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**Moderator: Courtney Chambers
April 10, 2012**

Courtney Chambers: Okay, now I'd like to give you today's speaker on Ecosystem Restoration Programs and Budgeting. Brian Johnson is the Chief of Environmental Planning Section for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Regional Planning and Environmental Divisions in St. Louis. He's been with the Corp since 1994 working on environmental planning and environmental programs for most of his career. And has spent much of his time working with the District Natural Resource Partners to develop and implement environmental restoration projects within the region. Brian is a member of the Corp's Environmental Research Area of Review Group. He's also heavily involved with the St. Louis District's Leadership Development Program. He has been the St. Louis Ecosystem Restoration Business Line Manager since 2008 and became the (MVD) Business Line Manager in 2010. More information about Brian can be found in his bio posted on the Learning Exchange with the rest of today's meeting documents.

We're very thankful for his willingness to share with us today. Okay, Brian at this time I'm going to give you the presenter rights and we can begin.

Brian Johnson: All right thank you Courtney and hello everyone. I appreciate you folks taking the time to (stay online) this afternoon. We'll see if I can - all right, we're ready to roll.

Want to start off by saying I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you all about this today and it's really quite timely because honestly last week we started the FY '14 budget process. So any opportunity to sort of refresh how we do what we do and inform some people and teach them a little bit about how we

go about what we do in an effort to have you all be able to help us is really great. So I appreciate the opportunity.

There we go. All right, so I really have three objectives for today. I want to explain the Ecosystem Restoration Program, really talk about how we fit inside the larger Corps Program. Want to explain to you all how our budget development process works. And probably most importantly, wrap it up with talking about how the folks on the phone and how (PDT) members can actually help their PMs and help their Business Line Managers put together better projects and better project justification. So that's the intent.

All right, so there are eight business lines within the Corp. I'm sure most of you are familiar with them. But it's navigation, flood risk reduction, environment, which actually includes three business lines and I'll talk about that in a second, hydropower, recreation and water supply, flood control, coastal emergencies, and the regulatory program.

We reside under the environment business line. Inside of that business line there's actually three smaller lines. There's Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration which we commonly refer to as Ecosystem Restoration. There's environmental stewardship and there's FUSRAP.

And one of the neat things or interesting things is all three of these actually are separate. The Ecosystem Restoration line works its way through the - through Civil Works Planning Chain. The stewardship line works its way through the (OPS O&M) Chain. And those two do not mix in terms of how the budgets are put together as they work through their chain. And then FUSRAP as well, it runs down a completely separate line inside of environment.

Also sort of a unique sort of (idea) I guess is what happens to (CAP) Projects. (CAP) Projects, you know, (CAP) is - we have (CAP) authorities in a bunch of different programs. The ones in the Environmental Program which is 204/206, they are actually ranked and scored inside of the Ecosystem Restoration line.

But then the way CAP is being put together these days. They've been (unintelligible) to the other (CAT) Programs as well for their ranking. They don't stay alone inside of the Environmental Program.

So that's the structure of our business lines and where we fit there. And this slide is really just to show you where the environmental business line, the bigger three item business line fits inside of the Corp budget. We are the third largest business line behind flood risk management and navigation so just a perspective slide. That's all I was going to show there.

All right, a little bit about the Ecosystem Restoration itself, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration comprises somewhere between 70% and 75% of the entire environmental budget. We typically run somewhere between 10% and 12% of the Corp's budget. That's using the last two years but that's pretty consistent. We're somewhere typically around 10% to 12% of the entire budget.

Within the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration budget, this is using the FY '13 numbers, the whole budget for FY '13 as proposed is about \$512 million and say roughly 11%, \$31 million of that, only 6% goes towards investigation and by far the bulk of that money, \$464 million goes towards construction related activities under Ecosystem Restoration. A little bit for O&M and a little bit for MRT.

And again those numbers are based upon - on recently released the President's budget for FY '13 which of course changes a little bit as we work our way through the process to finally getting an appropriation.

Courtney Chambers: Brian, excuse me just a minute. I just want to - just a brief reminder to ask everybody to make sure you're on mute. We're just getting some minor background noise. Thank you.

Brian Johnson: That could have been from the people sitting around me eating M&Ms.

Courtney Chambers: Oh well maybe that was it. Okay, proceed.

Brian Johnson: I had to - they wouldn't come unless I brought something.

Courtney Chambers: Ah-huh.

Brian Johnson: Ecosystem Restoration goal, the goal of Ecosystem Restoration is to restore greater ecosystem structure function and dynamic process to a less degraded more natural condition. Those were the words by which we go about doing what we do. I think very important in that is the word natural. You'll see the word natural run throughout the Ecosystem Restoration business line. You see it in our scoring criteria. You see it - you in essence really do see it throughout doing what we do. And the reason that is of course because we are - as an agency we're trying to get our projects to something more natural and back to the way they were so you'll see that word a lot.

Typically our projects have been of course associated with things associated with water. So our restoration opportunities have typically been wetlands, (riparian) and other floodplain and of course aquatic ecosystems and aquatic habitats are typically most appropriate for what we do.

Now having said that there are good examples on where we've partnered with NRCS or have worked with NRCS for those areas that are next to what we do well or what we believe is within our clear authority for some of those upland areas. So there's other agencies out there that we work with to try to complete a whole package but a whole project together if it's more than just the Corps believes it has clear authority to do so generally we do the wet stuff.

All right, a little bit on how we got to how we do the budget. So it actually really started almost 20 years ago with a - the Government Performance Result Act. And it really started to move agencies sort of towards some strategic goals and beginning to measure themselves. That continued in '01 with the President's Management Agenda. Performance-based budgeting was one of the five things; one of the five initiatives of the President's Management Agenda back in '01.

In '03 OMB put out guidance that said starting in FY '05 our budget decisions are going to be based upon program performance and that agencies should start to align their activities and programs in these accounts. And that really started to move us towards demonstrating relationships between the investment of what we were putting into an effort and the output that came out of it. And really agencies like the Corp started to codify how we did that and that in essence is what we continued to carry forth since 2005. It continues to be largely the way that the Corp put its budgets together now which is down the business lines.

So sort of put that in another perspective, the traditional approach of how we used to fund stuff was by account, by (CGDI), O&M. Geographical balance was part of what was considered and honestly funding shortfalls were usually spread across activities. Budgeting by performance which again is what we

have done since '05, change that around and now we budget by business program or business line. And funding it is largely distributed by outcomes, you know, each business line has its own way of ranking and determining its outcomes. And ultimately the reason we do that is so that high priority work can be funded at a more efficient rate. And honestly some of the lower priority work may not be funded and may be deferred even if its already been started so that's really been the way by which we have tried to budget to get the most investment, the most return on our investment as an agency. So I'm going to talk a little bit about how we go about figuring what that is.

So that's our budget guidance. We just got budget guidance actually last week for FY '14. That is EC 11-2-202. That budget guidance really sort of lays out how we're going to do what we do and its got a spreadsheet in there that I think is, you know, it's got a lot of columns in it. Those things are out.

But they will ultimately be on this first link. That's where all the budget, if you want to go back and find out what we did in '13 or '12 or '11, it all ultimately will reside there.

When I checked yesterday afternoon it was not there. It was out under the Engineering Circulars but it hadn't made itself to the Civil Work's page yet.

So if you want to find it now it's out there. In fact some of you may have seen it floating through your individual (MSC) or district channels. But the link at the bottom is where you can find the EC for FY '14.

All right, so Ecosystem Restoration, how do we do what we do. We have a number of performance criteria which are scored and ultimately ranked. Those criteria are habitat scarcity, connectivity, special species status, hydrologic character, geomorphic condition, plan recognition and self-sustaining. I'll talk

about those and I'll give - as we get into the presentation I'll give you some examples of, you know, what makes this at this point and what makes this at this point.

And if we have some questions related to that I'll do my - and I also noticed there's some really good folks online who do this like myself that might be able to chime in as well.

So we go through the scoring criteria and ultimately every project gets a score in every one of these criteria. And it sums up. And then ultimately we look at projects and we look at projects, are they nationally significant, are they regionally significant or are they neither. So for nationally significant projects those projects have to have the maximum score in three different categories habitat scarcity, connectivity and special species status. And at least the second highest score in plan recognition. And for it to be regionally significant, a regionally significant project it has to have at least the second highest score in all four of those things.

And so we'll talk a little bit about what goes into each of those criteria. So and you might ask yourself why is that important. Why do I care? You know why do I want to be nationally significant? Why do I want to be regionally significant?

And the answer very clearly is there is limited dollars inside of our Restoration Program and our budget and most of those dollars go towards efforts which are largely - will largely have a national impact on habitat. So those are those nationally significant projects.

So point being it is good to try to design projects that hit towards that national significance and we'll talk about what it takes to do that. And we'll talk a little

bit later at the very end about how you as a (PDT) member and as a member on your team can think about some of these things upfront and try to incorporate them in as you go so.

All right, so let's talk about the first one, habitat scarcity. Habitat scarcity, that scoring is based upon trend information and relative abundance of habitat. And what really we're trying to get to is what kind of habitat are you trying to restore? Is it a habitat that's nationally scarce? Is it a habitat that's regionally scarce? Or is it just a habitat that's, you know, that's in decline but may not be either one of those?

Traditionally nationally scarce habitats have had major historic losses. And the way this particular criteria is scored to be nationally scarce, you have to be able to demonstrate that in the spreadsheet and in your justification with either a federal, regional or a state tribal report or with peer reviewed publications or documents - and that citation absolutely must be included in your write-up for you to get the highest score for that. And that really is talking - you can't just say, hey I've got a wetland. And wetlands are disappearing. Well that's not a 25 point activity or that's not a 25 point habitat. You really need to say I have a sub-scrub wetland or I have (tupelo-cypress) and by the way somebody (et al) said (tupelo-cypress) was 90% - had seen a 90% decline.

So really that's the sort of thing it takes to be nationally scarce. That's - it's a tough one to hit. And you really do have to justify very well why the habitat that you're restoring is nationally important and why nationally, not just regionally that habitat is declining and rare. And so they really - we really, really, really do look for citations to make that case.

All right, connectivity, again one of those four, you've got to hit the highest in if you want to be nationally significant. Connectivity is - oh I got the sidetrack there. Sorry.

Connectivity is based upon connecting important habitats to facilitate the movement of native species. For you to get the - for you - for a project to get the highest amount of points, there are 25 points, they must create either a direct physical connection between two existing habitats or establish a network of interconnected habitat.

Sort of the classic examples of that that we typically see is if it, you know, connects to forest that happen to be broken otherwise through agricultural land or something else that you make two separate areas physically connected, is one good example. If you connect two life requisites together of a particular species, a species that you're - is a major focus of your project that's another one that traditionally will garner 25 points. And then dam removal as well is one that we have traditionally seen.

So now there are a lot of projects that create nodal connection between existing habitats. That could be, you know, for instance wetlands in a flyway where you don't have this direct physical connection but it does create some critical links between habitats. Nature like fishways are - typically fall under that 18 point so.

So I'm sort of talking about what it takes to be great and what's the best at the top. And I'm not really going to try to read through honestly and focus on some of the things that, you know, 10s and the 5s. If you like to we can come back and do that but I tried to really focus on what we see and what, you know, what it takes at the high points of each of these categories of the criteria.

So special species status, say that three times fast, special species status, again that's a scoring based upon the significant contribution (of key life) requisites for species of concern. The most points you can get in this one is 10 points and that is built entirely around restoring habitat that adds to the life requisites of federally listed or candidate (T&E) species.

Five points is habitat for those species which are influenced or are international treaties or other things, you know, like migratory bird, water fowl for instance and then on down the line.

I found that very important points associated with this one. It is important when folks put this together that they mention how they're going with the 10 point justification, it very clearly needs to be mentioned that where your information is coming through. Typically that can be in the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act report or letter. It can be through document and correspondence between your self and either the Fish and Wildlife Service or (nymphs) or it can be through (BA) or (BO) directly related to the project.

The fact that you have a federally listed species in the footprint of your project, that gets you nothing unless you can better justify and you can explain why your project itself is restoring habitat or completes or adds to the life requisites of that particular species. And it's not just you saying it. It's actually some - you know, you need something from the agency that you're working with as well.

All right I'll come back again and keep track of your questions. And we'll run through it and then hopefully I'll have a good amount of time and we can try to answer them so.

Hydrologic character really recognizes the importance of appropriate hydrology and maintaining ecological function in the aquatic ecosystems. So this runs from 20 points to zero points. And to get the highest point total here you have to fully restore the natural hydrology - you know, within your project footprint. And I'll say that's a very difficult thing to do. And I think personally this is one of the toughest criteria to score the highest in.

If you're able to partially restore that hydrology that's a 15 point exercise. And then we go down from there; if actual hydrology impairment doesn't exist its 10 points and then on down the line.

I think probably there's some things I really want to point out about this that are kind of important. And one is typically Corps projects and the things we do with Ecosystem Restoration have a hydrologic component to it because, you know, honestly most of the things we do are based on things in the wet or aquatic ecosystems or getting more water out of wetlands or trying to restore flow across or to or any number of things.

So almost explicit in what we do with most of our projects, or implicit is that we're trying to move things to a more natural hydrograph. And again that word natural I told you earlier pops up again, you know, and it's moving towards natural - more natural hydrology.

Typically or some good ways to try to figure out what natural is and define what natural is, reference site, historic stream gauge data, physical parameters that are required to restore and sustain are all good tools to use in making that determination. Again this is one of the reasons the Corps is in the business that we're in for Ecosystem Restoration this is one of the things that we're really good at, moving water around where it needs to be and restoring hydrology.

And as I said it's also one of the - this - I personally believe this is one of the tougher ones to score particularly well in. And I'll give you a good example. Flood pulse and I know several divisions, several districts are - have projects or programs that include flood pulse.

In this example if you create a flood pulse but it does not restore the magnitude or frequency of or the duration of that flood pulse as it naturally occurred, then it's a partial - then you partially restore that. So you've got the pulse back but you don't have the other aspects of the pulse that normally occurred. So that ends up being a 15 point scoring instead of 20.

All right, geomorphic condition, this one relates to structure or physical process of successful restoration. And I'll say as I have grown up as a Business Line Manager this is one that's always proven sort of tough for me to figure out exactly, you know, what makes 20, what makes 15, what makes 10.

For those projects that fully restore to natural or attainable geomorphic process which adds diversity and dynamics, those projects typically get 20 points. If you're able to restore some of the key processes and the system is expected to fully recover ecological function then that's a 15 point project.

So I'll give a good example of probably a classic example of a 20 point project would be one where you are fortunate enough to be able to restore the meandering function or the meandering of a river or a creek or a system where you end up having erosion and sediment movement deposition, that being the pinnacle of what would make a 20 point project.

Now those words erosion and sediment movement deposition they all sort of go towards how you score inside of a geomorphic condition. You know some of the things that we deal with at (MVD) we talk about ridge and swale topography and trying to restore some of that in the floodplain and other districts and other divisions, things like woody debris and the placement of woody debris with the eventual understanding that that woody debris will cause erosion and deposition and some manipulation of sediment in the system. Those are all sort of things that roll into geomorphic condition.

Plan recognition and we're getting towards the end here of how we score what we score. Most scores are based upon a contribution to a watershed or a basin plan. And if you recall, again this was one of the four where you have to score at least the second best to be considered nationally significant or regionally significant.

And really to score the best in this very clearly you have to have a multiagency watershed plan which has been demonstrated to be a federal priority in law or with specially authorized programs. Everglades is one of those, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf Coast, upper Mississippi River, (CALFED), they're all examples of that top one.

Good example of a 5 point plan or a 5 point project would be one that meets the goals of many of the joint ventures that are out there that, you know, we work with many of the multiagency folks on those as well. So that's a 5 point example. And, you know, very clearly ones that hit the state and local watershed plans, those are 2 point, you know, projects.

All right, I should also point out that recovery plans are not used as a basis for scores in this. You should talk about recovery plans and how your project fits under the specialty species status.

And that's one of the things I need to point out as well. We see a lot of times when we get these in that folks try to carry the same words over again and again and again. And that's one of the things as Business Line Managers we're not looking for you to tell the same story a different way in each of these different criteria. But there ought to be something special about what you're telling in each one of these that gets to why your project is what it is and why you scored it the way you did.

All right. There we go. Self sustaining. Self sustain doesn't really come in until projects are out of planning and they're into (PED) or construction.

And self sustaining really gets to, you know, how O&M intensive is your project going to be. And, you know, how much human influence is it actually going to take for your project to meet its goal.

I know we here in the valley very clearly hear from our project sponsors now that they want projects that are low in O&M cost and are self sustaining, that's something, I think we're probably hearing - undoubtedly we're hearing across the country and across districts and across divisions. So as part of formulation and when you roll into actual construction that's when the score adds in for projects that are in planning, this is not a score that even is of importance. It's only once you get into (PED) and construction.

And, you know, clearly you have projects that have low O&M costs, garner points and projects which are O&M heavy, O&M expensive - do not.

All right, so having said all of that and doing a world wind tour of how we try to do what we do and the rankings that go in back at the district level and at the MSC level. After it's all said and done every project gets a score.

However, when we get to doing our rankings, both at the district level and at the division level and at the headquarters level, we just don't say this project got 120, it goes to the top. And this project got 115 so it goes second. There's other things that go into consideration for how we ultimately rank projects.

Now one of those is national priorities. Right now there's five priority ecosystems that have been defined by the administration. Those weigh into where our rankings are as well. The physical scale of the restoration; is it a big, big project; is it a little project; cost. All of these things roll in. The phase that you're in and probably as importantly how close you are to the end of a phase may determine ultimately where your ranking is and if you get funded or not.

How you relate to other project purposes, if they're multipurpose and if what you do fits well with something that's being funded in one of the other business lines. Again, these all roll in. Your watershed status, I'll talk about that on the next slide. Watershed studies and watershed status - or watershed studies lately have taken on a greater emphasis.

And then also very important are the status of your cost share agreements. If you do not have your cost share agreements in place or do not believe or can convince us that you will get your cost share agreements in place, all of these things go into consideration when ultimately the rankings are put forward.

And rankings are put forward, they start at the district and they filter up to the division. And division does its ranking and then it filters up to headquarters and they do theirs. And I'll talk about that in a little bit. But all along the way, you know, it's not just rote. This project scored the very best so by gosh this project is the one we're going to do. There are some of these other

considerations that need to go into it as well. But I will say, it is very important that your project - if you have a good project that you do a good job of justifying why that is so and why you got the points that you did. So we'll talk about that.

All right, so I mentioned a little bit about watershed studies. And we've been doing watershed studies for a while but probably for the last five or six years it's been a focus area particularly - I know in the ecosystem restoration line. And typically the watershed studies are multipurpose, multi objective studies, normally occurring in an eight-digit HUC. And really the outcome of these is a watershed management plan.

Typically the implementation of that is not substantially dependent upon Congressional authorization. But another way, the implementation of that hopefully in a lot of cases doesn't reside with the Corps and that these watershed plans are really put together with a bunch of partners and really the focus on these plans is figuring out what needs to be done in a watershed and figuring out who can do it.

And honestly, in this case, most of the time the study itself is the product. I mean that's the expertise the Corps brings here and that's really capitalizing on our expertise as planners and our ability to lead diverse groups towards a plan without the outcome very clearly being the Corps is going to build a project.

So this has been a focus probably for the last four or five years and we've seen more of these watershed studies come online, which I think personally is a good thing.

So having said all that, what's the road to the budget and actually getting there from here? So actually the road starts now for us. April, the guidance just came out last week, assume the District PMs will start to put together their packages and put their spreadsheets together. All the PMs will ultimately put their packages together, that rolls up to the business line manager at the district.

The business line manager at the district has the responsibility of doing first line QAQC on the package that comes together and ultimately he or she ranks those packages from one to whatever.

After they're done with that, all the districts roll that up to the division level. And then the second level of QA and QC occurs with the division BLM and that person, he or she, in essence does the same thing. They take what all the districts have submitted and they end up ranking them from top to bottom considering score but also considering some of those other items that I discussed as well.

And I think this year we'll be done with that job sometime in late June and up it goes to headquarters at the next level. And by then hopefully all the QAQC for the most part has been done and we're confident of what we have in there and headquarter's job is really to take everything that's coming in from across the country and to do their ranking.

And again, a lot of consideration into some of the items I showed you a few slides earlier, very much go into that. And then that - and (Rennie Sherman) is the business line manager for us at headquarters.

And that starts a whole bunch of back and forth between ASA and OMB and headquarters. And that's why I've got all these loops. Sometimes it starts with

ASA and then heads all the way back down to the district BLM and all the way back up again. So there's a lot of iterations and a lot of gyrations that occur between when the PM starts his effort and then ultimately when the President releases his budget in February 2013. There is a lot of back and forth, particularly between the MSC and headquarters. And I think a lot of back and forth between headquarters, ASA, and OMB as packages are actually put together.

All right, so probably I think the best part of what I have to tell you is - you know, I want to really talk about what you all can do on the phone to help tell the best story and help your district and help your division tell the best story about your projects.

I'll start by saying very clearly, the further you get away from your district the more folks rely on what they read versus what they know. So inherent in that is that there are good narratives that go up with your projects and that your project has a very good narrative inside the spreadsheet, which really can clearly articulate why your project is important.

And rolling right into that is the fact that most packages are put together by the PM. And honestly, the PMs don't always know how to tell the best story, particularly as it relates to an ecosystem restoration project. And I know very clearly from my business line management experience, they don't know the literature that well. The people that know the literature best - and I talked about where you have to justify this, several places where you have to justify why you're saying what you're saying, and why you deserve - why your project deserves these points. Usually it's the biologist that understands the literature and who understands, you know, why this wetland is of national significance or why this wetland is of regional significance. And he can cite, you know, where that comes from and gives that citation.

But what I've also seen is a lot of times is the PMs try to put packages together real quick and when it gets to the next level they haven't come close to telling the quality of the story that they can.

So - which gets to the point that really the best submissions, and I talked to quite a few of the MSC business line managers last week is the best submissions usually involve the PDT in their development. You know, imagine I got a lot of planners and a lot of biologists on the phone. You guys are the ones that really can tell and in many cases you can help the person that's putting the package together, usually the PM, you can help them tell the best story because you honestly in most cases understand it better than they do.

So it's really easy to see a package that - particularly in ecosystem restoration that was put together without support of the biologist. A lot of times it's poorly justified and you can just inherently see where they left points on the table because they didn't articulate what was really in there.

So - and speaking of articulating, J sheets. Our J sheets are really important. Now they run along side our packages and our business line - what we're doing. But they're really important.

So some of the lessons that I gleaned from talking to folks, particularly at headquarters, is, one, your J sheet should really tell a good story, that this is the marketing tool that's not limited by 100 characters where you should be able to clearly articulate the importance of your project.

What I also heard was J sheets don't always get updated to reflect your submission. So your J sheet may lag behind where you actually are with your

project and what you're proposing and so when they pull the J sheet out and they're looking at, well, this J sheet really doesn't match what you said you were going to do. That's a problem. First thing it does is it begins to undermine your credibility with your BLM if your J sheets aren't matching what you're telling that person. And honestly, there are cases where if the J sheet so horribly matches what you said you're going to do that it will get a project kicked out.

And honestly, there are times that decisions are made on very short order. And those decisions are made not upon the ability of someone to call back and say, what do you want to do on this, I've got to know. But really based upon what you've submitted and folks' understanding of that based upon how good it is.

And honestly, if your J sheets aren't reflective and your package is not reflective of how good your project really is it can and has been kicked out because they need to keep moving. And you know, a lot of - they'll have some short turnarounds on some of these requests.

So I guess my upshot of all this is biologists and planners please get involved with your PMs. And PMs, please, try to involve your PDT in helping you put together your best package.

All right, so along that line, building the best project we can as the Corps and as a division and as a district.

I suggest - and I appreciate the fact that people on the phone - because if you really understand honestly what criteria are going to go into the rankings and what goes forward from the Corp as a recommendation for funding, understanding that during the planning phase instead of trying to shoehorn in afterwards, I think is a really good idea.

Again, you know, better understanding of the budget ranking process and some of those criteria, I think, when you're developing your project will be helpful and is helpful to PDTs that understand that. And again, you know, I spoke to the budget guidance 11-2-202 is the one for this year, that last number changes every year. Last year it was 200.

Go out and get that and as a bio, just as a planner, as a PDT member, at least familiarize yourself a little bit with, you know, what ultimately is going to go into the ranking and judging in essence of your project.

And realize that ultimately your project is going to compete in a line with a lot of other projects where funds are limited and national priority projects tend to get the majority of that funding. So when funds are limited like that you are doing yourself a disservice if you don't try to put your best project and your best foot forward.

And again, (unintelligible) talked about earlier, budgets are largely based upon the significance criteria. H&H and geomorphology as well, and these typically are the elements of what makes them best and some of our more successful ER projects. So considering all of that going in, I think, behooves the PDTs and behooves the projects themselves.

So all right, so that's the meat of what I had to say. Here are your business line managers for the MSCs. My last one just has my name and email and phone number. So I'll leave this up for a second so folks - if they don't know who their MSC business line managers are they can jot the name down and I'll move off in a second and give you my information as well.

And if I can't get to your question or you have a question you want to ask offline I'm more than happy to talk to you. You can shoot me an email or give me a call. So I'm going to assume you've written down what you wanted to write down if you didn't know who your person was and that's me.

Courtney Chambers: Great, thank you, Brian. I do have a few questions that people have shared through the chat feature. Would you mind going back to that main screen for us ?

Brian Johnson: I'm headed.

Courtney Chambers: Thank you.

Brian Johnson: All right.

Courtney Chambers: All right. Okay, first, obviously a private question that said, regarding O&M costs on your slide. I think you had \$15 listed. Are there extra zeros after that?

Brian Johnson: What was the question?

Courtney Chambers: The \$15 there. Is that - is there an additional unit behind that or zeros behind that?

Brian Johnson: Yes, it's per acre.

Courtney Chambers: Fifteen dollars an acre.

Brian Johnson: Yes, my fault. I'm sorry.

Courtney Chambers: No, no problem. Thank you very much. Okay, then we had some others.
Just a quick comment from (Jody). Planning associates, if you're on the line, please send (Jody) a note so that she can account for your attendance.

Okay, then more questions here. From (Cindy Barger), she wanted to know, can you share some good examples of J sheets?

Brian Johnson: I - yes, I'll - I think (Rennie)'s hanging out online with me too. I'll talk to (Rennie) and there's probably - I'm sure there are some good examples that we'd be happy to share.

(Reny Sherman): (Cindy), are you looking for studies or construction?

(Cindy): Sorry, I was having to take the mute off. Actually for - probably for both but primarily for studies.

(Reny Sherman): Okay, we'll see what we can find.

(Cindy): Great, thank you.

Courtney Chambers: Great, thanks. Okay, then from (Carol) we had a comment, there doesn't appear to be any changes from the previous year's restoration budget process. Is that correct? And if not what are the changes?

Brian Johnson: That is correct, we had almost no change from FY13. Again, I'll go - (Rennie) and I will hopefully tag team the rest of the way because she's looked at it probably even more extensively than I. But I know that (Rennie) and I have talked and there really is not much difference in the way we will rank and score in FY14.

(Reny Sherman): Yes, I mean that's the answer, that criteria have not been changed.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, thanks. (Laura) mentioned that the justifications like hydrology are limited to 200 or 300 characters, just an FYI note.

Brian Johnson: Yes, and that's one of the joys of being a BLM is you learn to understand hieroglyphics way better because you're trying to - you have to try to squeeze 100 characters or 1,000 characters worth of thought into 300 characters.

Courtney Chambers: Wow.

Brian Johnson: So yes, almost - I think very one of the criteria is character limited because it goes into an Excel spreadsheet. Again, that's why the narrative is really important and then things like outside of that, like the J sheet, are really important because you can only get so much across in 300 characters or 200 characters or 500 characters.

And it quickly gets gobbled up when you, you know, speak to benefits and to the merits of your project.

Courtney Chambers: Right, thanks, Brian. Okay, Philadelphia district wanted to know how does the ranking scheme account for major urban areas? It looks like it skews against such areas where the restoration opportunities may be small and patchy and don't include (T&E) but in the urban context they're very important. Are urban streams competing with projects such as the everglades?

Brian Johnson: (Rennie), can I kick that one to you?

(Rennie Sherman): So I mean everybody is competing against the everglades and everybody's competing against LCA but that really doesn't mean that every individual

study is not going to be looked at for what it produces. Everglades is sitting there, it's a giant construction project, but the studies are competing against each other. They're not competing against that. And so it's still making the best case. I mean the bottom line is that the Corp's mission for ecosystem restoration eschews toward not urban kinds of restoration. So you have to take the mission we've been given and do the best job you can presenting your, you know, proposed study. I mean we don't have the mission for cleanup, for water quality, for, you know, urban revitalization. So we have to look at these urban areas and see what's there that matches the Corps' mission and make the best case for it.

Courtney Chambers: Thank you, (Rennie). Okay, then a question from (Diane) asks, what are the five national priority eco restoration project types that are referred to in your presentation?

Brian Johnson: Sure, and (Rennie), if I happen to miss one correct me. Gulf Coast, Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, and Sacramento Bay Delta.

(Rennie Sherman): Right, and they're not project types but they're actually specific restorations and watershed areas that have been identified by the administration as being high priority to the administration.

(Diane): Okay, and I'm sorry, this is (Diane). That was too fast for me. Gulf Coast, Great Lakes.

(Rennie Sherman): Okay, it's Gulf Coast, Great Lakes, California Bay Delta, Everglades, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Brian Johnson: Columbia River not in there?

(Rennie Sherman): Columbia River was - there are then five additional priority areas that the Corps added so we identified them as civil works priority areas. So that's Columbia River, Missouri River, Puget Sound, Upper Miss, and Hudson Rarary Estuary, which is New York Harbor.

(Diane): And I'm sorry, and I'm trying to write this down, still too fast for me. Columbia River, something, and then Puget Sound, and the Hudson River. What was the one between Columbia and Puget Sound?

(Rennie Sherman): Missouri River.

(Diane): Missouri. And what was the fifth one?

Brian Johnson: Upper Miss.

(Diane): Okay, and I am actually trying to put together an ecosystem restoration study based on the Ohio River Ecosystem Restoration Program that was authorized by Congress in the year 2000. Disappointed to hear that's not mentioned.

(Rennie Sherman): Yes, that was not identified. There were the ten studies that were identified in Army's budget request to OMB back in September. And so that's when this was - you know, so that's kind of - it's not new information and it was a decision made by - as I said, by Army.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, then I have a few questions here that were sent to me specifically. From (Rhiannan) we had the question what is HUC and more specifically what is an eight-digit HUC watershed?

(Rennie Sherman): It's a hydrologic unit and the eight digit specify a certain size. It's a USGS designation.

Brian Johnson: Yes, and you can go to the USGS website and they actually have every watershed HUC.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, great. Thank you. Then we had a question from (Jody Clifford) asking about a regional construction and O&M costs that can be very different. Is there any correction for regional differences in cost? Fifteen dollars an acre removes several areas of the country from consideration immediately.

(Rennie Sherman): It's just one criteria and it doesn't - because it happens to be high because they are high land costs or because it's a project that's got very high O&M costs because it's an arid area and there's a substantial amount of, you know, hydrology and water that has to be moved and expensive - just more expensive project. We're not comparing, you know, Tres Rios to wetland development on the upper Mississippi River.

So it's just one criteria and especially for that kind of a measure all you can really look at is how projects compare to like projects. You can't compare very different ones to each other.

Brian Johnson: And I think that's part of getting back to - you know, we have this process to put points on things but there are a lot of other things that go ultimately into ranking and ultimately selection of projects to put forward into the budget. So a lot of that gets taken into account. It's clearly not - like, I said, it's clearly not you have this many points you win, you have this many points you lose.

(Rennie Sherman): And that's a really important point because the points are not a substitute for benefit cost ratios. And we never take the points and just rank from the - you know, the largest to the smallest.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, thank you very much. From (Roger Perk) we had, how will ecosystems be evaluated in the FY14 budget under the watershed based pilot budget?

(Rennie Sherman): We don't know the answer to that yet. There are - right now - I mean the requests for pilots is a request for pilots. And I think until we see what is submitted and get a better idea of how civil works wants to go forward, I think it's just going to be a - we're going to learn as we go.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, all right. Then from (Cindy Barger), she said if we have other designations of national significance outside of these ten is the best place to capture it in the J sheet? For example, US coral reef taskforce and NOC implementation plan.

(Rennie Sherman): I mean I think the place to capture that kind of information would be in the plan recognition.

Courtney Chambers: Okay. And then (Jody Creswell), she went ahead and typed out those priority restoration projects for us and distinguished between the administration priorities and USACE priorities for the ten. Thank you, (Jody).

Brian Johnson: Yes, thank you, (Jody).

Courtney Chambers: All right, at this time, if anybody else would like to ask a question you're welcome to take your phone off of mute and speak up or you can type your question in as others have.

Brian Johnson: Looks like - I can't tell if there's one that just went to me.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, that's likely. What does it say?

Brian Johnson: Is there any idea when we'll be able to submit new projects again not as FY10 to 13?

Brian Johnson: I think we can - you can submit new projects now. It's just - (Rennie)?

(Rennie Sherman): Yes, I'm not sure I understand what the question is. Can whoever submitted it clarify the question?

Courtney Chambers: Remember to take your phone off of mute if you would like to clarify that.

Brian Johnson: So you can - yes, projects can be submitted now whether - you know, ultimately what guidance comes out about what can be included in the budget that will - may ultimately help define what actually gets in but I don't believe there's anything that says you can't put new projects in.

(Rennie Sherman): You're correct, there's not.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, thank you. Okay, then St. Paul had a question, multipurpose projects and (IWRM) are noted as part of the strategic plan. How are BLM working across business lines to promote these kinds of projects?

Brian Johnson: That's a good question.

(Rennie Sherman): Okay, so let me - the budget is EC in addition to - you know, business line projects specifies that watershed, which would be multipurpose projects or not projects but studies and can be submitted. And that's where, you know, the - that would be taken into account.

When we are looking for watersheds we're not necessarily looking at all the ecosystem criteria in the same light. So they - the more important parts when submitting a watershed are talking about the - you know, the columns that talk about watershed criteria.

And the opportunity is there to - if it's - generally our experience has been that most watershed studies are submitted in the ecosystem restoration business line. But they don't have to be.

Some are also submitted when there's an interest in looking for watershed studies we go to those criteria and look for those studies and highlight them.

Courtney Chambers: All right, thank you, (Rennie). Any other questions?

Man: I have a question, it's (unintelligible), Chicago district.

Courtney Chambers: Okay.

Man: I'd like to get a copy of these slides.

Courtney Chambers: Yes, we actually post them on the ecosystem gateway under the Learning Tab. And I've actually posted the link at the very top of the chat feature. If you'll scroll up - and we'll post this recorded webinar as well as a PDF of the slides at that location. Do you see that?

Man: Pardon?

Courtney Chambers: If you're logged in online, if you look at the bottom right-hand corner, do you see the chat box?

Man: I don't see it.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, all right.

Diane: Courtney, also, I'm sorry. This is (Diane). You had said that earlier and I'm familiar with where the chat box is. I don't see that posted in the chat box so you might need to post it again there on the bottom.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, one thing just to double check on that, it - once the chat fills up there's a scrollbar. Can you scroll to the top?

(Diane): It doesn't look like it's there, yes.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, I'll repost that. Thanks for letting me know. Okay, watch for it now, here we go.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, excellent. That's where this recorded presentation will be posted as well as the PDF is already there along with Brian's bio.

(Cindy Barger): Hi, this is (Cindy Barger) over in the Honolulu district. I had a question regarding the discussion about the business line to multipurpose projects. If we - for example, we have a watershed plan that's both an ecosystem restoration, flood risk management. Right now we have it under the ecosystem restoration business line but as we get through alternative formulations if the larger - I guess the larger justification for the project is flood risk management. Is there a point where we should have discussions about which business line it's better to be under?

(Rennie Sherman): If you see it as a primarily flood risk management output then it should probably be considered under flood risk management.

(Cinder Barger): Yes, because right now it's kind of half and half so that's why we have it under ecosystem, okay.

(Michelle Remmin): Hello, this is (Michelle Remmin) from the Buffalo district. I just wanted to confirm what was said earlier about the ability to put in new projects or projects that have not been funded in 10, 11, or 12.

(Rennie Sherman): That would not - the difference - continuing projects that have not received any funding in 10, 11, or 12 and are not in the FY13 President's budget cannot be submitted. A new start - is that what you're asking about, a new start?

(Michelle Remmin): Yes, ma'am. Because I mean it says that they're, you know, any study that has not received funding. It doesn't delineate between new starts or continuing and that - like, significantly cut down our program, you know, our request to, like, three projects because, you know, we have such light funding in GI studies.

(Rennie Sherman): Well, I mean the intent was for it to cut down everybody's programs to bring the investigations program more in line with available investigations funding. But it did not mean that we would not consider new starts.

(Michelle Remmin): Okay, I just wanted to clarify that because that completely changes our strategy in inputting our budgets. I don't want to be caught at the - you know, the last day trying to input, you know, 20 other projects after I found out that I could put them in.

(Rennie Sherman): Well, I think that the point is for everyone to also be realistic about new starts. I mean the intent is not to take studies that have been underway that

haven't received any funding in four years and find them all as new starts because it would obviously - it would not be consistent with General Walsh's letter about reducing the size of the program to something more manageable.

(Michelle Remmin): Yes, ma'am. Thank you so much.

(Rennie Sherman): But new starts are still - you know, the budget EC allows for them and they can still be submitted.

(Michelle Remmin): Thank you so much.

Courtney Chambers: Okay, I did have another one here from Philadelphia that said, do you anticipate that the funding stream in FY14 will be similar to FY13?

(Rennie Sherman): I think that if we're lucky it won't be reduced any more.

Courtney Chambers: All right, very good, okay. Other questions, please. All right, well, if there aren't any others then we'll begin wrapping up. Brian, thank you very much for sharing with us and thank you participants for joining us. We had a very well attended webinar.

END