

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Managing for Excellence **Concept Paper**

Functional Area: Policies and Organization

Executive Sponsor

Roseann Gonzales, Director, Office of Program and Policy Services



Background/Drivers

As Reclamation's mission activity has become less focused on project construction and more on water management, numerous changes have been made to the agency's organization, and to its mechanisms for decision making and policy formation. Many of these changes have succeeded in better positioning Reclamation to meet its current and future challenges. However, both real and perceived problems have been cited with the consistency and transparency of decision making within Reclamation. As discussed more fully in Reclamation's *Managing for Excellence* Action Plan, both the agency and its stakeholders recognize remaining opportunities for organizational improvement and the need for an effective balance between centralized policy development and decentralized operations and decision-making.

The action items within the Policies and Organization functional area are intended to further refine this balance between centralized policy and oversight and an effective, decentralized operational organization. These actions will necessarily include an analysis of decision making processes, policy formation, and alternative future scenarios for water management. These three issues encompass the action items in this functional area and are more fully discussed below.

Decision Making

In order to address the shifting emphasis within Reclamation from project construction to water management, many of the formal, structured decision-making processes within the agency were sunsetted. The resulting empowerment of local management in decision making has yielded many benefits. Efficiencies have been gained and stakeholder relationships have been improved. In some cases, however, inconsistencies have occurred in decision-making. Authority and responsibility for decision making at various levels of the organization have at times been left unclear.

Opportunities for improving Reclamation's decision-making process was analyzed and addressed by the team responsible for Action Item 4. This team's primary objective was to better position Reclamation to manage the issues and challenges it faces now and in the future by providing recommendations for consistent yet adaptable approaches to decision making throughout the agency, and a plan for effective implementation of these recommendations. The team assessed the implementation of a 2004 report produced by Reclamation and entitled "Review and Decision Making in Reclamation." The team focused on the extent to which the report's recommendations have been implemented throughout the agency, lessons learned from implementation, and the extent to which Reclamation's current decision-making processes support the consistent implementation of policy decisions and mission goals. The team's final report and findings were submitted for the Commissioner's signature in January 2007.

Another critical aspect of good decision making is clear assignment of both the authority for making decisions and the responsibility for their outcomes. As discussed previously, Reclamation and its stakeholders recognize opportunities for improvement in this area. This issue was addressed by the team responsible for Action Item 5. The objective was to refine and clarify where authority for decision making lies within the agency at all levels, and to ensure that this delegated authority is commensurate with the responsibility for outcomes. This was documented by official Delegations of Authority in both the Reclamation Manual and the Interior Department Manual. Team 5 completed their assignment in August 2006 and the Commissioner directed the Director of the Office of Program and Policy Services to provide appropriate training for line managers to ensure understanding of and compliance with delegations of authority and assignment of responsibility. For an outline form of Team 5's objectives, tasks, and milestones, please see the attached Action Item Summary.

Policy Formulation

The effort to change Reclamation to a more effective water management agency and less of a construction-oriented one included the 'sunsetting' (retirement) of the Reclamation Instructions (RI's), a detailed, comprehensive set of procedures prescribing how work would be done, decisions would be made, and programs would be administered. The RI's were more prescriptive and detailed in nature than was appropriate for Reclamation's current needs. The Reclamation Manual essentially replaced the RI's as the repository of Reclamation-wide policy requirements. However, the development of Reclamation Manual policy documents has been a gradual process, and the manual still does not address policy requirements in a number of key areas. In some cases, this led to both real and perceived inconsistencies in the administration of Reclamation projects and programs.

Addressing these 'policy gaps' is the responsibility of the teams assigned to Action Items 6 and 7. In consultation with Reclamation managers and staff, Team 6 identified those areas where policy development is needed and prioritized these based on current and near-term issues and challenges. Team 7 is now working with Reclamation managers and staff, customers, and other stakeholders to expedite the development of the policies identified by Team 6. For an outline form of Team 6 and 7's objectives, tasks, and milestones, please see the attached Action Item Summary.

Alternative Future Scenarios

Both Reclamation and its stakeholders recognize that the means to achieve the agency's mission priorities evolve over time, based on stakeholder input, internal initiative, and within legal and public policy parameters. It is important for Reclamation to understand and evaluate the changing trends in infrastructure management. Three potential future scenarios are discussed in Chapter Five of the NRC's report, "Managing Construction and Infrastructure in the 21st Century Bureau of Reclamation," with a recommendation that Reclamation consider these and what implications they have for the agency's organizational structure. The team responsible for Action Item 8 performed an analysis of a "menu of options" for future infrastructure management; the advantages and disadvantages of the options; and any obstacles to, or opportunities for, implementation. Team 8 sought customer comments on the three scenarios, and any other alternatives, at the public meetings in Salt Lake City and Sacramento. The Team also sought input from customers through additional means, such as Reclamation's *Managing for Excellence* internet site. It is expected that the report for Action Item 8 will be discussed at the public meeting in February in Albuquerque. The final report for Action Item 8 will be posted on the *Managing for Excellence* website.

Relationship to other Functional Areas

This functional area will necessarily impact a number of others in Reclamation's *Managing for Excellence* effort, and vice-versa. Action Items 2 and 3, while categorized under the functional area of Relationships with Customers and other Stakeholders, are primarily policy-related. Action Item 2 was an effort to make the Reclamation Manual, the repository of Reclamation-wide policy documents, readily available online. That team's work included communications to Reclamation customers and other stakeholders regarding the availability of the Reclamation Manual online, as well as its significance and content. Action Item 3 addressed the revision of Reclamation's centralized policy development process to require appropriate incorporation of the Secretary's 4Cs, as well as transparency, accountability and efficiency in Reclamation. Both of these action items have been accomplished and the results are available on Reclamation's *Managing for Excellence* website:
<http://www.usbr.gov/excellence/finalproducts.html>.

Action Item 4

Identify structured decision-making process gaps and potential remedies, with particular attention to the recommendations from “Review and Decision Making in Reclamation.”

Team Lead: James Hess, Associate Director Operations, Commissioner’s Office

Team Members:

- Karen Weghorst, Civil Engineer, Safety, Security, and Law Enforcement
- Randy Peterson, Program Manager, Environmental Resources Division, Upper Colorado Region
- Tino Tafoya, Program Manager, Snake River Area Office, Pacific Northwest Region
- Jayne Harkins, Deputy Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region

Objectives:

- Provide recommendations and guidance in an effort to increase Reclamation’s managerial abilities by implementing consistent, yet adaptable, approaches to decision making across Reclamation.

Tasks:

- Assess how well the current decision-making processes support consistent implementation of Reclamation policy and long-term goals.
- Identify the extent to which recommendations and approaches in the 2004 report are being implemented, including positive results, lessons learned and gaps where best approaches are not being implemented widely or consistently.
- Make recommendations to increase the implementation of best practices and address gaps where there are identified problems with a lack of structured and consistent decision making processes.
- Identify potential training needs and provide recommendations to the Human Resources/ Workforce Teams.

Milestones:

- July 2006: Distribute survey to Reclamation managers and employees
- September 2006: Submit draft team report for review by advisory team and Executive Sponsor.
- November 2006: Finalize report and complete implementation plan.
- December 2006: Complete final report and implementation plan.

Products:

- Report of recommended improvements to decision-making processes
- Decision-Making Implementation Plan

Action Item 5

Refine and clarify delegations of authority within the agency to ensure that they are commensurate with assigned responsibility, including appropriate training of line management with regard to authorities. This will allow Reclamation to respond effectively to the needs of its customers and other stakeholders in a manner that is consistent throughout the agency and which enhances the agency's credibility at all levels.

Team Lead: Shannon Kerstiens, Program Analyst, Program Support Services, Office of Program and Policy Services

Team Members:

- Nancy DiDonato, Contracts and Repayment Specialist, Lower Colorado Region
- Sue Fry, Special Assistant to the Regional Director, Mid-Pacific Region
- Vicki Cook, Procurement Analyst, Acquisition and Assistance Management Division, Management Service Office
- Bill Rideout, Management Advisor, Resource Management Division, Upper Colorado Region
- Rosemary Urbigkeit, Paralegal Specialist, Water Rights and Acquisition Group, Pacific Northwest Region
- Lisa Vehmas, Program Analyst, Contract Services Office, Office of Program and Policy Services
- Sharon Suralski, Management and Program Analyst, Great Plains Region

Objectives:

- Refine and clarify delegations of authority within the agency to ensure that they are commensurate with assigned responsibility.

Tasks:

- Update delegations within Departmental Manual and Reclamation Manual.
- Create a training module for line management covering delegations of authority.

Current Status: Complete

Milestones:

- August 2006: Complete Department Manual Delegations
- August 2006: Complete training module.
- August 2006: Complete Reclamation Manual Delegations.

Products:

- Departmental Manual (DM) Chapter 255 delegations of authority from the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science to the Commissioner
- Reclamation Manual (RM) delegations of authority from the Commissioner

Action Item 6

Identify 'policy gaps' created by sunseting of the Reclamation Instructions (i.e., missing or inadequate Reclamation Manual Policy, Directives & Standards, technical guidance) that are critical to addressing current and near-term issues and challenges.

Team Lead: Shannon Kerstiens, Program Analyst, Program Support Services, Office of Program and Policy Services

Team Members:

- Vicki Cook, Procurement Analyst, Acquisition and Assistance Management Division, Management Service Office
- Roberta Ries, Management Analyst, Upper Columbia Area Office, Pacific Northwest Region
- Dick Stevenson, Branch Chief, Water Rights and Contracts, Mid-Pacific Region
- Larry Walkoviak, Deputy Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region

Objectives:

- Create a prioritized inventory of policy, directive and standards, and guidance needs for the Executive Sponsor.

Tasks:

- Review Reclamation policy, directive and standards, and guidance needs to develop an inventory of 'policy gaps.'
- Consult with Reclamation management/staff to ensure the inventory reflects the gaps between Reclamation Instructions and the Reclamation Manual, and that it identifies those Reclamation Manual releases that are most critical for prioritization purposes.

Current Status: Complete

Milestones:

- October 2006: Complete inventory of 'policy gaps'.

Products:

- Prioritized inventory of policy, directive and standards, and guidance needs

Action Item 7

Expedite the development of policy, directives and standards, and technical guidance determined necessary in Action Item 6 to assure that local decision-making is consistent with Reclamation's philosophy and stewardship responsibilities.

Team Lead: Shannon Kerstiens, Program Analyst, Program Support Services, Office of Program and Policy Services

Objectives:

- Develop Reclamation Manual Policy, Directives and Standards (D&S), guidance, etc. identified as "high priority" in the Action Item 6 inventory.

Tasks:

- Contact offices responsible for inventory items.
- Develop, review and finalize policy, directives and standards, and technical guidance determined necessary in the Action Item 6 inventory.

Milestones:

- October 2006: Inventory of 'policy gaps' will be available. Action Item 7 begins.
- December 2007: Final Reclamation Manual Policy, Directives and Standards (D&S), guidance, etc. will be available.

Products:

- New Reclamation Manual Policies, Directives and Standards (D&S), guidance, etc.

Action Item 8

Consider the scenarios discussed in Chapter Five of the NRC Report and what refinements, if any, to Reclamation's organizational structure may be useful in meeting future challenges under each of these scenarios.

Team Lead: Lisa Vehmas, Program Analyst, Contract Services Office, Office of Program and Policy Services

Team Members:

- Don Moomaw, Assistant Regional Director, Great Plains Region
- Brian Person, Area Manager, Northern California Area Office, Mid-Pacific Region
- Owen Walker, Program Analyst, Contract Services Office, Office of Program and Policy Services
- Larry Walkoviak, Deputy Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region

Objectives:

- Complete an analysis of the scenarios (including any additional scenarios) in terms of advantages and disadvantages to each; and identify opportunities for, and/or obstacles to, implementation.
- Incorporate the findings of other M4E teams, as appropriate.
- Recommend options to refine, if appropriate, Reclamation's organizational structure to address changing customer needs within legal and public policy frameworks.

Tasks:

- Clarify scenarios
- Identify any additional scenarios
- Submit questions to stakeholders, Reclamation, and any other entities
- Research other agencies, countries, models
- Meet with, as needed, stakeholders, other agencies and Reclamation staff
- Develop case studies and hypothetical examples
- Incorporate findings of other M4E teams, as appropriate
- Develop options to refine, if appropriate, Reclamation's organization structure
- Develop analysis document

Milestones:

- September - October 2006: Provide questions to stakeholders, and Reclamation staff; Hold meetings with stakeholders, other agencies and Reclamation staff as needed.
- October -November 2006: Develop analysis document
- November - December 2006: Review and revise analysis document
- December 2006: Complete final product

Products:

- Analysis document