

## **Kick-off Meeting Notes**

### **US 93 Post-Construction Wildlife-Vehicle Collision and Wildlife Crossing Monitoring Research**

Meeting notes (by Marcel Huijser-WTI-MSU)

**Date and Time:** Tuesday, February 2, 2010- 10 am -12:00 pm.

**Location:** Commission Room, Helena and MDT district office Missoula, linked through Polycom

#### Action items are underlined

#### 1. Introductions of the panel members and researcher(s) (by Kris Christensen, MDT)

Panel members (●= present, ○= not present):

- Kris Christensen, MDT Research Section (project manager)
- Sue Sillick, MDT Research Section
- Pat Basting, MDT Environmental Bureau (chair)
- Dale Becker, CSKT
- Jonathan Floyd, MDT Traffic Safety Bureau
- Bonnie Gundrum, MDT Environmental Bureau
- Mark Zitzka, FHWA
- Doug Moeller, MDT Missoula District Administrator
- Kevin Christensen, MDT Construction Engineer
- Scott Jackson, USFWS
- Vickie Edwards, FWP

Contractors present

- Marcel Huijser, WTI-MSU
- Whisper Camel, CSKT

#### 2. Explanation of roles (by Kris Christensen, MDT)

Most important points, highlighted from MDT's checklist:

- All communication regarding substantial issues that may affect the project scope, time and/or budget, or products, including potential changes in personnel and amendments (e.g. a potential 5<sup>th</sup> year of data collection), goes through Kris Christensen, MDT Project Manager.
- Publications (not only the final report for MDT, but also potential articles or proceedings) and/or potential presentations at conferences have to be approved by MDT while the contract is in effect. MDT is primarily concerned with the release of preliminary data and that all partners receive credit.
- With regard to potential interviews with journalists or other representatives of the media, only speak about the US93 project results in general terms, and do not draw any major conclusions before the project has been finalized. For example, no one should state that the crossing structures "work" as the work scope defines

what MDT, CSKT, and FHWA mean with "work", and data have to be collected and analyzed before that question can be answered. However, facts, e.g., species x, y, and z have used x crossing structures between x date and y date a total of x, y, and z times are permissible. Basically, do not draw conclusions before the data have been collected and analyzed, and before the report has been approved by MDT. However, factual statements (data that cannot change) are permissible.

- Potential meetings that have travel costs/per diem costs have to be a separate line item in budget/financial reports.

### 3. Contract deliverables (by Kris Christensen, MDT)

Most important points, highlighted from MDT's checklist:

- Draft reports should represent the contractor's best effort. Draft reports should not be incomplete or below the contractor's best effort.
- Line item responses are required for the comments on the deliverables.
- Guidelines for reports are available from MDT's website.

### 4. Review of project work plan (by Marcel Huijser, WTI-MSU)

- Marcel presented a brief history of related work on the US93 mitigation measures and presented a summary of the work plan for the current project.  
Action: Kris Christensen (MDT) will distribute work plan among panel members.
- It is the intention that a selection of photos of animals using crossing structures will continue to be posted on MDT's and CSKT's website, and from now on, also on WTI's website. Action: A protocol on what pictures can or cannot be posted will be developed by Whisper Camel, Marcel Huijser and Pat Basting.
- Action: Marcel will have WTI communication staff review the text on MDT/CSKT websites and see if this text is OK or needs to be modified for WTI-MSU website.
- Action: MDT (Pat Basting and Kris Christensen) will integrate or provide links between the current project page and the US93 photo page (both on MDT's website).
- Kris Christensen stated that business aspects (i.e. costs and benefits) of MDT projects are really important to MDT. In this context, the cost-benefit analysis of the project is critical.
- There was a discussion on whether there may be additional parameters from MTFW&P for recording potential changes in the population size of deer on the reservation. However, it was decided that the following parameters will likely be useful:
  - Deer pellet group surveys
  - The number of wildlife vehicle collisions (crash and carcass data) on other unmitigated roads on the reservation.

5. Other potential funding sources and potential integration with this project (by Marcel Huijser, WTI-MSU)

Potential funding sources

- USFWS Tribal Wildlife Grant Program  
Dale Becker (CSKT) expects to hear about the grant application soon.
- WTI fellowship for Masters student  
In addition to Tiffany Allen who is pursuing her MS at MSU, WTI will have another MS student apply to do his/her MS related to US93. More news is expected in March or April.
- Federal Highway Administration  
Mark Zitzka mentioned that the STEP funding program is still reviewing applications/recommendations, including potential funding for US93.

The following topics were mentioned as candidates if sufficient additional funds are obtained:

1. A 5<sup>th</sup> year of data collection: Marcel will send budget to Kris Christensen (MDT)
2. A black bear population study: Marcel will send budget to Kris Christensen (MDT)
3. Fish connectivity study
4. Vegetation/weed study
5. Turtle study (on very long term, Ninepipes)
6. Outreach (exhibits local and regional talks).
  - Note: Dale Becker mentioned that the CSKT have outreach specialists that may assist with outreach activities.
  - Note: Should exhibits be an option at some point, MDT suggests to plan for the life cycle of the exhibit (incl. potential maintenance/up keeping).

Depending on what the funder(s) specify and what the level of available funding is, the 5<sup>th</sup> year of data collection and the black bear population study have the highest priority according to the panel members. Action: should any funding come in, the recipient needs to inform Kris Christensen (MDT), and discuss how the additional tasks may or may not relate to the current project funded by MDT and whether amendments should be considered.

7. Schedule field trip

Action: Kris Christensen will send a list with potential dates for a field trip for the panel members. The field trip may be in June 2010.

8. Expectations from MDT

These are listed in table 12 of the work plan. Action: Marcel will send this table to Doug Moeller and Pat Basting for further discussion. Marcel will keep Kris apprised of discussion outcomes.

9. Safety regulations for field work

WTI-MSU and CSKT personnel will wear safety vests and hard hats while on the road or in the right-of-way. Amber warning light on potential vehicles should be used if the vehicle is not fully off the road. Action: Marcel will communicate this with CSKT and make sure the equipment is available to CSKT.

**Action list**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Kris Christensen (MDT)	Will distribute work plan among panel members.	February 3, 2010
Kris Christensen (MDT)	Will send a list with potential dates for a field trip for the panel members.	Date set for June 24 on February 11, 2008
Kris Christensen and Pat Basting (MDT)	Integrate or provide links between the current project page and the US93 photo page (both on MDT's website).	Request sent February 5, 2010
MDT, FHWA, CSKT, WTI	Should any funding come in, the recipient needs to inform Kris Christensen (MDT), and discuss how the additional tasks may or may not relate to the current project funded by MDT and whether amendments should be considered.	
Marcel Huijser (WTI-MSU)	Have WTI communication staff review the text on MDT/CSKT websites and see if this text is OK or needs to be modified for WTI-MSU website.	Request sent February 5, 2010 for MDT site
Marcel Huijser (WTI-MSU)	A 5 <sup>th</sup> year of data collection: send budget to Kris Christensen (MDT)	Done (8 Feb 2010)
Marcel Huijser (WTI-MSU)	A black bear population study: send budget to Kris Christensen (MDT)	Received February 10, 2010
Marcel Huijser (WTI-MSU)	Send table that lists expectations for MDT to Doug Moeller and Pat Basting, with a cc to Kris, for further discussion.	Sent February 9, 2010
Marcel Huijser (WTI-MSU)	Communicate safety protocol with CSKT and make sure the equipment is available to CSKT.	Done (8 and 9 Feb 2010)
Whisper Camel, Marcel Huijser and Pat Basting	Develop a protocol on what pictures can or cannot be posted on CSKT, MDT and WTI websites	February 9, 2010