MEETING REPORT:

NATIONAL MEETING OF LARGE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM PROGRAM MANAGERS

OCTOBER 22 - 23, 2007
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

OFFICE OF WATER
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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NATIONAL MEETING OF LARGE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM PROGRAM MANAGERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The managers of Large Aquatic Ecosystem (LAE) programs met on October 22-23, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri, at the request of EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, Benjamin Grumbles. Large aquatic ecosystems represented at the meeting included:

- Chesapeake Bay;
- the Great Lakes;
- the Gulf of Mexico;
- Long Island Sound,
- South Florida;
- the Mexico Border;
- Puget Sound;
- the Columbia River; and
- the Pacific Islands.

Managers from the National Water Program and from the Office of Research and Development also participated in the meeting, along with Water Division Directors from several regions. Jim Giattina, Director, Water Management Division, EPA Region 4 chaired the meeting.

The meeting purpose was to offer initial dialogue among managers of LAE programs and national water program mangers on how best to support and enhance efforts to protect these vital resources. LAE programs build upon and leverage their implementation within the boundaries of the core water programs authorized in the Clean Water Act. Three key objectives set the focus for the meeting:

1. Share knowledge and experience related to managing large aquatic ecosystems.
2. Increase networking opportunities among ecosystem programs.
3. Agree upon key next steps regarding program support, reporting and coordination.

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

Four major policy-level actions were identified as a result of the meeting:

- Large aquatic ecosystem managers should respond to the several recent national large aquatic ecosystem reports and make recommendations to national water program managers concerning possible response actions;
- Large aquatic ecosystem program managers and national program managers should work together to communicate research priorities to the EPA Office of Research and Development and to comment on the ORD multi-year research plans related to large aquatic ecosystems;
- Large aquatic ecosystem programs need to be better integrated into Agency goal-setting, including development of the EPA *Strategic Plan,* annual program guidance, and budget; and
- Large aquatic ecosystem program managers should reconvene and develop a consortium of these programs with a clearly defined purpose.

MEETING SUMMARY

Sessions I and II introduced the programs and participants and provided a summary of four national reports on LAE programs. The Meeting Chair acknowledged the wide diversity of ecosystem programs while also indicating commonalities, such as challenges to achieve non-point source controls, and coordinating across many sectors and with many participants.

Session III discussed support mechanisms, such as budget and reporting, as well as challenges facing non-point source and wetlands management programs in EPA. The Chair acknowledged that, despite good progress in the EPA mandated areas, wetlands loss and ecosystem degradation continued. The Chair concluded that LAE programs must be embraced as critical to the national environmental protection regime and have strong ties to EPA's Strategic Plan and budget. There was a consensus agreement to reconvene the LAE program managers in the future.

Additional important points made in the meeting were:

- LAE programs share fundamental principles, challenges, and needs and there is general interest across the programs in exchanging knowledge and experience.

- Stakeholders and partners are central to the management of LAE programs. While strong stakeholder efforts are evident in every program, the group acknowledged that collaboration is never done.

- Both science and data are crucial elements of support to management decisions and buy-in from every level. Products need to be tailored to the end-user.

- EPA leadership is required on issues not traditionally within the OW or EPA purview, necessitating strong coordination across the federal sector.

- The LAE programs should improve their reporting on success stories and innovations.

- The programs would benefit from closer links with other EPA programs, such as the Office of Air and Radiation on mercury deposition and Superfund on sediment cleanup.

- A suggested strategy to help promote the LAE programs included the following:

    - Track success of core EPA programs, especially water programs, within individual Large Aquatic Ecosystems.
    - Develop threshold criteria for Large Aquatic Ecosystem designation.
    - Allow Large Aquatic Ecosystems to utilize performance partnership approaches to bundle and manage resources.
    - Commit to a regular schedule of rotating LAE program evaluations.
    - Develop common suites of short and long-term measures to show results.
    - Encourage program-level advocacy in budget and strategic planning efforts.

MEETING REPORT

SESSION I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Large Aquatic Ecosystem (LAE) program managers met on October 22-23, 2007, in St. Louis Missouri. The meeting was held at the request of EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, Benjamin Grumbles (see attached meeting invitation memo). Large aquatic ecosystems represented at the meeting included:

- Chesapeake Bay;
- the Great Lakes;
- the Gulf of Mexico;
- Long Island Sound,
- South Florida;
- the Mexico Border;
- Puget Sound;
- the Columbia River; and
- the Pacific Islands.

Managers from the National Water Program and from the Office of Research and Development also participated in the meeting along with Water Division Directors from several regions. Jim Giattina, Director, Water Management Division, EPA Region 4 chaired the meeting. Martha Shimkin, of The Track Group, facilitated the meeting. A list of meeting participants is attached.

The meeting purpose was to offer initial dialogue among managers of LAE programs and national water programs on how best to support and enhance efforts to protect these vital resources. LAE programs build upon and leverage their implementation within the boundaries of the core water programs authorized in the Clean Water Act.

Three key objectives set the focus for the meeting:

1. Share knowledge and experience related to managing large aquatic ecosystems.

2. Increase networking opportunities among ecosystem programs.

3. Agree upon key next steps regarding program support, reporting and coordination.

Interviews with each of the programs had taken place in advance and helped prepare the agenda and discussions. The meeting began with introduction of the participants and the ecosystems represented. Desired meeting outcomes expressed by participants at their introductions fell into four key categories:

- networking among programs, especially to share lessons and ideas,
- increasing program support,
- thinking strategically about new and existing ecosystem programs,
- and strengthening links with the core water programs.

Each program shared its unique features and highlighted a recent success in program management. The features revealed the breadth and depth of the LAE programs, e.g:

- Largest land to surface water area (Chesapeake Bay)
- The only river among the programs (Columbia River)
- Largest of the LAEs -- drains 40% of U.S. waters (Gulf of Mexico)
- Contains 3 distinct programs (South Florida)
- Bi-national (Great Lakes)
- Has 2 openings with the ocean (Long Island Sound)
- The only fjord system in the U.S. (Puget Sound)
- Largest wilderness east of the Mississippi (South Florida)

Reported successes by some participants emphasized management and structural accomplishments, such as strong program initiation, solid authorizations and good fits within the EPA strategic plan and core OW programs. Others reported programmatic successes including such achievements as coral reef and forestry management, and consistency across states on adopted water quality standards.

NATIONAL REVIEWS OF LARGE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

Katharine Dowell, Office of Water, presented four recently conducted national studies on LAE programs. Studies considered were:

- Environmental Law Institute: *Implementing Ecosystem-based Management: Governance Gaps, Conflicts and Needs*, 2005

- National Academy of Public Administration: *Taking Environmental Protection to the Next Level: An Assessment of the U.S. Environmental Services Delivery System*, 2007

- Northeast Midwest Institute: *Large-Scale Ecosystem Restoration Initiatives: Lessons for Existing and Emerging Initiatives*, 2005

- National Research Council: *Mississippi River Water Quality and the Clean Water Act: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities,* 2007

(The PowerPoint presentation on these reports is attached.)

Discussion following the presentation centered on three themes: 1) cross-cutting budgets, 2) opportunities for cooperation and linkages within and across LAEs and, 3) a consensus commitment to review and respond to the studies.

BEST PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

Throughout the meeting, Martha Shimkin, the meeting facilitator, provided feedback from the preparatory interviews conducted with each of the LAE programs. Two interview topics presented at the start of the meeting concerned best practices and challenges:

- **Best Practices:** The theme that LAE programs most often cited was coordination across federal agencies, state and local organizations. Nearly all programs noted the importance of federal agencies coordinating among each other to identify appropriate roles. Benefits from partnerships included fostering collaborative problem-solving, gaining buy-in and general consensus, and transparent decision-making. Good definition of the program was another best practice, as were success in leveraging resources, working both within and outside of regulatory programs, working within a strategic framework, strong communication efforts, and securing long-term support.

- **Challenges:** The challenges presented were varied. They included defining issues and priorities for investment decisions, and managing expectations of communities, states and the federal government. Regarding program effectiveness, facilitation of both trust and consensus were deemed central to success, yet hard to quantify and measure. In many cases, access to data, data sharing and measuring results were viewed as tremendously complicated. Determining the federal versus state roles in terms of accountability, and where resources come from, further challenged the programs. Programs wanted to move beyond planning and management to program implementation, and they noted that accomplishing work by committee, while important for ecosystem programs, was time and resource-intensive. Other challenges mentioned included finding sufficient resources, obtaining political buy-in, and securing long-term support from the Agency.

SUMMARY OF SESSION I

The Meeting Chair summarized the first session, reminding participants that all ecosystem programs are unique yet they face a mutual challenge: to achieve non-point source controls, with shared accountability, sufficient resources, and long-term investment in natural resources while coordinating across many sectors and with many participants. Two summary questions the Chair raised were: What is EPA accountable for? And how best do the LAE programs describe themselves? The chair also reminded the group of its recommendation to respond to the four studies presented in this session.

SESSION II: STAKEHOLDERS, SCIENCE AND DATA, FEDERAL ROLE

The second session of the meeting focused on three of the themes that were raised by the four LAE studies: Stakeholders, Science and Data, and the Federal Role.

STAKEHOLDERS/PARTNERS

The session on Stakeholders began with a presentation by Mary Lou Soscia of the Columbia River Program, on their experiences in working to reduce toxics in the Columbia River through partnerships and collaboration. This program gives primary focus to toxins in fish, an indicator of water contamination and a sustenance issue for the many local tribes. The program had employed a facilitated meeting technique to bring together numerous tribes, federal and state governments and other parties to develop focus, goals, and actions for the program. This enabled the group to set priorities which were: monitoring, public information and toxins reduction. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached.)

The work not only achieved buy-in from all partners but has also resulted in successes, such as Oregon's pesticide stewardship partnership, Washington's sediment cleanup program, and a push to change Oregon's water quality standards to make fish consumption levels more reflective of tribal consumption patterns. A more general success has been widespread participation in the program for very little financial investment on the part of EPA. Program priorities include monitoring, public information, and toxics reduction.

Martha Shimkin next presented pre-meeting participant interview feedback regarding the importance of stakeholders. These benefits were consistently cited across the programs: better buy-in, better decisions, improved resource leveraging, knowledge sharing, building momentum, and achieving implementation. The programs named several categories of stakeholders, such as states, local government, tribes, non-governmental organizations, federal agencies, other national governments, the polluters, and those who share the watershed resource. Many mentioned the structures used to bring in stakeholders, which ranged from formal advisory committees, to community groups and interested individuals. The programs shared their successes in bolstering stakeholder participation, while highlighting continued needs for:

- Persistence
- Continued/additional human resources
- Long-term commitments
- Implementation commitments
- Sufficient/consistent funding

Methods used to bring in stakeholders included conference calls, outreach efforts, outreach to schools, meetings and conferences, sector and media based initiatives, well defined responsibilities, websites, and multi-cultural efforts (in particular, language).

The discussion on stakeholders concluded that they are central to the success of LAE programs. There was a distinction drawn between stakeholders that act as advisors and those who implement. The programs need to focus efforts on finding stakeholders who can fill gaps and meet program needs.

Actions

The discussion identified two key points:

- Better coordination of stakeholders
- Dedicated travel money and human resources to continue strong stakeholder involvement

SCIENCE AND DATA

To begin a discussion on Science and Data relating to LAEs, Paul Horvatin, of the Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) presented his program's experience in using the annual *State of the Lakes* report to inform partners and the public. This program has years of experience in tracking data relating to the Great Lakes. For example, the program reports that ten years into a Bi-National Toxics Strategy, the program's focus on decreasing backyard refuse burning has resulted in a 60% reduction of toxics in the lake waters. The program highlighted that new and

emerging science was needed to address issues of invasive species and crashing food webs in some of the lakes. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached.)

Discussion followed the presentation, focusing on three topics: funding, reporting, and support from ORD. It was noted that GLNPO has achieved tremendous leveraging of EPA data and assessment money; e.g., USFWS champions aquatic habitat and is able to tie their Great Lakes support work into their own strategic plan.

Martha Shimkin again reported on feedback from the pre-meeting interviews, highlighting strengths, challenges and needs for science and data support:

SCIENCE	DATA
Strengths	**Strengths**
Strong science base	Large dollar investment
Sophisticated models	Role for EPA
Strong science interest	GIS-based data collection/report
Good tools	NEP wealth of data
ORD collaboration	Information exchange
- labs, ecosystem services plan	Stakeholder support
Good role for EPA	EPA data repository
Challenges	**Challenges**
Collaboration with ORD	Use at local level
Some science not available	Broader use of data
How science aids at local level	Lots of data: how to use
Political disinterest	Transmitting data to stakeholders
Lack of public understanding	- simple to understand and compelling
	Data management
	Synthesis
	Money sink
Needs	**Needs**
Bridge into ORD planning process	Accessing, analyzing & synthesizing data
Better organization	Program input on data plans
Targeted investments	Money to support and maintain systems
More science support	Data sharing (from collectors)

Actions

The discussion resulted in two action items:

- The LAE programs should attempt to bridge research needs into the ORD planning process
- There is a request that the LAE programs input reports into STORET.

THE FEDERAL ROLE

Jeff Lape and Diana Esher presented the Chesapeake Bay Program experience on working with states and other federal agencies. The Chesapeake Bay Program has strong state and federal

mandates which, among other benefits, co-locate staff from several universities and federal agencies in one office in the Chesapeake Bay area. This has resulted in strong, day-to-day working relationships across federal and state programs, and it has helped in the development of program goals, daily implementation, shared leadership and problem-solving. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached.)

With the Chesapeake Bay facing the prospect of decreasing water quality over the next 5-10 years due to continuing population growth and land development, despite excellent environmental management progress, the discussion after the presentation centered on a common LAE topic: how to foster sustainable development. The Bay program is developing an approach to limiting stormwater impacts by promoting "no-impact development." Programs shared similar concerns about how to set manageable expectations of the federal role, and how to deal with accountability when ecosystem degradation is not under the purview of the EPA or other partner agencies. Other discussion points included providing flexible or combined federal funding for programs so they can better invest in priorities. Programs shared experience with awarding pooled funds, such as the Long Island Sound "Futures Fund" that combines the resources of EPA, NOAA and NRCS. However, a note of caution was sounded about federal partners' perceptions of losing control of their funds.

Martha Shimkin provided feedback from the pre-meeting interviews which confirmed the point that the LAE programs rely on cross-agency collaboration in order to cover large geographic spans as well as a diversity of issues that fall under various mandates. Coordinating across the federal sector was bolstered by mandates and directives where agencies were required to coordinate. In addition, inter-agency agreements, flexible funding mechanisms to pool funds across agencies, and good definitions of agency roles were means to support better coordination. Success in cross-agency coordination was helped by co-location of staff, inter-agency panels to address specific concerns (such as financing), and pooling expertise.

Programs shared that senior management interest from within OW was important. Mandates and directives were especially helpful in achieving more coordination across federal agencies. Staff and money are needed, especially to support a long-term, sustainable perspective.

SUMMARY OF SESSION II

Jim Giattina summarized the session, reminding the group that collaboration is never done and recognizing that there were several models for managing LAE programs, which is to be expected, given the diversity of programs at hand. He helped to define the term stakeholder as anyone who wants to help solve the problem, and he pointed out that science and targeted monitoring support good communication. He referred to a quote from Fred McManus, of the South Florida Program, "The key to achieving environmental results is successfully engaging/working with all stakeholders in a true partnership to implement priority actions to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution. We should strive to build capacity of local stakeholders to help solve problems."

The Chair highlighted the group consensus to provide input to ORD's multi-year research agenda by coordinating a science needs plan for the LAEs, and that a data rich program leads to better policy decisions, thus the importance of continued investment in monitoring and information. On coordination across federal agencies, the Chair reminded the group that

coordination is relations-based and that trust relations take time to build. He concluded that EPA's leadership role as a convener of federal agencies is essential to good working relationships in the future.

SESSION III: SUPPORTING & ENHANCING LAE PROGRAMS

The Meeting Chair opened Session III, reminding the group of two action items already identified: the collective response to national reports on LAEs, and working with ORD to integrate research needs for LAEs into long-term research planning. The Chair also brought forth the challenge of accountability that the LAE programs face as they are responsible for programs that span media and agency mandates or authorities.

FUNDING

Tim Fontaine, Senior Resource Official, OW, and Jeff Peterson, OW/Immediate Office, presented an overview of LAE programs in the EPA budget and strategic plan. A copy of the PowerPoint for this presentation is attached. This provided background to the federal budgeting process, painting a global picture of continued growth in mandatory federal programs which leads to decreasing availability of budget for discretionary programs. He noted Congressional interest in specific projects, for example the Chesapeake Bay Program, Puget Sound, and the San Francisco Bay – these will likely receive Congressional earmarks to secure funding. Another positive note made was that LAE programs to date have received relatively more funding that other OW programs. Recommendations were to strengthen links between OW's core program and the LAEs, as well as links to the EPA Strategic Plan. Of particular interest to OMB was strong data and clear endpoints. (The PowerPoint presentation is attached.)

Martha Shimkin provided feedback from pre-meeting interviews on funding, stating that universally, the programs sought flexibility so they could invest in the program priorities. Not only was sufficient funding needed, but also consistent funding, and a long-term perspective. An ultimate goal of some programs was to get a line item in the federal budget, which would address funding sufficiency and consistency. Some flexibility came from pooling with other federal agencies and seeking matching funds from state and local governments. A few programs pointed out that funding for program management was sufficient but funding needs for ecosystem restoration were in the billion dollar range.

Discussion

An involved discussion followed, covering several areas, starting with recognition of the wide disparity of funding levels and mechanisms across the LAE programs. An interesting comment was made about the LAE programs serving as a "learning lab" for EPA, as the agency seeks to trend away from traditional "stovepipe" management. It was also noted that programs needed to do a better job of reporting their accomplishments. Some points made were:

- The programs need to play strong roles in planning, budgeting and reporting processes to get the attention of Regions, OW, the Agency, OMB and Congress.

- Congress gets very interested and becomes willing to work with EPA once they understand and can support a program. They like to see greater results in the shorter term vs. tiny increments at the national level.
- The programs need to link to core water programs, possibly helped by a crosswalk between the water goal (goal 2) and the ecosystem goal (goal 4). It was noted that experience with integrating other EPA core media programs has varied: some have been cooperative, while others have resisted using LAEs as a program delivery venue.
- Programs noted that annual reporting was less indicative of environmental results than multi-year reporting. Yet, for the agency results reporting, annual measures were needed.
- Good program evaluation was considered essential and a possibility of following the National Estuary Program reporting model was suggested.

Actions

The discussion identified three key points:
- Annual measures need to feed into longer-term measures and both should be reported.
- National LAEs should coordinate reporting for future budgets.
- LAE program leaders, and Regions as well as OW, must advocate for each of the LAE programs especially in the Agency budget and planning processes.

NON-POINT SOURCE/WETLAND DISCUSSION

The original agenda was revised to accommodate a desire on the part of the programs to discuss the issues and challenges of nonpoint sources and wetlands. Tom Eaton, of Region 10, led the discussion, pointing out that EPA had a relatively small role to play in overall ecosystem protection. This presents accountability challenges and highlights a need to build stronger federal agency as well as state and local cooperation, and to manage expectations. Despite good progress in the EPA-mandated areas, both wetlands loss and ecosystem degradation continue, mostly due to population growth and land development -- areas in which EPA has no jurisdiction. The programs agreed that they had to increase collaboration with some of the large federally funded programs, such as USDA and Department of Transportation. Other policy actions, such as tax incentives for zero-impact development initiatives, or withholding highway funds in association with state decisions and actions that resulted in ecosystem harm were suggested.

Actions

The discussion identified two key points:
- Catalogue innovations and successes-
    - tell a watershed success story, relate story to the larger program
    - use measures as a base, developing a "logic model"
- Secure funding to address the problems through better inter-agency coordination and potential incentive/disincentive policies.

LONG-TERM COORDINATION

Martha Shimkin initiated the concluding discussion regarding coordination across LAE programs and provided feedback from the interviews. The feedback was divided into both statements of purpose and strategy for long-term coordination, and shared program concerns and needs. One

shared advantage of long-term coordination was the opportunity to strengthen linkages among LAE programs and with the core OW programs. In addition, the opportunity for sharing tools and experience, networking, gaining input to problem-solving and having colleagues across the country were foreseen as positive outcomes from a consortium of LAE programs.

Programs suggested various mechanisms of coordination, such as annual or bi-annual meetings and periodic conference calls. They also suggested a central Headquarters coordinator for the programs, which would also help them integrate with the EPA strategic plan. For the most part, programs wanted to be part of this formative LAE consortium, but noted as their primary concern, that there must be an added value to participation in such a group maintained over the long term.

The following needs were identified to sustain long-term coordination:

- Clearly define the purpose and value of the consortium, including meaningful exchange of information.
- Manage accountability and expectation from the LAE programs.
- OW and EPA leadership should reaffirm the importance of the LAE program to the EPA mission.
- OW leadership needs to make a long-term commitment to the LAE programs and their consortium.

Actions

Several next steps were identified:

- Set up networks for practitioners to foster communication at staff level.
- Define a hard-hitting purpose that describes the value added by this consortium.
- Reflect the LAE program in EPA's next strategic plan. With this, promote the concept of the LAE programs as "geographical laboratories" for EPA.
- Bridge LAE research needs into ORD's research planning agenda.
- Reconvene the LAE program group with OW Headquarters and Regional support.
- Consider meeting around specific themes and actions.

SUMMARY OF SESSION III

The Chair summarized Session III, highlighting the rich discussion and dialogue that this one-day meeting generated. He defined the LAE programs as loosely fitting within the Agency framework, constituency-based, and unique multi-media programs. He concluded that, despite this uniqueness, LAE programs must be embraced as critical to OW and EPA's national environmental protection regime with strong ties to the Strategic Plan and budget. Questions remain on how to engage stakeholders and how to recognize innovation while also applying core programs and overall accountability. The consensus agreement to reconvene the LAE programs in the future would be a useful next step.

NATIONAL WATER DIVISION DIRECTORS MEETING

The Meeting Chair summarized the National Meeting of Large Aquatic Ecosystems at the National Water Division Directors Meeting which followed the LAE meeting. This subsequent meeting was chaired by the Office of Water Assistant Administrator Benjamin Grumbles.

Follow-up actions identified and tentative lead responsible parties:

1. Create collective Agency response re: NAPA and other reports' recommendations and brief AA. [OW with all LAEs, Regions]

2. Develop program/region-based coordinated science needs list to bridge into ORD multi-year plan. Work with lead ORD Region (Region I) [Chesapeake Bay Program lead]

3. Enhance accountability and reporting:
   - Begin clarifying and articulating EPA's LAE role relative to restoration and protection expectations. [Jeff Peterson, Mike Mason, OWOW]
   - Begin to develop a process to revisit goal setting and Strategic Plan linkages. [LAE lead TBD]

4. Consider drawing closer national connections with other media programs in context of Strategic Plan: e.g., w/ OAR. (Note: Superfund connection solid in several LAEs already) [Jeff Peterson, Mike Mason with LAEs, Regions]

5. Reconvene LAE program managers consortium around shared goals: [OW, OWOW, LAEs], e.g.
   - Focus on tracking successes of core OW programs within LAEs.
   - Develop threshold criteria for LAE designation and allow LAEs to utilize performance partnership (PPG) approaches to bundle/manage resources.
   - Commit to regular (rotating?) LAE program evaluations. (e.g., NEPs)
   - Develop a few common suites of short and long-term measures tied to the Strategic Plan to show results.
   - Staff at HQ- OW and Regional levels the role of advocate for LAEs.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Final meeting agenda
2. List of participants

Attachment 1

National Meeting of Large Aquatic Ecosystem Program Managers
October 22-23, 2007
St. Louis, Missouri

Purpose:

To begin the first step in a dialogue process among managers of large aquatic ecosystem programs and national program mangers on how best to support and enhance efforts to protect these vital resources.

Objectives:

4. Share knowledge and experience related to managing large aquatic ecosystems.
5. Increase networking opportunities among ecosystem programs.
6. Agree upon key next steps re: program support, reporting and coordination.

October 22

SESSION I - INTRODUCTIONS & UNDERSTANDINGS

1:00 pm **Introduction and Purpose** **(5 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Region 4, Meeting Chair

Participant Introduction **(10 minutes)**
Each participant introduces themselves, stating hopes for the meeting.

Large Aquatic Programs **(10 minutes)**
Each Large Aquatic Ecosystem (LAE) program has one representative give a 3-sentence overview of their ecosystem program, including one statement about a unique feature of the program, and one success of the program. Facilitator will record the feature and success of each program. The purpose of this is to set the stage, increase awareness of other programs, and establish grounds for discussion throughout the meeting and breaks.

1:25 pm **Four Recent Studies & Reports: Implications for Large Aquatic Ecosystem Program Management** -- *Katharine Dowell, OW* **(15 min)**

- *National Academy of Public Administration*
- *Northeast/Midwest Institute*
- *Environmental Law Institute*
- *National Research Council*

`1:40 **Lessons Learned -- Feedback from the Interview Process (20 minutes)**

- *Coordination across agencies, governments, organizations*
- *Partnering with state and local governments*
- *Clear definition of the program*

- *Working within a strategic framework*
- *Integrating science into decision-making*
- *Need for long term support*
- *Good internal and external communication*
- *Political will and good leadership*

Discussion
Do you agree with this list? Is anything missing? Which are easily done? Which pose challenges? Opportunity to ask/answer questions among the programs.

2:00 pm **Challenges -- Feedback from the Interview Process (30 minutes)**

- *Coordination -- difficulties and resource intensive*
- *Resources -- human, financial, technical*
- *Political Will -- interest, political baggage, transition*
- *Long-Term View -- especially in HQ support*
- *Data -- so much data, so little capability to deal with it*
- *Best Practices – how to share, promote them*
- *Issue Specific -- various issues found challenging (population growth, storms, toxics in fish, etc.)*

Discussion
Do you agree with this list? Is anything missing? Which are easily done? Which pose challenges? Opportunity to ask/answer questions among the programs.

2:30 pm **Summary of Session I** **(15 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Meeting Chair

- *Heard from the various groups.*
- *Learned of commonalities on lessons learned and challenges.*
- *Overall reactions? Other points?*

2:45 pm **BREAK**

SESSION II -- PARTNERS, SCIENCE, AND THE FEDERAL ROLE

3:00 pm **Coordinating with Partners and Stakeholders**

Presentation by the Columbia River Program –*Mary Lou Soscia Reducing Toxics in the Columbia River through Partnerships & Collaboration* **(10 minutes)**

Stakeholders: Successes and Challenges **(20 minutes)**
What has worked and not worked. Why are stakeholders so important? What are the NAPA report, and other studies, saying about the need for more work here? Do you agree with the recommendations?

Discussion **(10 minutes)**
e.g,, What is needed to better coordinate with partners and stakeholders?
Opportunity for follow-up: What next steps could or should the group, including

headquarters, commit to in order to improve or support partner/stakeholder coordination?

3:40 pm **Science and Data**

Presentation by the Great Lakes Program -- *TBD* **(10 minutes)**
State of the Lakes: Using Science to Inform Partners and the Public

Science: Strengths and Challenges **(10 minutes)**
Facilitator asks participants: what has worked, then highlights challenges.

Data: Strengths and Challenges **(10 minutes)**
Facilitator asks participants: what has worked, then highlights challenges.

Discussion **(20 minutes)**
What is needed to improve science and data in the programs? Opportunity for follow-up: What can the group, including headquarters, commit to in order to improve science and data support for LAEs?

4:30 pm **The Federal Role**

Presentation by the Chesapeake Bay Program -- *Jeff Lape/Diana Esher Working on a Daily Basis with States and Other Federal Agencies* **(10 min)**

Coordinating across Federal Government **(20 minutes)**
Participants to share best practices, then discuss challenges.

Discussion
How can the LAE programs improve cross-agency coordination? How can Headquarters help with this? Opportunity for follow-up: What can the group, including headquarters, commit to in order to generally help improve cross-coordination?

5:00 pm **Summary of Session II** **(30 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Meeting Chair
Note that today's discussion was one step in response to reports, and the types of success and challenges highlighted. Highlight any commitments to work towards improvements, and who is responsible. Next day will focus on support and enhancement, and coordination. Close for day.

5:30 pm **ADJOURN**

6:30 pm **Optional Group Dinner** -- *Hannegan's Restaurant and Pub.*
The restaurant is a reasonably short walk from the hotel.
Address: 719 North Second St., St. Louis 63102.
Phone: 314-241-8877 http://www.hanneganrestaurant.com

October 23

SESSION III – SUPPORTING & ENHANCING LAE PROGRAMS

8:30 am **Opening** **(10 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Meeting Chair
Review of day before. The purpose of today is to think about where the LAEs want to go as a group. Introduce next topic & speakers.

Presentation from Office of Water – *Tim Fontaine and Jeff Peterson*
Overview of Large Aquatic Ecosystem Programs in the EPA Budget and Strategic Plan **(15 minutes)**

Discussion **(20 minutes)**
Opportunity for dialogue between OW presenters and the LAE programs.

9:15 am **Funding - Feedback from the Interviews** **(30 minutes)**

- *Flexibility of funding*
- *Allow program to fund the priorities*
- *Sufficiency*
- *Consistency*
- *Need for funding restoration, not just program management*
- *Matched funding with states, local governments*
- *Coordination with other federal agencies*
- *Line items in the budget*
- *Leverage funding*

Discussion
e.g., Invite representatives from headquarters staff, core programs, ecosystem programs to comment. What are the reactions to the feedback? Talk about funding flexibility. How to address billion dollar price tags for restoration work? Opportunity for follow-up: Develop key messages on funding mechanisms, levels, etc. Next steps?

9:45 am **Progress Reporting/Identify Best Practices** **(30 minutes)**

Presentation by the Gulf of Mexico Program — *Bryon Griffith, "Setting Shared Goals Establishes the Best Foundation."* **(10 minutes)**

Discussion
There is consensus on the need for shared goals/ reporting. Currently, what is being asked of the programs is found in the EPA strategic plan. In the future, what will be reported? To whom? How can emerging best practices be promoted? Opportunity for follow-up: Agreement on next steps re: reporting requirements, to address, e.g., timing, updating and who programs report to.

10:15 am **BREAK**

10:30 am **Defining Large Aquatic Ecosystem Programs** **(30 minutes)**
In the interview process, there were questions on the definition of Large Aquatic Ecosystem programs. How much variation in geographic scale, funding, and mission makes sense? How should conclusions be reflected in the revision of Goal 4 of the EPA Strategic Plan?

Long-Term Coordination -- Feedback from the Interviews
Facilitator will summarize.

Discussion
Are there key aspects of Large Aquatic Ecosystem Programs?

11:00 am **Summary of Session III** **(15 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Meeting Chair
Summarize discussion and next steps.

11:15 pm **Key Points for Afternoon's WDD Meeting Report-Out** **(45 minutes)**
Jim Giattina, Meeting Chair, moderator
Facilitator will summarize conclusions; discussion of next steps, and key messages for WDDs.

12:00 pm **LUNCH BREAK: Join WDDs Meeting at 1 pm**

National Water Division Directors Meeting
St. Louis, Missouri
October 23 – 25, 2007

1:00 – 1:10 **Welcome to WDDs meeting**
[*Jim Giattina, R4*]

1:10 – 1:30 **Opening Remarks**
[*Ben Grumbles, OW*]

1:30 – 2:00 **Large Aquatic Ecosystem Report-Out**
[*Jim Giattina, R4 / Jeff Peterson, OW*]

This session will provide an overview and report-out from the Large Aquatic Ecosystem Meeting held October 22-23, 2007.

2:00 **LAE Meeting Adjourns/continue with WDDs …**

ATTACHMENT 2

Large Aquatic Ecosystem Meeting Participants

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