

Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) Federal Forum

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, May 10, 2022, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern Time

Welcome and Introductions

Stephanie Kavanaugh, Deputy Director of the National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center), welcomed Forum members. In-person and virtual participants introduced themselves by name and agency. See [Appendix A](#) for a participant list.

General Updates from CEQ

Tom Sharp, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), shared that CEQ is focused on updating the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Guidance and moving forward National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulation revisions. CEQ is considering how to incorporate Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) into these regulations and is happy to serve as a partner to the National Center and other ECCR Forum participants in this area. If anyone has questions on the rulemaking, they can contact [Amy Coyle at CEQ](#).

General Updates from the National Center

Brian Manwaring, National Center, announced two new hires, Lauren Cordova and Elyse Magen. Lauren Cordova will be based in the Udall Foundation's DC Office and will support the Native American Congressional Internship Program and the National Center's Native American and Alaska Native Program. Elyse Magen is a remote employee based in Washington, DC. Elyse will work primarily on the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) project.

Brian also shared that upcoming National Center trainings have capacity for additional participants. Courses are listed at: <https://www.udall.gov/OurPrograms/Institute/OpenTrainings.aspx>

Presentation + Q&A: Geospatial Online Tools for Public Participation in Environmental Governance: Research on USACE and Crowdsourcer Reporter

Presenter: Julie Minde, PhD; Post-doctoral Research Associate on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution; Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy | University of Arizona

Dr. Julie Minde presented on geospatial online tools for public participation in environmental governance. Dr. Minde provided an overview of geospatial online participation tools ("geo-OPTs"), including how Federal agencies are beginning to utilize these tools in their efforts to gather public and stakeholder input. She then presented results of her research on USACE's use of one such tool, Crowdsourcer Reporter.

Dr. Minde demonstrated how the use of geo-OPTs can enhance government-public communications, information exchange, and relations, with the caveat that there are pitfalls to avoid and best practices

that still need to be developed. She concluded by sharing recommendations for improved use of geo-OPTs for Federal agencies.

Slides from the presentation can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Following Dr. Minde's presentation, ECCR Forum members asked questions and discussed the potential uses, benefits and challenges of geo-OPT tools:

- Will Hall (DOI) asked Dr. Minde if she found that geo-OPT use allowed for an increase in unconstructive comments and behaviors due to comments being anonymous. Dr. Minde replied that most people used their real name when posting online since the communities were tightknit enough to be honest and open. She stated that disruptive comments were rare and those that were disruptive were mostly upset that they did not receive a response from the agency regarding their comment. Dr. Minde suggested further study on this topic.
- Michelle Ethun (BLM) mentioned that they have seen geo-OPTs like this in action and see both possibilities and limitations of geo-OPTs. Michelle then asked if the stakeholders involved in the cases studied by Dr. Minde were involved in the pre-planning phase or if USACE did sufficient research on their stakeholders prior to project?
 - Dr. Minde responded that the Pittsburgh District Public Involvement Team didn't understand their stakeholders very well. She mentioned that planning in advance and having sufficient resources can be helpful to this type of online public involvement.
- Seth Cohen (National Center) mentioned that in his previous position with USACE he was involved in the implementation of the Chicago area case study reviewed by Dr. Minde. He explained that USACE was trying to strike a balance between people who were outside of the project area versus those who were local. To ensure that USACE heard the voices of the local community, a zip code was requested prior to submitting a comment using Crowdsourcer Reporter.
- Marcia deChadenedes (BLM) mentioned that most people do not understand what a public scoping period is and stressed the importance of educating members of the public in order to enable them to provide meaningful input. She also suggested providing additional options for input besides geo-OPTs since some people do not have access to the internet.
- Multiple ECCR Forum members discussed how to build trust with a community to the level needed to effectively utilize tools like geo-OPTs. They stressed the importance of listening to acknowledge community concerns. Connecting to the community on a personal level can help build a trust and relieve the tension. Other ways to build trust would be to include a third-party neutral in the process.
- Steph Kavanaugh (National Center) mentioned that geo-OPS appear to exhibit similar pros and cons to online engagement meetings in that they enable greater participation for folks who have access to and are adept at using the internet but leave out those who do not have access or are not as adept at use. Steph asked the ECCR Forum members how agencies might ensure participation from both groups.
 - Some ECCR Forum members mentioned that a mix of both in-person and online is the best way to ensure proper scoping for a project.
 - Tom Sharp (CEQ) stated that there are many tools being developed to include participation in scoping and that the agencies should look to share those resources among other agencies.
 - Marcia deChadenedes (BLM) pointed out that it is important to include Native Nations in these conversations about technology and ensure data sovereignty for Federally and non-Federally recognized Tribes and communities.

Final Thoughts

Tom Sharp (CEQ) encouraged participants to attend Forum meetings in-person if they are available and in Washington, D.C. Future ECCR Forum meetings will be held at Udall Foundation DC Office at the University of Arizona Washington, D.C. Center for Outreach & Collaboration., The next meeting is projected to be in Fall 2022.

Lastly, Brian Manwaring stated that the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy (Udall Center) at the University of Arizona and the John McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (NCECR) will co-host a workshop to discuss Federal agency use of online geospatial tools for public participation. The motivation for hosting the workshop was born from interest among federal agencies who were interviewed as part of a related research project. Several agency representatives expressed interest in opportunities to learn about use of geospatial online tools for public participation at other agencies. The research team, headed by Dr. Andrea K. Gerlak, was awarded a grant to conduct the workshop through the University of Arizona's Office for Research, Innovation and Impact (RII). Julie Minde (Udall Center Postdoctoral Research Associate) led the workshop planning and outreach.

[Addition: The workshop was held May 11, 2022 from 9am- 4pm Eastern Standard Time at the University of Arizona Center for Outreach and Collaboration located at 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 500 Washington, DC 20004. As a hybrid event, the workshop drew attendees from approximately 13 federal agencies and multiple representatives from industry, environmental collaboration and conflict resolution firms, and organizations such as the National Institute for Civil Discourse and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The presentation slides from the meeting can be found in [Appendix C](#) and the report can be found in [Appendix D](#).]

APPENDIX A: Meeting Attendees

Name	Agency
Cynthia Politowicz	U.S. Army
Thomas Sharp	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Marcia deChadenedes	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Michelle Ethun	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Steven Miller	Department of Energy (DOE)
William Hall	Department of the Interior (DOI)
Sarah Palmer	Department of the Interior (DOI)
Megan Blum	Department of Transportation (DOT)
Leah Vasarhelyi	Department of Transportation (DOT)
Olivia Walker-Chaffin	Department of Transportation (DOT)
Gina Cerasani	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Pamela Houston	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Freya Margand	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
JD Hoyle	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
Josh Hurwitz	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
Krista Sakallaris	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
David Cohen	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Frank Sprtel	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Seth Cohen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Lauren Cordova	Udall Foundation
Stephanie Kavanaugh	Udall Foundation, National Center
Elyse Magen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Brian Manwaring	Udall Foundation, National Center
Julie Minde	Udall Foundation
Courtney Owen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Michelle DeGrandi	Veterans Affairs (VA)
Catherine Johnson	Veterans Affairs (VA)

APPENDIX B: Geospatial Online Tools for Public Participation in Environmental Governance: Research on USACE and Crowdsourc
Reporter | Presenter: Dr. Julie Minde



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