MEETING SUMMARY OF THE
ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION COUNCIL
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
441 G Street, N.W., WASHINGTON, DC
October 6, 2009

The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m., with the following members and representatives present:

- **Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy,** Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
- **Mr. Rock Salt,** Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Chair;
- **Mr. Bryan Arroyo,** Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS);
- **Ms. Patricia A. Montanio,** Director, Office of Habitat Conservation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA);
- **Ms. Suzanne Schwartz,** Acting Director, Office of Wetlands and Watersheds, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and
- **Ms. Ann Mills,** Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I. Program History

Ellen Cummings (USACE), an ERA Work Group member, gave a presentation tracing the history of the Act and the 2007 Amendments in the Water Resources Development Act. The purpose and key elements of the Act were outlined, along with previous funding levels.

II. Council Chair Election

Ms. Darcy led the election of a Council Chair. Army had chaired the Council since its inception in 2001. A discussion ensued as to whether or not the Council Procedures should call for a rotation of the Chair among the agencies. There was also a discussion on the merits of a Vice Chair so that someone could plan in advance to take over leadership of the Council. It was clarified that the position of Chair goes with the position, not the person serving as the agency representative at the time of election.

DECISION: USFWS nominated NOAA to Chair the Council and USDA seconded the motion. A consensus vote elected NOAA to Council Chair for a period of three years.

III. Council Procedures

Noemi Mercado (EPA), an ERA Work Group member, gave an overview of the suggested Council Procedures. The Council asked that the Work Group outline the pros and cons of establishing a Vice Chair including a discussion of having three year versus longer rotations of the Chair, and whether or not voting would be necessary. The Work Group is to suggest draft language to revise the Council Procedures. Army

ACTION: The Council will have a conference call to discuss revisions to the Council Procedures; the final document will be posted on the ERA Website.

IV. **Interagency Work Group**

Ms. Mercado gave an overview of the Work Group including their roles and responsibilities, and introduced the remaining members.

Review of New Habitat Restoration Project Proposals

Ms. Cummings gave an overview of the estuary habitat restoration project solicitation process and the requirements of proposals. Army asked how more projects could be accomplished, and was concerned with the large amount of carryover funding this year. A suggestion was made by the Council to have a list of projects worthy of funding at the ready. Another suggestion was to determine how funding can be transferred among agencies, depending on who would be most suited to implement specific projects. The Work Group and Council have previously agreed that projects recommended for implementation would include a recommendation of the agency to implement based upon agency interest and funding to implement projects. The Council wants to ensure the solicitation is reaching everyone it should and encouraged the Work Group to reach out to applicants in preparing proposals as appropriate. Since ERA requires a match, the Council also suggested reaching out to corporate groups that may have funding that could be used for this purpose. Army has approximately $3,075,000 available for project funding for the 2009 solicitation.

Chris Darnell (USFWS), a Work Group member, then gave a brief overview of the five projects the Work Group recommended for funding. They were:

a. Kent Island Restoration at Bolinas Lagoon, California will restore 23 acres of tidal marsh/coastal dune habitat at an ERA cost of $527,000.
b. Secret Harbor Estuary and Salt Marsh Restoration, Washington will restore 27.5 acres of wetlands and upland habitat at an ERA cost of $577,000.
c. Thunder Bay Reef Habitat Restoration, Michigan will create 12 artificial reefs in the Bay, covering 0.5 acres at an ERA cost of $517,000.
d. West Goleta Slough Restoration Project, California will restore approximately 20 acres of wetlands and wetland-to-upland transitional habitat at an ERA cost of $623,000.
e. Deadman's Island Restoration Project, Florida will restore 13 acres by the placement of artificial vertical oyster reef structures and the planting of emergent salt marsh at an ERA cost of $825,000.

DECISION: The Council approved all five projects recommended by the Work Group.

Krissy Rusello (NOAA), a Work Group member, then gave an overview of the project NOAA funded with fiscal year 2009 ERA funds. Due to funding allocation timelines at NOAA, the project had to be decided on, and funds obligated, prior to the Council meeting. The McAllis Point Estuarine Habitat Restoration will restore 75 acres of marsh in Galveston, Texas at an ERA cost of $915,000 and was approved by the Council.

DECISION: The Council approved the inclusion of the McAllis Point project in the official ERA project list.

V. Strategy Revision Discussion

Jenni Wallace (NOAA), a Work Group member, led a discussion of the Work Group's proposed Strategy revision. The Council advocated holding a listening session or workshop with the public to identify challenges, opportunities and ideas to aid in revising the ERA Strategy. The Council encouraged the Work Group to look at ways to align the Strategy with the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and Large Ecosystems efforts that are currently underway. Where the ERA can serve as a gap filler for smaller areas, versus where ERA fits in larger federal and state efforts was also discussed.

The public was given a chance to speak and brought up issues such as better explaining to the public how their restoration acres will count towards the 1 million acre goal and if a campaign is appropriate to accomplish that. They also asked what role ERA can bring to other efforts, including bringing federal agency efforts to one place. The public also encouraged the Council and Work Group to think big and to figure out what the ecosystem needs are and start there in looking for assistance. They brought up the fact that ERA is unique in that it focuses on improving the health of the nation, as opposed to having to follow agency mandates.

ACTION: The Work Group will develop a workplan and implement a public listening session/workshop to aid in revising the ERA Strategy.

VI. National Estuaries Restoration Inventory (NERI) and Monitoring Update

Marti McGuire (NOAA) gave an overview of NERI and how it's working now, including the number of acres included in the database that count towards the Act's goal and how other agency's data are being incorporated into NERI.

VII. Public Comment

The public was given several opportunities to speak during the meeting as well as at the end of the meeting. Among those present that provided feedback were:

- Jeff Benoit, Restore America's Estuaries
- Will Nuckols, Coastal America
- Anthony Chatwin, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Matthew Menashes, National Estuarine Research Reserve Association

The meeting ended at noon.