



Planning Associates Program 2008

PA Team: The Great White Shark Team

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CTP Title: Addressing the Needs of the Nation's Water Resource Challenges:
Establishment of the Interagency Watershed Tiger Team

*"A Top-Down and Bottom-Up Strategy for Integrated Water Resource Solutions
and Sparking a Cultural Change"*

The Challenge

The current expanding demands and challenges to the Nation's water resources have created the critical necessity for an integrated water resource strategy that uses a watershed planning perspective.

The timing for this need is in alignment with the awareness of the value of addressing problems holistically in a systems context on the expanding demands of water resources constrained by limited funds and resources. Also, with the updating of the Civil Works Strategic Plan, finalizing of the five GE Watershed Studies, and the concluding of the Actions for Change work, the timing is right to further incorporate watershed planning processes and perspective into the Corps planning culture.

A watershed perspective requires a cultural shift to look beyond the single agency and single project mentality, and to look into an inclusive process using collaboration and cooperation among agencies, partners, and the public. No one

agency or group can accomplish these water resource challenges alone; they must work together and plan in a cumulative holistic environment.

The ideas and principles of watershed perspective planning are not new to the Corps. The Flood Control Act of 1917 authorized the Corps to “undertake comprehensive study of watersheds to assess the relationship of flood control projects to navigation, water power, and other appropriate uses of water resources affected by projects.” Corps leadership has provided “top down” directives and guidance over the years in watershed planning, although this has been a continuing challenge to integrate for an agency still focused on project funded planning. The current Civil Works Strategic Plan emphasizes the watershed perspective clearly by stating that integrated water resource management and watershed focus shall include:

- Holistic focus on water problems and opportunities.
- Logical geographic area for managing water resources.
- Systems approach for analyzing problems and solutions.
- Collaboration, partnerships, and teamwork.
- More achievement within existing resources.

The way of Corps involvement with water resources is changing from the leader of single project focus to a participating agency role and/or provider of technical and planning experience over an entire watershed. Interagency cooperation is vital in this process. The traditional one agency focus must be set aside, for no one agency can or has the authority to address all that is required for the watershed and water resource challenges now or in the future.

A process to quickly integrate and adapt to changes and new information is needed. Directives from the top down have created institutional changes and made organizational changes, but the critical need is to instill a cultural change from the “bottom up” Project Delivery Team (PDT) level.

This Critical Think Piece proposes to address the two challenges of integrated watershed planning and cultural change in processes with the creation of the Interagency Watershed Tiger Team (Tiger Team).

The Approach – Who Makes Up the Tiger Team

The Tiger Team will be a support team to the District PDT's and initially facilitated by the Corps. It can consist of one or more persons with demonstrated watershed planning experience who will function as the Corps lead on the Tiger Team. The Tiger Team leverages resources from around the Corps including HQ, MSC's, PCX's, ERDC, and IWR on an as-needed basis, depending on regional need and issues, as well as other agency expertise and resources. Besides the vertical structure, functional areas represented by the CoP's and sub-CoP's may be included as needed or to address specific needs that can go across Corps and other agency business lines and authorities.

A steering committee made of members from Corps (HQ, MSC's, ERDC, and IWR,), and other agency resource management members could be assigned to provide oversight and guidance to the Tiger Team. Additionally, there should be a single point of contact within the Corps who is tasked with the

responsibility for the Tiger Team, to include ensuring that required information exchange and milestones are supported.

The Tiger Team's success is dependent upon active participation from other local, state, and Federal agencies. Local and state members should be pulled from recent studies, passing on lessons learned to new studies in other areas of the country. Local and state members may be transitory, adding value as local interest in a watershed increases.

The Federal agencies are encouraged to have enduring participation through active membership and resource sharing. Agencies which have a purpose or interest in watershed planning include:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Federal Highways Authority
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Geologic Survey
- Bureau of Indian Affairs

The Tiger Team should be limited in size for efficiency, but representatives from the key agencies are important members in the Tiger Team. Diverse perspectives and information relevant to all levels of government as well as the

full spectrum of watershed planning and experience are key values that the Tiger Team brings.

In addition to multiple agencies, cross-functional diversity is a key element of the Tiger Team. By having planners, land managers, biologists, engineers, regulators, and others on the team, the Tiger Team will be able to address the many diverse needs and provide a broad experienced perspective. Having the right players on the team is critical to success. Once the right people are in the right places, watershed planning will begin to progress on its own.

What Is the Tiger Team?

Through interagency watershed planning, the Tiger Team will infuse national perspectives and experience with the PDT's regional elements into watershed plans at a local level. The goal is not to re-create or reinvent existing expertise in watershed studies, but to leverage that expertise into a coherent unified team and act as a catalyst and force/resource multiplier.

Rather than focusing on the Corps aspects of a study, the Tiger Team is focused on the missions of all the agencies involved with a study. For example, the Corps offers expertise that can serve in multiple roles such as water resource planner, program management, facilitator, regulator, technical expert, and stakeholder.

An important aspect of the Tiger Team concept is the development of a watershed program and process, rather than specific projects. The Tiger Team encourages a holistic approach to watershed planning as well as fosters

relationships among the agencies and individuals. The Tiger Team can participate in discussion on policy guidance, priorities, and strategic goals of the national watershed program.

In addition to the programmatic level, the Tiger Team will also have a positive impact on individual watershed planning efforts. The Tiger Team is a base of expertise to bridge between individual watershed teams to pass on lessons learned and promote organizational adaptive management.

The Tiger Team goal will be the “resource” across the nation for planners to look for the latest training, tools, guidance, experience, and other assistance in watershed planning. The advantage to have the Tiger Team perform this function is that the resources will be vetted with and provided by other agencies. In this era of collaboration and external review, having common tools, methods, and language is essential for efficiency of resources.

A Tiger Team could ameliorate watershed planning and bring together the key stakeholders to:

- Enhance the planning capabilities of the PDT’s in holistic watershed contexts.
- Develop a plan to identify capability gaps and fill them as required (could be accomplished by, or in collaboration with, the PDT).
- Educate and train water resource team members at all levels on the interagency processes for watershed planning.

The Path Forward

The Tiger Team will serve in a support role for the PDT that uses existing forums, committees, groups, task forces, and the PCX’s. The Tiger Team will use the combined expertise of the Corps and other collaborating agencies to

provide a team capable of assisting PDT's at the start of their watershed studies and throughout the course of those studies and investigations. This will ensure a standard and effective approach at the start of the studies while allowing the district and regional PDT members to mold the study with the uniqueness of the particular watershed in a regional context.

Key requirements for the Tiger Team concept should include:

- National Integration of Federal, state, and local resources.
- Regional support to the PDT's.
- Buy-in from HQUSACE, Regional Business Centers (MSC's), PCX's, and districts.
- Buy-in from other Federal agencies.

For tasks that are recurring or require a long-term, indefinite length of time, the Tiger Team would function on an as-needed basis. This would give a cohesive and reliable technical base and allow for consistency throughout the life of a study. Without this cohesive synergistic approach, there is a risk of losing focus and delaying progress on a unified national watershed program.

The Tiger Team and PDT may decide to establish working groups or otherwise organize itself to most effectively accomplish its charter and will likely evolve during the life of the program. Further, its frequency of meeting may change, but will probably require several weeks of full attention by its members when first established.

The focus of the Tiger Team's initial meetings would be to develop a draft charter with the PDT. This would serve to validate that the initial membership adequately represents all the appropriate stakeholders and obtains additional participants as needed. The Tiger Team would organize internally as necessary:

identifying a team leader; determining meeting times, locations, and procedures; and creating working groups and/or sub-teams, if required. The Tiger Team would develop draft Tiger Team milestones for program development, a tentative meeting schedule, back-briefs to HQUSACE and other agencies to obtain approval, or additional guidance as necessary. Before a full commitment is made to the Tiger Team concept, USACE could carryout a 'proof of concept', by beta-testing the Tiger Team on one or two authorized watershed studies.

Future missions of the Tiger Team can include ways to further instill the culture of watershed planning throughout the Corps and other agencies.

Methods that could be used to accomplish this mission are:

- Creation of a Planning Core Curriculum prospect course on watersheds.
- Hosting of a watersheds bi-annual conference.
- Requiring lessons learned reports on all watershed studies.
- Creation of a watershed guide book to outline the roles and responsibilities of local, state, and Federal agencies in individual watershed studies and act as a catalyst for project management plans.

To complete the top-down, bottom up communication, the Tiger Team could augment the content of the existing bi-annual Planning CoP Conference to focus on obtaining a common understanding of the national watershed program. Subsequent sessions and trainings could provide updates on the program, executive-level sessions, and working group breakouts as necessary to identify and solve new issues or the need for changes to the program or processes.

Funding the Tiger Team

All projects and studies fall within a watershed. The Corps Tiger Team members are funded using project study funds through respective Project

Management Plans for most activities such as assistance to the PDT's. Some level of funding may be necessary from Corps HQ to address programmatic level activities. Other agency members of the Tiger Team should be funded from their own agency budgets in the pursuit of watershed planning.

Funding other agency labor may be possible from study funds to address specific needs. Through collaboration, this concept could be expanded to propose joint agency (bundled) budget submittals or cross cut funding between the agencies.

To get some of the studies up and running and to bring sponsors on board, it could be possible to use Planning Assistance to States funds or Interagency and International Support funds to prepare an initial 905b report. This would allow the Tiger Team to get the PDT on the right tract and to serve as a nexus point for future watershed studies.

Summary

The Interagency Watershed Tiger Team seeks to instill a cultural change within the Corps, capitalizing on the top-down direction from leadership combined with a working level integration with the PDT's to encourage collaborative watershed perspective planning. The Tiger Team concept rises to the challenge of the Actions for Change, specifically in Theme One: the comprehensive systems approach. Whereas watersheds are systems, the Tiger Team seeks to expand Corps projects and perspectives beyond the district to other Federal agencies that have roles and authorities to work in the watershed context.

The Tiger Team also addresses Theme 4 of Actions for Change: professional and technical expertise by creating a national learning environment across business lines, jurisdictional boundaries, and professional areas. The success of the Tiger Team depends on active participation from multiple agencies and across diverse experiences, thus increasing the capability of the various Corps PDT's to succeed in future watershed planning efforts

The true success of the Tiger Team will be in the success of the PDT to effectively and efficiently develop a watershed study that serves the regional and national good. The true metric of the Tiger Team's success will be when it is no longer needed.