAD), Kimberly Rea (MVD), John Derby (NWD), Paula Rafferty (SWD), AJ Jensen (MCX), Tim Grundhoffer (MCX), Erin Krug (MCX)

I. Team Updates

- The RMC (risk management) Program: The team should become familiar with the risk management program [Tim].
- John retires 29 July.
- New England Sign Shop: Currently down, but plan to hire a dedicated permanent employee to operate the shop [Jeff].
- Waterway Signs: Many are purchased but not installed because they are deemed too expensive to install [Jack].

II. Action Item Follow-Up

Follow-up on Action Items, as recorded in the 2015 National Sign Program Meeting minutes.

A. SAWG Contact with Division Sign Managers

- SAWG members have received varied responses from district and division SPMs.

  ➔ **Action Item [SAWG]** Continue reaching out to division and district SPMs as an ongoing effort.

B. SignPro Migration

- Migration to a secure server was completed December 2015.
- Photos are not linking. AJ is working with ACE-IT (Harry Sanchez and Sutter Bailey) to resolve this and other SignPro issues.

C. Appointment Letters

- District/division SPMs should have an appointment letter from the district/division commander [Jack].
- The regulation (ER 1130-2-500, 6-2a) talks about district and division SPMs being appointed from NRM to oversee that the sign program is "properly managed throughout Civil Works" and that when new SPMs are appointed, the National SPM "shall be advised." Appointment letters are not explicitly part of the requirement, although they would be nice and potentially give the district SPM the clout needed to execute the mission across Civil Works [AJ].
- Districts without an NRM program should appoint from Operations [Jack].
- Send around a draft appointment letter for easy updating [Jack].
- Appointment letters may be a way to ensure the right players are at the table during decision making [Kim].

  ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Investigate the HQ perspective on appointment letters and report to SAWG.

E. Manufacturing & Compliance
- Nonconforming sign orders sent to UNICOR should be flagged and sent to AJ. This might assist in achieving conformity across the nation [Paul].
- Volume II calls for a report of all signs produced by each contractor and manufacturer, yet this has not been happening. Should it? It may be useful to assess these signs at year's end to manage the national program [AJ].
- We need to stick with the process that UNICOR will not make a sign order that hasn't been approved by the district SPM [Jack].
- Many district SPMs do not make time to quality-check all the orders. How do other agencies approve their signs for uniformity? [Steve].

F. Education & Training
- PROSPECT Training. People have shown interest in a PROSPECT course for the Sign Program [Paula]. It wouldn't cost much because AJ's labor is covered [AJ]. To be worthwhile, a PROSPECT course would be 3-4 days.
  - An alternate to a PROSPECT may be a regional or traveling training program with AJ training on a circuit. This may be more cost-effective.
- Gateway. The best thing we can do is keep the Gateway strong. That's one of the first places people go for help [Jeff].
- Webinars. They may not be the best, but they are something [Jack].
- Videos. Videos are a good idea, but they need to be relevant and interesting so they can make an impact [Paula].
  - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Continue to develop the education and training program. Investigate potential for PROSPECT.
  - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Speak with Mary to check on the feasibility of getting onto a list to present to Commanders.

G. Strategic Plan
- SAWG reviewed Strategic Plan in August and submitted to Mary, who provided feedback and sent it out to MSCs for review. Feedback has been integrated into the Plan.
- The SAWG will review it at this meeting on Thursday.

H. Sign Manual, Volume II
- Reviewing the edits: SharePoint and a feature in Adobe Acrobat are ways to allow team members to review documents and see others' comments. The challenge is that the file has to reside on a server that all can access. [Tim]
- The old EC will be a new tab/section inserted into Volume II. It is over 100 pages of engineering materials that is referred to several times per year. [Tim]

I. Symbol Signs Update
- There are some symbols that should be reviewed and considered for integration into the Sign Program. [Kim]
- A few symbols were added in 2012, but some of them are not appearing in SignPro [Jeff & Kim]
- The "No Drones" sign & symbol issue has still not been finalized.
- No Drones

- The team voted on adopting the FAA's "No Drones" symbol. It needs to be edited to meet the Corps standards.
- The wording could have a couple of options:
  - No Unmanned Aircraft
  - No Drone Zone (FAA wording)
- In the past, the group hired Peter Reedijk to stylize signs for the program. [Jeff]

J. Missouri Department of Transportation
- Kim and AJ have each looked at the challenge of getting consistent answers directional signage on MODOT rights of way.
- Kim has contact information for MODOT officials to share with AJ.
  - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Follow-up with the contacts in order to find resolution on this issue which affects three divisions and five districts.

K. Retroreflectivity
- AJ placed the Federal Highway Administration guidance on the Gateway and addressed this issue in *The Sign Post.*

L. Signage for Emergency Situations
- A protocol for emergency situations that warrant immediate placement of temporary signage needs to be addressed.
- Public & employee health is paramount, and sometimes there is no time to wait for normal sign approval procedures before posting a temporary sign.
- The resulting problems:
  - These signs are not properly vetted for legend size or content, placement, and appropriateness
  - Temporary signs become "permanent" signs because there is no follow-up, nor do they appear in a sign plan
  - They too often perpetuate out-of-compliance signs as they are duplicated and replaced
- Solutions:
  - We need to provide written guidance. It could be fairly brief, perhaps even appearing on our Gateway FAQ page to address emergency signage needs. [Jack & John]
  - The district SPM must cultivate a good relation with the district Safety office in order for this to succeed. Same at the project level. [AJ]
  - ➔ **Action Item [SAWG]** Develop a draft of written guidance for emergency signage situations to eventually appear on the Gateway FAQ page.

M. Sign Manufacturing [AJ]
- Printing onto Vinyl. The Truman Sign Shop prints onto vinyl with a Mutoh printer because it is less labor intensive. It performs color calibrations regularly. UNICOR does not use the printer because it has not seen whether the prints will stand up to the elements over time (7-10 years).
- Cut Vinyl Lettering. UNICOR uses cut vinyl for Corps signs because it always has.
- Silk Screening. Fading in reds and yellows is the key reason not to silk-screen Corps signs.

N. Symbols
- A set of the symbols was created years ago. It needs to be updated to include all symbols used throughout the Corps. [Jeff]
- Reasons to make the Corps symbol set available
    - Maps. The symbols could be integrated into the ESRI GIS software for maps.
    - ISOP. Interpretive usage and panels.
    - ➔ **Action Item [Jeff & AJ]** Update GIS symbol set with all recreation symbols and share nationwide.

O. ANSI Signs [AJ]
- More to discuss later in conference.

P. At Own Risk [AJ]
- Corps sign shops and UNICOR are no longer producing "at own risk" signs.
- "At own risk" will not reduce liability and could be interpreted as implicit endorsement to engage in the risky behavior mentioned on the sign (Swim at Own Risk).
    - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Follow-through with memorandum to address total removal of all "at own risk" signs.

Q. Corps Helvetica Kerning [AJ]
- Font kerning (spacing) for Corps Helvetica is now fixed.
    - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Investigate posting the fonts to the Gateway, getting the font approved by ACE-IT for addition to all Corps computers, and getting the font to UNICOR and all the Corps sign shops.

III. MCX Update
A. Sign Manual Volume I [AJ]
- AJ met with Colleen who did the 2006 revision. She is doing graphics revisions and is through chapter 6. AJ is also going through and is content-editing and cleaning up the styles. Hoping to be complete in the next couple of months.
- Additions, such as symbol signs, can be inserted before publishing.
- It is looking like Volumes I and II may be rolled out at once.

B. Sign Manual Volume II [Tim]
- All graphics are being redone in CAD software.
- Erin will provide engineering documentation on all items.
- Posts
    - Looking at incorporating new types of posts for signs that are on state rights-of-way.
    - Will try to provide more information on breakaway posts. Standard plates are found by looking up the state DOT information.
    - A frost depth map of the nation will aid in field installations. NOAA or the FHWA may be able to help with this. [John]
    - Some have been using Telespar and U-channel posts without real justification. Metal posts should only be used when wooden posts are not feasible, such as

when meeting DoT requirements for Corps signs when installed on DoT rights-of-way. Even then, the decision to use metal posts should be well justified on paper before being reviewed and approved by the district SPM. They should then be documented in the sign plan.

- Wood
  - Routed red cedar will replace routed redwood (due to sustainability and cost). They have a similar appearance and performance. Southern yellow pine does not rout well nor hold its properties as well, but is a choice for posts.
  - Wood recommendations are needed for structure and performance to aid rangers in the field.
  - These newer choices in wood do not obsolesce redwood.
- Next review suspense date which will include graphics will be the middle of August.
- Final publication draft to HQ in November

C. SignPro [AJ]

- Migration
  - Success: SignPro was moved to a compliant server. It now requires CAC login.
  - Problem: Graphics will not load because a plug-in is not properly connecting. AJ cannot edit this. He is working with ACE-IT to resolve this issue.
- Improvements
  - Jeff and AJ met with Peter Reedijk (SignPro's developer) in January. Together they documented several needs that SignPro has.
  - AJ is working to get Peter access to a copy of the files so he can advise. Because Peter is not a US national, he cannot access the database directly. He could, however, have one of his SeaReach employees do it.
- Question: Is it possible to put SignPro onto an outside vendor's server (such as a SeaReach server) so we have access to be able to update, etc.?
- ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Ask ACE-IT if SignPro can be put onto a non-Corps server (like a vendor server).
- ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Communicate to the field that SignPro issues are being actively worked on to get it functional again.

D. Sign Program Presentations [AJ]

- Southwest Division Ranger Conference. AJ made a 45-minute presentation in Little Rock, Arkansas in February.
- Rock Island District Ranger Conference. AJ made a 45-minute presentation in Little Rock, Arkansas in March.

IV. Other Discussions

A. Day-Use Fee Signs

- The Sign Post was the location for information about the revised Day-Use fee signs. Additional information was sent to Ginny to add to the Gateway at the beginning of April, but it is not showing up.
  - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Follow up to get it onto the Gateway.
- Options

- The isolated US Fee Area sign (found on page 7-6) meets the requirement (EP 1130-2-550 Chapter 9) to post the U.S. Fee Area symbol at the entrance to designated use fee areas. Many are trying to answer this requirement with a fee menu sign, but it's too wordy for moving traffic. The fee menu sign is best for stopped traffic at a pay station, performing more like a bulletin board than a sign. It's ideal to post the U.S. Fee Area symbol sign at the entrance with the fee schedule where people will pay. [AJ]
- Because signs with dollar amounts on them run the risk of needing replacement every time the fees change, placing envelopes at the pay station with the fee schedule printed on them may be an economical option, especially with diminishing recreation budgets. This would eliminate the need for a larger sign at the pay station. [Paul]
- Other agencies are using their signatures on the fee sign.
  - What's keeping us from having the Corps Castle on our fee sign instead of the bird? [Steve]
    - ➔ **Action Item [AJ]** Investigate the official symbol and see if there is latitude to add the Corps Castle to ours.

V. Field Site Visit—Locks & Botanical Gardens

The Sign Advisory Work Group and MCX visited the Carl English Botanical Gardens and the Hiram Chittenden Locks to view how Corps signage fits into their program. The onsite NRM staff offered interpretive tours and treated the group well.

An After-Action Review (AAR) is located at the end of the minutes. A copy of the AAR will be sent to Kevin Paff (NWD Chief of Natural Resources), Nathan McGowan (Lake Washington Ship Canal OPM), and Peggy Marcus (NRM Supervisor, Lake Washington Ship Canal).

VI. Strategic Plan Review

The group reviewed the Strategic Plan and made a number of recommendations as to the content and layout of the plan. The draft is attached.

VII. ANSI Safety Signs [AJ]

Bringing Civil Works into full compliance with the Corps standards of signage is a critical function of the National Sign Program. Several worksites across the Corps have strayed from the guidance of the Sign Standards Manual, yet they have complied with the safety and occupational health (SOH) guidance of the Corps Safety Manual (EM 385-1-1) in the adoption of the ANSI z535 standards for safety sign formatting. In order to reconcile this discrepancy, the SAWG resumed last year's discussion about whether to adopt the ANSI standard and to what degree.

A. Formatting—ANSI vs. Corps

- *Corps Exceeded ANSI.* When the Sign Standards Manual was first published in the 1980s, the Corps format exceeded the industry-standard 1967 ANSI z535 format in legibility and appearance for SOH signage. The same Corps format was used for safety signs designed for the public in recreation areas, waterways, etc.

- *ANSI Exceeds Corps.* While the Corps formatting for safety signs has remained the same for the past 30 years, ANSI has made several improvements that now exceed the standards of legibility and appearance of Corps signs. ANSI formatting also allows for pictograms that transcend language barriers.

B. Safety Manual Sign References.

- Section 8 of the Corps Safety Manual (EM 385-1-1) refers to a listing of referenced standards to be met or exceeded, including the Sign Standards Manual and ANSI z535.1, z535.2, and z535.5 (which are universal standards that establish the format that utilizes pictograms for workplace safety signs).

C. HQUSACE Safety Office Opinion.

- The Safety Office is in support of full embrace of ANSI-formatted signs with pictograms for the workplace throughout the Corps.

D. Functional Separation.

- *Workplace Safety Signs.* The guidance for workplace safety signs is governed by the Corps Sign Standards Manual, the Corps Safety Manual, and OSHA policies (including ANSI formatting standards for workplace safety signs).

- *Public Safety Signs.* The guidance for the formatting of safety signs directed toward the public stems from the Corps Sign Standards Manual, and not OSHA policies.

E. Vote: The team voted to adopt the ANSI safety signs into Section 11.

1. The ANSI z535 format with pictograms will apply only to workplace safety signs where the primary target audience is for the workplace, and will not affect public safety signs (keeping in mind that there may be cases where the public does see workplace safety signs, such as on a dam tour).

2. The process for HQUSACE approval of legends will remain the same.

3. A catalog of approved legends will be maintained current and made available through the MCX.

4. Guidance for the sign dimensions in reference to legend size (including "A" height), mounting height, and viewing distances will need to be figured out and made accessible.

5. This new allowance does not call into question existing signage, nor does it necessarily mean that older signs must be taken down; however, the whole sign inventory will need to be periodically assessed as is standard procedure with an ongoing functional sign plan.

VIII. Volume II Group Review [Tim]

The group reviewed printouts of the Volume II draft and left them with Tim to be integrated into Volume II.

IX. Deliverables

A. All

1. Continue to reach out to District Sign Managers to develop relationships.

2. Send AJ supervisor information and others that might benefit from getting a thank you message for team member participation.

3. Review the charters and provide feedback to AJ.

    4. Encourage district SPMs to perform an audit on one project a year.

    5. Create an inspection checklist form that can be used by project staff for the sign program.

B. Jeff

    1. Follow up on creating the flow chart/how to for new sign managers.

    2. Create a draft/template for appointment of sign program managers at the District level. Look into how the process should be handled.

    3. Work with AJ to update GIS symbol set with all recreation symbols and share nationwide.

C. John

    1. Send state sign contacts to AJ for his information.

    2. Draft a memo with AJ and send it to Kevin Paff for Ballard Locks.

D. AJ

    1. Reach out to MODOT now that we have a contact and work to determine path forward for roadway signs.

    2. Add information clarifying that using Telespar or other non-compliant posts is a last resort.

    3. COE Helvetica Fonts

        a. Post fonts on the Gateway.

        b. Call ACEIT and get the sign fonts approved so we can all be able to have them added to computers.

        c. Share the font with UNICOR/all sign shops.

    4. Recreation fee sign—Investigate what the official symbol is and if there is latitude to make changes.

    5. SignPro

        a. Communicate to the field that SignPro issues are being actively worked on to get it fully functional again.

        b. Ask ACEIT if SignPro can be put on a non-Corps server (like a vendor server).

    6. Update the Corps symbol set. Work with Jeff to update the GIS symbol set.

    7. Talk to contracting HQ for Volume II and also options for sign ordering.

    8. Investigate creating a PROSPECT course. Add this to the strategic plan.