

Alaska Environmental Streamlining Interagency Collaboration 2004-2007

Location: Alaska

Background

In early 2004, at the request of the Alaska Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and Roster Member Louise Smart, from CDR Associates in Boulder, Colorado, conducted an assessment of interagency and intergovernmental coordination challenges among federal and state transportation agencies, including Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), and environmental agencies in Alaska.

The assessment found that assistance was needed developing an Interagency Agreement and operating protocols among the agencies. The agencies formed an Environmental Streamlining Group (ESG), facilitated by Louise Smart, to develop a protocol for coordination and cooperation among the agencies to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review requirements for transportation projects in Alaska.

Several work teams of the ESG drafted principles and goals related to specific issues:

- one team drafted principles and goals related to mitigation;
- another team drafted an early agency coordination form and environmental review process; and
- a third team focused on alternative design features for projects that include stream crossings in order to expedite the review and permitting processes.



Highlights

- The parties drafted an early agency coordination form and protocols.
- Participants explored alternative design features with a focus on minimizing impacts to wetlands and offsetting habitat damage in projects that include stream crossings. In order to expedite the review and permitting processes, participants built into the project designs specific performance measures that the resource agencies would typically request in their comments.

Results and Accomplishments

- An Interagency Consultation and Coordination Agreement that governs relationships among the agencies during NEPA reviews of transportation projects was developed and signed by the participating agencies.
- The operating protocols that were created within the Agreement are being practiced in projects as they are developed.
- In addition, an Issue Resolution Process was developed and modified to accommodate projects where FHWA and ADOT&PF share lead agency NEPA responsibilities.

Credits

Partner from National Roster of ECR Practitioners

Louise Smart, CDR Associates, Boulder, CO.

U.S. Institute Project Lead

Dale Keyes, Consensus Mediation Services (formerly with the U.S. Institute)

U.S. Institute Contact:

Joan Calcagno, Sr. Program Manager
Transportation Program
Phone: (520) 901-8552
E-mail: calcagno@ecr.gov
Website: www.ecr.gov