
Process Summary Report

Integrated Transportation and Ecological Enhancements for Montana (ITEEM) Process Highway 83 Pilot Study MDT PROJECT STPX 0002(884); CN 6438; ACCT 9702

Seeley Lake, Montana



Prepared for:

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June 2010

Project No: 100000537

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the Integrated Transportation and Ecological Enhancements for Montana (ITEEM) Highway 83 2008-2010 Pilot Study process, its successes and challenges, and recommendations for process improvement. A separate “outcomes” report (PBSJ 2010) documents the actual outcomes of the October 28-30, 2008 ITEEM process Highway 83 pilot study workshop, as well as preparatory meetings, coordination, and comment solicitation leading up to the workshop, a December 2009 follow-up meeting with workshop participants, and a spring 2010 public comment period.

In March 2008, PBS&J was contracted by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to gather data for, facilitate, and document the results of the ITEEM pilot study process. The intent of the pilot study is to test and evaluate the ITEEM process, which encourages agencies to collaboratively and strategically plan infrastructure projects and related restoration / conservation opportunities with goals of conserving and connecting important habitats, while increasing predictability and transparency of transportation planning and regulatory agency processes. The ITEEM process was detailed in *Developing the “Integrated Transportation and Ecological Enhancements for Montana” (ITEEM) Process: Applying the Eco-Logical Approach* (Hardy et. al 2007), and summarized as follows:

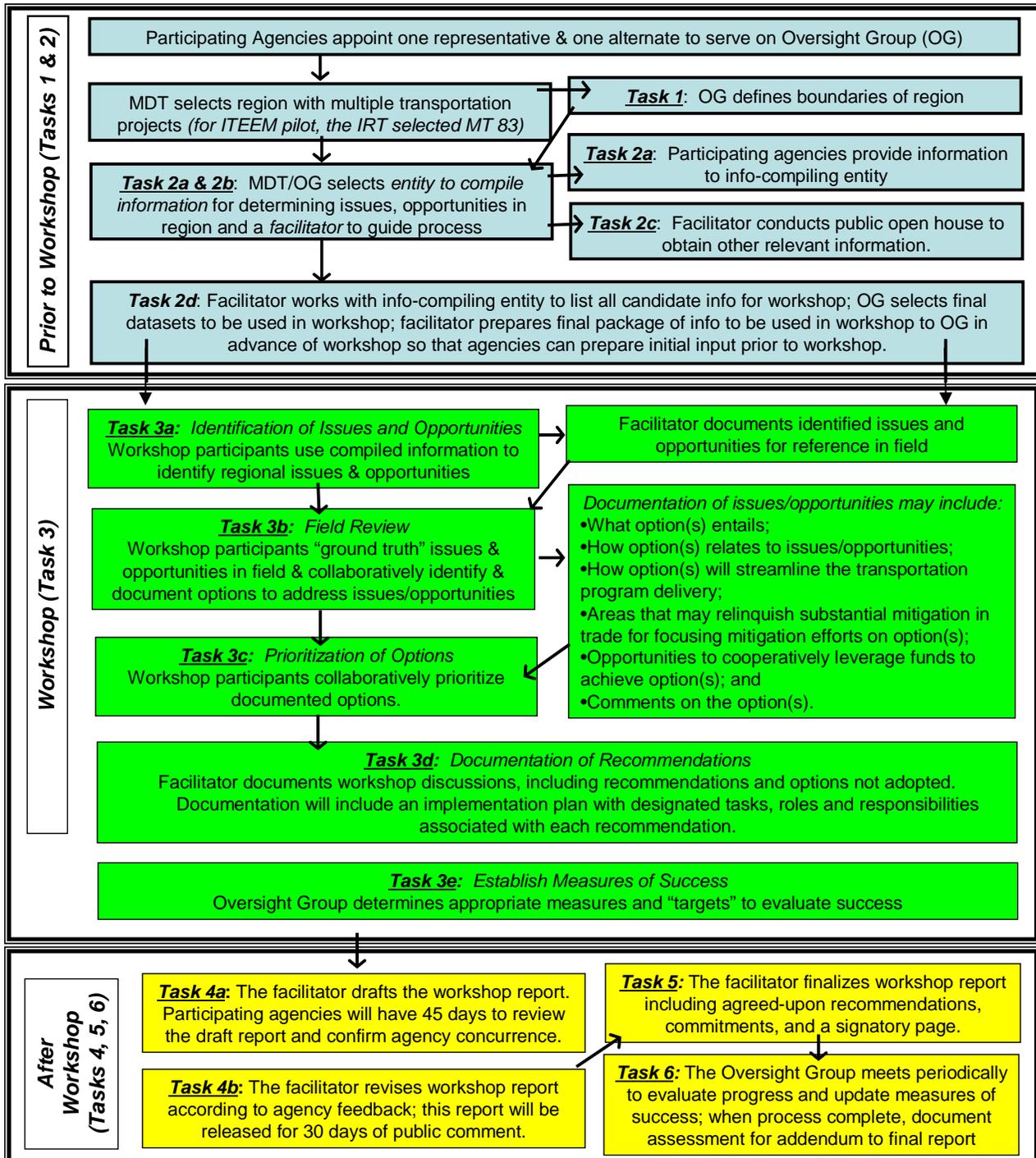
The broad goal of the ITEEM process is to streamline transportation program delivery while applying more effective ecosystem conservation. More specifically, the goal of the ITEEM process is to collaboratively identify, within an identified region, issues and opportunities for larger scale ecological conservation or restoration projects to offset adverse impacts for multiple transportation projects within that given region. This goal will be achieved by integrating existing information from multiple sources to cooperatively identify cost-effective opportunities in the given region to offset adverse transportation impacts on ecosystem resources and fulfill environmental regulatory permitting requirements early in the planning process. Through earlier and more effective coordination, greater environmental benefits can be accomplished while maximizing efficient use of public funds and improving transportation program delivery. Desired outcomes of the ITEEM process include:

- *Conservation: Protection of larger scale, multi-resource ecosystems;*
- *Connectivity: Enhanced or restored habitat connectivity and reduced habitat fragmentation;*
- *Early Involvement: To the extent possible, early identification of transportation and ecological issues and opportunities;*
- *Cost Efficiency: Making the best use of transportation program funding by focusing mitigation efforts where they would be most effective;*
- *Cooperation: Finding solutions acceptable to all participating agencies;*
- *Predictability: Knowledge that commitments made early in the planning process by all agencies will be honored – that the planning and conservation agreements, results, and outcomes will occur as agreed; and*
- *Transparency: Better stakeholder involvement to establish credibility, build trust, and streamline infrastructure planning and development.*

The ITEEM process strives to balance environmental and transportation values. Participants share the responsibility of finding solutions that meet both transportation and ecosystem conservation goals. Schedule, cost, safety, quality, public input, regulatory requirements, ecological concerns and other factors will all be considered with no single factor dominating as the top priority.

Specific ITEEM process activities, indicated as tasks, are summarized in **Chart 1** below (adapted from Hardy et. al 2007). In this example, MDT is the “initiating agency”, but any agency can initiate the ITEEM process.

Chart 1: ITEEM Process Task Flowchart (adapted from (Hardy et. al 2007))



Occurring in advance of the NEPA process, an additional potential benefit of the ITEEM process is that it can help to implement early interagency involvement, communication and coordination that is sometimes not well addressed during NEPA implementation. Evaluations of the NEPA process have noted that inadequate early involvement of reviewing and regulatory agencies can result in later problems or misunderstandings during the NEPA and permitting processes. The ITEEM process promotes early interagency involvement, and therefore facilitates minimization of such problems.

Apart from testing the process itself, the main objectives of this Highway 83 pilot study were for participating agencies to collaboratively:

- Conduct early coordination and discuss / resolve and document natural resource and planning considerations relative to future potential MDT Highway 83 reconstruction projects along approximately 15 miles of Highway 83 (**Figure 1**); between the community of Seeley Lake and the Clearwater River divide to the north; and
- Identify, discuss, and prioritize terrestrial and aquatic natural resource restoration partnership opportunities (for which MDT would receive credit for its financial participation) in defined portions of the Seeley/Swan /Blackfoot watersheds (**Figure 1**).

The ITEEM process can be initiated by any participating agency. In this case, the pilot study was sponsored by MDT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The pilot process strives for win-win outcomes in that:

- Resource management agencies are able to provide early input with respect to the highway projects and gain partners in accomplishing some agency-identified priority restoration projects; and
- MDT/FHWA gain early input into project development process, predictability in the permitting process, improved inter-agency relationships, and potential advanced mitigation considerations when, in fact, the future highway projects come to fruition.

In addition to MDT and FHWA, agencies participating in this pilot study included the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MDNRC), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), Missoula County Rural Initiatives Office (MCRIO), Seeley Lake Community Council (SLCC), and the Lake County Planning Department (LCPD). The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) were also invited to participate, but declined at this time. Individual participants are listed in **Table 1**.

Each agency was invited to select staff to represent their agency at various stages of the process. While the Interagency Review Team (IRT) was comprised of individuals at the director level, the Interagency Review Team Working Group (IRTWG), comprised of MDT, FHWA, MDEQ, MDNRC, MFWP, USFWS, USFS, USEPA, and USACOE, represented the core ITEEM process working group (**Table 1**). IRTWG members are charged with attending periodic coordination meetings and distributing information to and coordinating appropriate staff (e.g., the Oversight Group and Technical Representatives as described below) within their respective agencies regarding application of the ITEEM process to specific projects or activities.

The Oversight Group was comprised of: core agency members empowered to speak and foster tentative agreements / commitments on behalf of their agency; and local agencies as appropriate to the specific location / nature of the particular project to which the process is being applied. In the case of

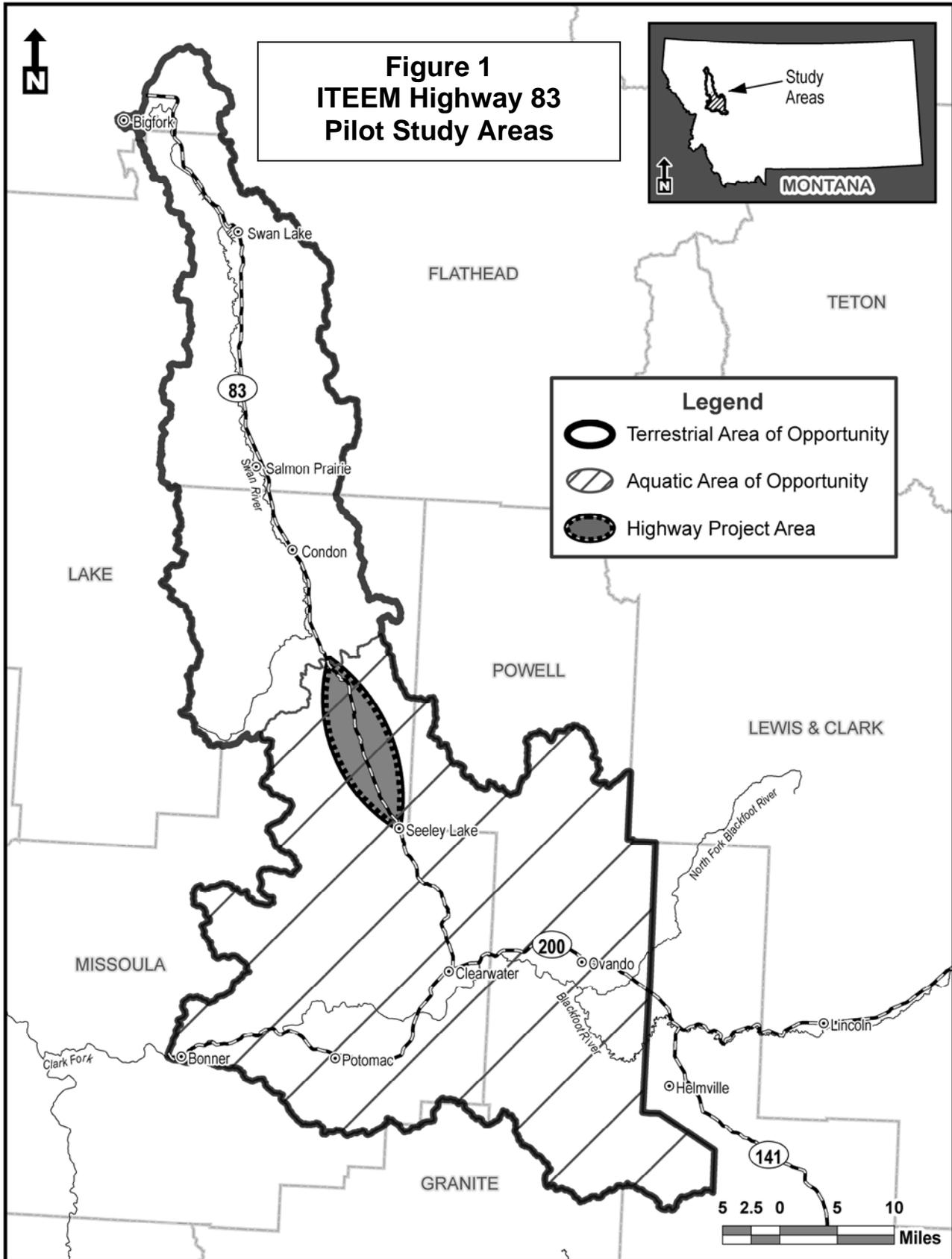


Table 1: ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study Agency Participants (2008)

Agency	Interagency Review Team	Interagency Review Team Working Group	Attended October 28-30, 2008 Workshop	
			Oversight Group (agency decision-making and financial commitment authority)	Oversight Group Technical Representatives
FHWA	Kevin McLaury, Director	Craig Genzlinger, Operations Engineer (in 2010 is Brian Hasselbach)	Craig Genzlinger (in 2010 is Brian Hasselbach)	Gene Kaufman, Operations Engineer Lloyd Rue, Program Development Engineer
MDEQ	Richard Opper, Director (Tom Livers alternate)	Jeff Ryan, Water Quality / Wetlands Specialist	Jeff Ryan	Chris Romankiewicz, Water Quality Specialist
MDNRC	Mary Sexton, Director	Gary Frank, Resource Management Section Supervisor	Gary Frank (28 th only)	None
MDT	Jim Lynch, Director	Tom Martin, Env. Bureau Chief Bonnie Gundrum, Resources Section Supervisor Pat Basting, Missoula District Biologist Deb Wambach, Butte District Biologist, ITEEM Project Manager	Jim Walther, Preconstruction Engineer	Bonnie Gundrum, Pat Basting (28 th , 30 th), Deb Wambach, Lesly Tribelhorn, Highways Bureau.
MFWP	Jeff Hagener, Director (in 2010 is Joe Maurier)	Glenn Phillips, Habitat Bureau Chief, Fisheries Division (retired summer 2008) Steve Knapp, Habitat Bureau Chief, Wildlife Division T.O. Smith, Coordinator, Comprehensive Statewide Fish and Wildlife Strategy	Mack Long, Regional Supervisor, Missoula Region (28 th only) T.O. Smith (28 th only)	Ladd Knotek, Fisheries Biologist (28 th only) Jay Kolbe, Wildlife Biologist (28 th , 30 th) Mark Lere, Habitat Restoration Program Officer (28 th , 29 th)
USACOE	Allan Steinle, MT Program Manager (in 2010 is Todd Tillinger)	Todd Tillinger, Project Manager	Todd Tillinger	None
USEPA	John Wardell, Director, Region 8 (in 2010 is Julie Dalsoglio) Julie Dalsoglio, Deputy Director, Region 8 (in 2010 is Ron Steg)	Julie Dalsoglio, Region 8 Deputy Director (in 2010 is Ron Steg) Stephen Potts, NEPA Coordinator, Region 8	Stephen Potts	None
USFS	Joel Krause, Director, Engineering Bruce Fox, Director, Forest & Rangeland Management	Fred Bower, Transp. Planning Engineer James Claar, Carnivore Program Leader Kate Walker, Fish Program Leader	Tim Love, District Ranger, Seeley Lake Ranger District	Scott Tomson, Wildlife Biologist Shane Hendrickson, Fisheries Biologist
USFWS	Mark Wilson, Field Office Supervisor	Scott Jackson, Wildlife Biologist	Scott Jackson	Anne Vandehey, Wildlife Biologist Greg Nuedecker, Assistant State PFW Coordinator (28 th only)
Missoula County Rural Initiatives Office	NA	NA	Carly Walker, Rural Landscape Scientist	None
Lake County	NA	NA	Sue Shannon, Planner (28 th only)	None
Seeley Lake Com. Council	NA	NA	Jon Haufler, Chair	None

this pilot study, additional Oversight Group agencies included the MCRIIO, SLCC, and LCPD. Powell and Flathead County commissioners and planning departments were also contacted, but declined participation in the pilot study workshop. Oversight Group participants, along with the Technical Representatives (e.g., generally local resource experts within their agencies) that they chose to assist them, attended the ITEEM agency workshop. Not all individual participants attended the entire three days of the workshop (**Table 1**).

2.0 PILOT STUDY ACTIVITIES

Pilot study activities are discussed below, and are referenced to ITEEM process tasks and subtasks as described in Hardy et. al (2007) and listed above in **Chart 1**.

2.1 Pre-Workshop (ITEEM Tasks 1 and 2)

Initiation and Task 1 – Define Boundaries of ITEEM Region. In developing the ITEEM process in 2006/2007 (Hardy et al. 2007), the IRT selected the MT 83 corridor through the Clearwater and Swan River valleys in northwestern Montana as the general geographic region of interest for the pilot study, and the IRTWG further defined the pilot study boundaries. The pilot study itself was initiated with a March 3, 2008 letter from MDT Director Jim Lynch to the directors or regional supervisors of MDEQ, MDNRC, USEPA, FHWA, MFWP, USACOE, USFS, and USFWS, inviting them to select Oversight Group representatives from their respective agencies to participate in the pilot study workshop.

Objectives: Study boundary definition and Oversight Group determination

Actual Result: Study boundary definition was completed, although there was a conflict between the 2007 boundary figure and accompanying text that required resolution between IRTWG members at the beginning of the pilot study. **Figure 1** represents the resolved study area borders. Oversight Group determination was completed by each agency via email.

Task 2 – Prepare Materials for ITEEM Workshop.

Subtask 2a – Compile Existing Information for the Region. An IRTWG ITEEM pilot study kickoff meeting was conducted on March 14, 2008 during which the process and objectives (see Section 1.0 above) were explained and discussed at length over several hours. On April 28, 2008 MDT submitted a letter to the IRTWG members requesting a list of the best available existing project corridor data that each agency wanted considered during the process, including relevant studies, reports, information, maps, and mapping data. The letter also requested the agencies to provide data contacts, and agency summaries of coarse-scale natural resources issues / concerns relating to the proposed highway project corridor and large-scale restoration / conservation partnership opportunities relating to the larger study area (**Figure 1**).

In late April 2008, MDT submitted a letter to each of the Missoula, Lake, Powell, and Flathead County Commissioners requesting their participation in the process, the same information requested of the IRTWG members (discussed above), and a list and description of any specific planning, zoning, or development projects (such as subdivisions) that could occur within the study area that may have the potential to affect the identification and prioritization of restoration/conservation opportunities.

On May 15, 2008 an IRTWG ITEEM status meeting was conducted, at which data needs / sources / contacts and the proposed open house (see Subtask 2c below) were discussed at length. On June 23, 2008 the USFS and MFWP conducted an internal ITEEM data discussion meeting, which MDT and

PBS&J also attended. At this meeting, the ITEEM process, local resource data, data contacts, and some potential (primarily aquatic) restoration opportunities were discussed. From approximately April through August 2008, PBS&J directly contacted agency and non-governmental organizations (NGO) data staff and acquired, or attempted to acquire, study area electronic and hardcopy resource data as identified by agencies and other stakeholders.

Objectives: Obtain corridor data, issues, and opportunities.

Actual Result: Corridor data, issues, and opportunities were acquired. Much information was available for the corridor, and local NGOs were particularly helpful in locating and providing data. Some resource agency data and issues/opportunities response delays were encountered, likely due to the onset of the field season, and necessitated requests to and assistance from the IRTWG regarding their respective agencies.

Subtask 2b – Select a Facilitator. PBS&J was selected as the facilitator / data compiler in February 2008.

Objectives: Select facilitator.

Actual Result: Facilitator selected in February 2008 via proposal / interview process.

Subtask 2c – Seek Public Involvement. In late April 2008, press releases were submitted and ads placed in local publications informing the public of an ITEEM process informational public open house scheduled for May 20, 2008 in Seeley Lake. Additionally, open house announcements were directly mailed to approximately 40 local NGOs considered potential stakeholders in the process. On May 20th, a public open house was conducted in Seeley Lake. Public attendance was relatively sparse, although attendants did include the MCRIO and two additional primary local NGOs (Clearwater Resource Council [CRC] and Trust for Public Land [TPL]).

Throughout this process, from approximately April through August 2008, PBS&J conducted individual interviews with local stakeholder groups to obtain their input, issues, and potential opportunities with respect to the ITEEM pilot study. These stakeholders included: Missoula County Rural Initiatives Office / Missoula County Planning, Powell County Commissioners (PCC), Clearwater Resource Council / Seeley Lake Community Council, Blackfoot Challenge (BC), Seeley Lake Chamber of Commerce (SL Chamber), Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC), Northwest Connections (NWC), Plum Creek Timber Company (PCTC), and American Wildlands (AW). Others were contacted, but either declined or were non-responsive.

On September 5th, PBS&J mailed invitations to approximately 40 local NGO stakeholders soliciting their input and inviting them to make presentations at the October 2008 agency workshop. Five groups ultimately elected to make presentations at the workshop: Trust for Public Land, American Wildlands, Clearwater Resource Council, Swan Ecosystem Center, and the Blackfoot Challenge.

Objectives: Public involvement via an open house.

Actual Result: Public / NGO involvement via an open house, direct mailings, interviews, and invitations to make presentations during Day 1 of the workshop.

Subtask 2d – Select Final Datasets. On August 12, 2008 another IRTWG ITEEM status meeting was conducted. This was a substantive meeting, in that the comprehensive list of data received by PBS&J to date was reviewed and screened, and it was agreed as to which data “layers” would be compiled onto maps for discussion at the workshop. This was a consensus-based process, in

that each available layer or source was in turn discussed and consensus achieved within the group as to which were likely most appropriately (and usefully) displayed on maps at the workshop, and which would simply be made available for examination at the workshop electronically or in hard copy report form, if needed (no layers or sources were dismissed from consideration). Additionally, each agency presented their respective issues and potential opportunities to be considered during the process. It was determined that PBS&J would summarize these issues and opportunities, identify which required additional information or explanation, and provide that list to the group for review in the form of a “straw man” agency issues and opportunities summary.

On August 25, 2008 MDT distributed the agency issues and opportunities summary / information needs document and the screened list of agreed-upon data layers to be included on workshop maps to IRTWG members for their review, comment, and further explanation (primarily of opportunities) by September 8th. On August 29, 2008 a conference call was conducted between MDT, USFS, FHWA, and PBS&J in order to clarify some USFS ITEEM process questions and issues. On September 25, the August 25 summary / information needs document and data list was re-submitted to the group by MDT (requesting responses by October 1) as no responses had been received.

On October 14, 2008 a technical memorandum summarizing the process, data (including all maps), and all public, NGO, and agency input received as of that date was transmitted to all scheduled workshop participants in order to facilitate preparation in advance of the October 28th, 29th, and 30th 2008 workshop.

Objectives: Select final datasets, issues, and opportunities and transmit to workshop participants in advance of the workshop.

Actual Result: A technical memorandum summarizing the process, data (including all maps), and all public, NGO, and agency input received as of two weeks prior to the workshop was transmitted to all scheduled workshop participants in order to facilitate preparation in advance of the workshop. Most, but not all pilot study agencies provided issues or opportunities and participated in data screening prior to issuance of the technical memorandum.

2.2 Workshop (ITEEM Task 3)

Task 3 – ITEEM Workshop. The workshop was conducted October 28th, 29th, and 30th 2008 at the Seeley Lake Community Center in Seeley Lake, Montana. As mentioned above, some workshop participants were only able to attend Day 1, some only Days 1 and 2, and some only Days 1 and 3 (**Table 1**). This made it challenging to maintain a consistent level of participation and solicit input from a single “voice” with respect to some agencies.

Subtask 3a - Identify Issues and Opportunities at a Coarse Scale. Day 1 consisted of NGO and agency presentations; round-table data, issues, and opportunities review and discussion; and determination of opportunity areas to examine during the Day 2 field reconnaissance.

Objectives: Identify, discuss, and conceptually prioritize issues and opportunities, and determine opportunity areas to examine during the Day 2 field reconnaissance.

Actual Result: Agency and NGO presentations occupied most of the morning session, and an appreciable portion of Day 1 was spent explaining and discussing the ITEEM process itself (context, scale, objectives, etc.), rather than discussing the pilot study corridor, as several of the Oversight Group participants were new to and therefore unfamiliar with this process. Some agencies were reticent to provide detailed input regarding issues or mitigation partnership opportunities until they had

seen a proposed design on which to comment, and had a better understanding of what potential impacts may result from highway project implementation.

Some of the key workshop participants arrived with an expectation that there was a stand-alone funding source for conducting advanced mitigation for Highway 83. To some, the concept that they were encouraged to pool and leverage funds with MDT (or visa versa) for large-scale ecological conservation projects that could partially function as “mitigation” for MDT came as a surprise. Pulling together a cooperative effort involving various agencies and organizations and examining issues and opportunities at a landscape level (e.g., the ITEEM process) was not in itself viewed as a significant contribution by some participants in the pilot study area, as cooperative management involving most agencies and organizations was already being conducted. Further, agency interest in pursuing large-scale ecological restoration projects or land purchases was markedly diminished / alleviated by the recent enactment of the Montana Legacy Project; a 312,500-acre purchase of Plum Creek lands to preserve and protect habitats, public access, and sustainable timber harvest in the Seeley-Swan corridor.

Detailed issue discussions were ultimately postponed until the Group had a chance to visit the actual highway corridor the following day. Afternoon discussion focused largely on highway features and potential opportunity areas to be examined in the field on Day 2 in conjunction with the corridor reconnaissance.

Subtask 3b – Conduct Field Review of Issues and Opportunities. On Day 2, the group visited the 15-mile highway corridor and some potential opportunity areas identified previous to and during Day 1.

Objectives: Review the project corridor, discuss applicable issues, and examine potential opportunity areas.

Actual Result: The project highway corridor was reviewed, which provided tremendous focus and perspective to the Group. Issues became much more apparent and focused. The corridor reconnaissance occupied much of the day, and some USFS example culvert and bridge replacement projects were visited that also enhanced participant perspective with respect to corridor issues. General opportunity areas were visited, most of which were very conceptual in nature and all of which required additional coordination and follow-up.

Subtasks 3c, 3d, and 3e – Prioritize Options to Address Issues and Opportunities; Document Recommended Options; Establish Measures of Success. Day 3 was comprised of focused issue and opportunity discussion and wrap-up.

Objectives: Prioritize and document issues and opportunities and establish success measures.

Actual Result: Issues were very productively focused and distilled into four main groups: safety and wildlife mortality, linkage areas, water quality, and community aesthetics. Highway corridor planning considerations and opportunities associated with these groups were compiled. The Group did not prioritize these issues and opportunities, in the sense that one would take precedence over another, as the actual highway design would occur 10-15 years into the future and agency priorities and the regulatory/legal focus could change over that period. Specific success measures were not developed during the workshop relative to issue resolution or opportunity development for the same reasons. The Group did, however, discuss perceived successes of and improvement suggestions for the ITEEM process itself. General opportunity and ITEEM process success measures were developed during the December 2009 follow-up meeting, and are included in **Appendix A**.

2.3 Post-Workshop (ITEEM Tasks 4, 5, & 6)

Tasks 4 and 5 – Draft, Circulate, and Finalize ITEEM Workshop Report. A preliminary draft of the pilot study “outcomes” report presenting and discussing all data, issues and opportunities resulting from the workshop was submitted to MDT and FHWA for internal review in March 2009. Final internal comments were received in June 2009, and the agency draft outcomes report was issued in July 2009. Following receipt of agency comments in January 2010, the outcomes report was revised and submitted for public review from April 19-May 21, 2010. No public comments were received, and the report was finalized in June 2010.

A preliminary summary of the ITEEM Highway 83 pilot study process and results was presented to members of the IRT by MDT and PBS&J on April 30th, 2009.

A preliminary draft of the pilot study “process evaluation” report (e.g., this report) was submitted to MDT and FHWA for internal review in July 2009. Final internal comments were received in September 2009, and the agency draft process evaluation report was issued in September 2009. Following receipt of agency comments in January 2010, the process report was finalized in June 2010.

Objectives: Draft and final ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study Report.

Actual Result: Separate draft and final ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study “outcomes” and “process evaluation” reports. The Group decided at the workshop that issuance of two separate reports would allow for more efficient tracking and follow-up of Highway 83 outcomes and overall ITEEM process refinement, without mixing the two into one larger, potentially more cumbersome report. The outcomes report affecting the study area region was made available for agency and public comment, while the process evaluation report was only reviewed by the actual participating agencies.

Task 6 – Evaluate and Adapt the ITEEM Process. An Oversight Group follow-up meeting was conducted in December 2009, and a second such meeting is proposed in June 2010.

Objectives: Periodic OG meetings to check on the progress of implementing recommendations, revisit success measures, and develop process refinement recommendations.

Actual Result: These meetings are to be periodically scheduled; the first (December 2009) was scheduled following publication and review of the agency draft ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study outcomes and process evaluation reports. Part of the process refinement recommendations discussed included how to continue the process in the study area within the structure of an existing local NGO, although final solutions and approaches were not defined. Agencies provided comments on the draft reports, which have been incorporated into this process report and the separate outcomes report. General opportunity and ITEEM process success measures were developed during the December 2009 follow-up meeting, and are included in **Appendix A**.

3.0 PILOT STUDY PROCESS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

This section presents discussion of pilot study successes, challenges, and recommendations for improvement relative to future applications of the ITEEM process. Successes, challenges and recommendations are presented in **Table 2** and organized using ITEEM task numbers and titles from **Chart 1**. Primary successes of the pilot study are listed below.

- **General, coarse-level planning / design considerations identified for the highway project corridor will facilitate future highway project scoping, design and permitting, as well as resource agency review.** The process identified numerous considerations to facilitate future design, and achieved consensus regarding general approaches to various issues, including safety and wildlife mortality, linkage areas, water quality, and community aesthetics (see details in PBSJ [2010]). Specific design parameters (e.g., culvert dimensions, specific wildlife crossing structure dimensions, clear zone widths, etc.) were not discussed in detail, as actual design was projected to occur 10-15 years into the future. However, current priority areas and issues, and approaches as to how to address them, were well-discussed. Field review of the highway corridor was especially helpful in facilitating this effort.
- **Some promising partnership opportunities were identified that would compliment ongoing conservation / restoration efforts in the study area.** These include a multi-agency corridor restoration fund and potential short-term advance remedies in the corridor (see details in PBSJ [2010]). These represent win-win concepts that foster ecological improvements, leverage existing efforts / funds, and facilitate good will between MDT/FHWA and resource management agencies.
- **The extensive data compilation / consolidation (maps) will be useful planning tools for all local agencies / groups into the future.** General maps produced include USGS topographic information, 2005 NAIP aerial photograph information, wildlife habitat linkage, grizzly bear habitat, lynx habitat, big game habitat, species of concern, bull trout / west-slope cutthroat habitat / streams, wetlands, recreation sites, planning / land use, and opportunities. Copies of these maps and associated data lists and sources are provided in the pilot study “outcomes report” (PBSJ 2010). It should be noted that some of these data may need to be updated by the time an MDT project is nominated in the project corridor.
- **The workshop facilitated agency trust and relationships; understanding of various agency mandates and priorities; and identification of common goals and objectives.** Regardless of the actual process outcomes, the fostering of these interagency relationships, identification of “common ground”, and discussion of what restoration projects and efforts were proposed and ongoing by each agency in the study area were very valuable for all involved agencies, and will well serve all participating agencies into the future, both inside and outside of the defined ITEEM process.
- **All agencies contributed to the process; the USFS in particular strongly contributed expertise throughout the workshop.** Most of the participating agencies dedicated considerable staff resources and time commitments to the process and project successes would not have been possible without this participation. Although unable to participate in many of the workshop preparatory meetings, the USFS dedicated a number of technical staff for the entire duration of the workshop itself and provided critical input throughout. This level of commitment and participation warrants acknowledgement as one of the process successes.

4.0 PROCESS CONCLUSIONS

The pilot study application of the ITEEM process along Highway 83 was considered successful for many reasons, including those listed above in Section 3.0 and in **Table 2**, although the outcomes were not necessarily those originally anticipated to result from strict application of the process outlined in **Chart 1**. Rather than producing a written agreement documenting a prioritized list of large-scale ecological restoration opportunities and how those opportunities would specifically apply to and offset highway-related impacts through the corridor, the outputs were much more conceptual in nature.

This conceptual-level outcome was the result of several issues, the primary of which was the projected span of 10 to 15 years between application of the ITEEM process and the actual onset of formal highway design. When originally volunteered for the pilot study, the Highway 83 projects were much closer to the nomination and pre-design stages, but were subsequently re-scheduled years into the future due to funding priorities. Resource and regulatory agencies could not firmly commit to identification or endorsement of specific “mitigation” projects for which further “impact” detail could not currently be provided (e.g., what specific impacts are being mitigated?), and that could be subject to significant species management priority or legal status changes over a 10-15 year period.

A second major issue in the project corridor that impeded the identification and prioritization of specific large-scale restoration opportunities was the recent enactment of the Montana Legacy Project; a \$510 million, 312,500-acre purchase of Plum Creek lands in order to preserve and protect fisheries and wildlife habitats, preserve traditional public access (recreation), and preserve sustainable timber harvesting in the Seeley-Swan corridor. Acquisition of these lands will occur over three years. Consequently, local resource agencies (primarily USFS, MDNRC, and MFWP) are occupied with acquiring and developing management strategies for these lands. However, restoration project opportunities are likely to materialize from these lands in the future as these management strategies are developed.

A third major issue was simply a matter of the learning curve associated with this process. As the process is new, and this pilot study was its first attempted application, many individual agency and NGO representatives were unfamiliar with it. As the process is applied to future projects and more agencies and individuals become familiar with its application, its utility and potential to provide the sought streamlining benefits to all involved agencies are likely to improve substantively. Within this context, and based on this pilot study, it is recommended that future ITEEM potential Oversight Group members (workshop participants) address the following overarching questions prior to initiating the ITEEM process:

Process “initiating” agency (the agency that initiates the ITEEM process for a given project): *Relative to the proposed project and timeline, what level of commitment and end results are needed from the other participating agencies in order to justify the effort and expense associated with this process (e.g., written agreements, specific permits, focused input, general goodwill, etc.)?*

Participating agencies: *Relative to the design stage, nature, and location of this project, to what level of participation, input and agreement can you commit in association with this process, assuming consensus is reached (e.g., written agreements, specific permits, focused input, general goodwill, etc.)?*

Straightforward answers to these questions at the process initiation stage would likely encourage realistic expectations and more confident participation from initiating and participating agencies.

Table 2: Task-Specific ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study Successes, Challenges, and Recommendations

ITEEM Task	Successes	Challenges	Recommendations
<p>1 – Oversight Group identifies boundaries of region</p>	<p>2008 proposed modifications to and clarifications regarding 2007 Highway 83 Pilot Study aquatic and terrestrial opportunity study areas were successfully resolved by IRTWG.</p>	<p>Analysis area boundaries had been determined (in 2007) prior to the onset of the pilot study, but were incorrect in the pre-study document (conflict between boundaries shown on the figure and described in the text). This required additional coordination with all agencies.</p>	<p>Ensure that analysis area boundaries are well understood and agreed-upon by all participants prior to initiating data collection and other information requests, etc.</p>
<p>2a – Participating agencies provide information 2b – Consultant compiles agency-provided issues, opportunities, and baseline information</p>	<p>Much GIS and hard-copy baseline data was available for the corridor. NGOs are very active in the corridor and were especially helpful in providing corridor data. Data, issues, and opportunities were successfully compiled.</p>	<p>Issues and opportunities were not provided by some agencies in advance of the workshop.</p> <p>Intra-agency communication between IRTWG and Oversight /Technical staff regarding the overall ITEEM pilot study, objectives, and scale was sometimes lacking, and was subject to individual agency priorities, line authority, etc. This led to apprehension, confusion and delayed response times.</p> <p>Agency participation in preparatory pre-workshop meetings was sometimes lacking. Requested provision of issues, data, and opportunities (and review responses) often lagged substantively behind requested deadlines, as dictated by conflicting priorities and the abovementioned confusion.</p> <p>The data collection effort was in some cases duplicative of recent or ongoing data collection efforts in the area.</p>	<p>Including Oversight Group (and possibly IRT) members and Technical Representatives at a focused kickoff meeting / call could facilitate initial process understanding and interagency cohesion.</p> <p>More “up-front” direction from and within each participating agency (perhaps in some cases allowing for modified line authority between various programs and offices, etc.) may facilitate intra-agency communication. Commitment, direction and flexibility from the IRT level down are critical.</p> <p>Direct contact with OG members should be increased. Conducting individual agency Oversight Group interviews / meetings prior to the workshop (possibly in lieu of IRTWG meetings) would ensure more timely process understanding and information acquisition (forgone during pilot study due to agency commitments, delayed responses, and compressed timeline).</p> <p>Duplication of data collection efforts should be minimized. Conducting data analyses (as opposed to collection) should be considered.</p> <p>Greater use of a project website would facilitate process understanding and information acquisition. It could also enable productive group interaction from remote locations, reducing time and travel commitment.</p>

ITEEM Task	Successes	Challenges	Recommendations
2c – Public open house	Two of the primary NGOs active in the project corridor attended the open house, as did Missoula County and other members of the public.	Despite placement of press releases in local newspapers and direct mailings to 40 NGOs, public participation in the open house was far less than anticipated.	In order to facilitate increased public participation, public meetings could be held in conjunction with local scheduled NGO meetings. This would also ensure that the open house would not conflict with such meetings. In addition to press releases, ITEEM representatives should consider working with stakeholders and the local media to solicit a feature story of the process in advance.
2d – Oversight Group selects final datasets to be used in workshop; contractor prepares and distributes final package to be used at workshop	Data layers were successfully screened by participating agencies using a consensus-based approach. Agreement was generally straight-forward. Final package was successfully prepared and distributed in advance of the workshop.	<p>Although all agencies provided varying amounts of project corridor data, not all agencies participated in the selection of preliminary, draft, nor final datasets to be presented on workshop maps.</p> <p>Electronic distribution of the final package met with some password-related complications regarding the FTP site.</p>	<p>All recommendations listed under 2a/2b above apply.</p> <p>Mapped data should be limited to what is truly at issue in the region of interest.</p> <p>Electronic data exchange should be simplified; eliminating passwords, etc. to the extent possible (this was rectified during the process).</p>
3a – Workshop participants identify issues and opportunities	General, course-level planning / design considerations identified for the highway project corridor will facilitate future highway project scoping, design and permitting, as well as resource agency review.	<p>Much of the first workshop day was spent explaining and clarifying the ITEEM process and scale to the Oversight Group and Technical Representatives in an attempt to alleviate the apprehension and confusion, earn trust and gain buy-in. These issues should have been resolved early in the process and were not anticipated at the workshop. The Oversight Group was more focused on landscape-level issues, while the Technical Representatives were more focused on project-scale issues.</p> <p>The three-day workshop commitment was appreciable and difficult for some agencies. Some agencies were not able to commit the same (or any) staff through the entire workshop, which made consistent engagement and issues / opportunities discussion challenging.</p>	<p>All recommendations listed under 2a/2b above apply. The group suggested possibly removing the “T” from ITEEM to shift the focus from transportation exclusively, as any agency can initiate this process. It may also help to resolve the issues of scale and agenda.</p> <p>The fact that the initiating agency is striving to financially participate in (e.g., add / leverage funds for) on-going or proposed priority ecological restoration / protection projects should be emphasized, and that any “mitigation credit” received would be tied to <u>their</u> level of participation, and not to those of other participating agencies.</p> <p>To the extent possible, the workshop should be reduced to a two consecutive day commitment.</p> <p>In advance of the workshop, a ½ day meeting could be held with OG members only to facilitate focused discussion at the upcoming workshop.</p>

ITEEM Task	Successes	Challenges	Recommendations
3b – Workshop field review	The field review of the corridor was especially helpful and provided some clarity with respect to corridor issues. It was also helpful from a “team-building”, or relationship perspective.	In retrospect, the field review may have been of even more use if conducted earlier in the workshop – but the first day of the workshop was largely spent clarifying the process itself (see 3a above)	Conducting a field review on Day 1 may help to better focus participants and unearth common ground upfront. However, this would require that participants identify opportunities to include on the field review prior to Day 1; perhaps in association with the “pre-meeting” suggested above under Task 3a.
3c – Workshop prioritization of issues and opportunities	The process identified numerous considerations to facilitate future design, and achieved consensus regarding general approaches to various issues. Specific design parameters (e.g., culvert dimensions, specific wildlife crossing structure dimensions, clear zone widths, etc.) were not discussed in detail, as actual design was projected to occur 10-15 years into the future. However, current priority areas and issues, and approaches as to how to address them, were well-discussed.	Although originally only a few years from nomination when the pilot study was conceived, the potential highway projects in the study corridor were actually too far from design (moved 10-15 years out) to facilitate discussion of specific impacts, etc. to be mitigated, and development of potential written agreements with regard to commitments. Data may be out of date by the time a project is nominated.	Choosing subject infrastructure projects that are closer to the nomination stage, but still in advance of NEPA/MEPA, would facilitate more specific discussion and, potentially, written agreements regarding planning and mitigation commitments.
3d – Workshop documentation of recommendations		There are many agency and NGO groups and area-wide restoration efforts on-going in this region (including the Montana Legacy Project), in a sense rendering the ITEEM process just “one more” effort in the area. In this case, integration of these multiple ongoing efforts is likely more critical than identification and prioritization of individual restoration or conservation projects.	Embedding the ITEEM process into advanced corridor or conservation planning studies should be considered, where appropriate and not too far in advance of project nomination (see above recommendation). Where possible, the same agency representatives should be involved in the ITEEM, NEPA, and permitting processes for purposes of continuity. Solid written records should be maintained throughout the process such that input is not lost over time.
		Financial limitations for “on-project” mitigation concepts, such as large culverts and bridges, were an issue.	Choosing a project corridor in stronger need of a multi-agency coordination effort (e.g., one that does not contain several such ongoing efforts) may make better use of and enable participating agencies to prioritize the ITEEM process. Opportunities for all ITEEM agencies to participate (financially, in-kind, etc.) in creative solutions to financial “on-project” mitigation concepts should be explored. Need for continuing consultation with field-level staff (typically Technical Representatives)

ITEEM Task	Successes	Challenges	Recommendations
			during a future project “design” stage should be stressed.
3e – Workshop establishment of success measures	This activity was not completed at the workshop.	Not completed at the workshop, as specific “project-level” opportunities were not brought forth, and many participants had to leave the workshop prior to the discussion of success measures. Rather, some general partnership opportunities were identified, for which success measures could ultimately be developed upon further investigation and “scoping” of specific projects that could arise from these opportunities.	Establishment of success measure is most pragmatic when very specific opportunities (e.g., projects) have been discussed, proposed, and agreed-upon. With respect to subsequent application of the process, very preliminary draft success measures could be requested of agencies along with issues and opportunities. General opportunity and ITEEM process success measures were developed during the December 2009 follow-up meeting, and are included in Appendix A .
4a & b – Draft workshop report	<p>Internal draft, agency review draft, and public draft outcomes reports completed. Internal draft and agency review draft process reports completed.</p> <p>Agency verbal comments on draft reports were gathered at a December 2009 follow-up meeting, and followed up with written comments. This worked well and ensured comments were not missed.</p>	One report detailing both the pilot study process and the outcomes would likely be lengthy and cumbersome to digest.	Two ITEEM reports were issued: one evaluating the ITEEM process itself (this report), and one that documents actual outcomes in the Seeley / Swan corridor resulting from the Highway 83 pilot study (PBSJ 2010). Issuance of two separate reports allows for more efficient tracking and follow-up of Highway 83 outcomes and overall ITEEM process refinement, without mixing the two into one larger, potentially more cumbersome report.
5 – Final workshop report	Final outcomes and process reports completed.		Gathering initial comments on draft reports via a follow-up meeting facilitates participation and comment capture.
6 – Periodic Oversight Group meetings	A productive follow-up meeting was conducted in December 2009, and another is scheduled for June 2010.	A primary challenge is determining how (or whether) to continue this coordination process within the pilot study corridor. Should it continue as “ITEEM”, or can coordination and pursuit of opportunities be continued through existing local agency or NGO working groups and local opportunity “champions”?	<p>A continued “check-back” schedule should be developed.</p> <p>Once the process is largely completed, transfer of the coordination and pursuit of opportunities associated with the ITEEM process to existing local agency or NGO working groups and locally-identified opportunity “champions” should be considered.</p>

The discussed challenges aside, the pilot study process resulted in enhanced interagency understanding of missions, mandates, and processes; fostered interagency and agency-NGO relationships; facilitated the gathering of valuable public and agency input relative to the Highway 83 corridor and future highway design; and identified several general partnership opportunities for further pursuit that would meaningfully compliment ongoing large-scale restoration efforts and promote good will between MDT/FHWA and the resource and regulatory agencies. A follow-up meeting between the participating agencies was conducted in December 2009, and another is scheduled for June 2010. The group plans to determine how to transition the Highway 83 ITEEM process from MDT to a more permanent local NGO (or other options) for continued follow-up and outcome implementation.

Additional primary recommendations are summarized below. Recommendations by ITEEM Task are provided in **Table 2**.

- The group suggested possibly removing the “T” from ITEEM to shift the focus from transportation exclusively, as any agency can initiate this process. It may also help to resolve the issues of scale and agenda.
- More “up-front” direction from and within each participating agency (perhaps in some cases allowing for modified line authority between various programs and offices, etc.) may facilitate intra-agency communication.
- Firm commitments to participate in the full workshop should be obtained from all attendees.
- Direct contact with the Oversight Group should be encouraged, as opposed to working exclusively through the IRTWG. Including Oversight Group (and possibly IRT) members and Technical Representatives at the kickoff meeting would facilitate initial process understanding and interagency cohesion. Conducting individual agency Oversight Group interviews / meetings prior to the workshop (possibly in lieu of IRTWG meetings) would ensure more timely process understanding and direct information acquisition. In advance of the workshop, a ½ day meeting could be held with OG members only to facilitate focused discussion at the upcoming workshop.
- To the extent possible, the workshop should be reduced to a two consecutive day commitment.
- Conducting a field review on Day 1 may help to better focus participants and unearth common ground upfront.
- Choosing subject infrastructure projects that are close to the nomination stage, but still in advance of NEPA/MEPA, would facilitate more specific discussion and, potentially, written agreements regarding planning and mitigation commitments. Embedding the ITEEM process into advanced corridor and conservation planning studies (e.g., MDT corridor studies, USFS Forest Plan revisions, etc.) should be considered, where appropriate and not too far in advance of project nomination.
- Choosing a project corridor in strong need of a multi-agency coordination effort (e.g., one that does not contain several such ongoing efforts) may make better use of and enable participating agencies to prioritize the ITEEM process.

- Need for continued consultation with field-level staff (typically Technical Representatives) during a future project “design” stage should be stressed.
- Flexibility should be maintained in future applications of the process to allow for corridor-specific management, resource, data collection, and public interest settings.

5.0 REFERENCES

- Hardy, A.R., James, C.J., and T.G. Burch. 2007. Developing the “Integrated Transportation and Ecological Enhancements for Montana” (ITEEM) Process: Applying the Eco-Logical Approach. Prepared for: Federal Highway Administration, Montana Division Office, Helena, MT. Western Transportation Institute - Montana State University (WTI), Bozeman, MT. 43 pp.
- Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan (PBS&J). 2010. Outcomes Report - Integrated Transportation and Ecological Enhancements for Montana (ITEEM) Process Highway 83 Pilot Study, MDT Project STPX 0002(884); CN 6438; ACCT 9702. Prepared for: Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana. 22 pp. plus appendices.

Appendix A

PRELIMINARY SUCCESS MEASURES

Process Report: ITEEM Highway 83 Pilot Study

**HIGHWAY 83 ITEEM PILOT STUDY EXAMPLE SUCCESS MEASURES and GRADING
DECEMBER 2009**

SUCCESS MEASURES

Conservation Opportunities (Ecosystem Outcomes)

- Substantive ecosystem benefits were realized. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Mitigation leveraged other resources to achieve a greater good. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Actions taken served to expedite the environmental review and approval process. 4 3 2 1 NA

Restoration Fund:

- A restoration fund of meaningful size (____ dollars) was established by ____ (date). 4 3 2 1 NA
- A mechanism to access restoration funds was developed and adopted by ____ (date). 4 3 2 1 NA
- Funding was received from ____ (number) of sources. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Funding was leveraged to bring additional funding to restoration projects. 4 3 2 1 NA
- The parameters for using the funds were clear and meaningful. 4 3 2 1 NA
- ____ (number) of projects were undertaken and completed. 4 3 2 1 NA
- MDT received credit for its participation in the fund. 4 3 2 1 NA

Advance Remedies:

- Fish passage for ____ age classes of ____ species during _____ (dates) was provided at the Highway 83 crossing of Benedict Creek. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Riparian restoration was implemented along the north Clearwater River bank adjacent to the MDT maintenance yard. 4 3 2 1 NA
- ____ (number) of potential sites improved. 4 3 2 1 NA
- ____ (number) of entities/agencies participated in the remedies. 4 3 2 1 NA
- The remedies made cost-effective use of available resources. 4 3 2 1 NA
- MDT received credit for its participation in this effort. 4 3 2 1 NA

ITEEM Process

Data Assimilation:

- Project study area was clearly identified. 4 3 2 1 NA
- % of data received by proponent by the agreed-upon date. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agency data were presented to proponent in usable formats. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Maps produced by proponent were usable and contained appropriate data. 4 3 2 1 NA
- % of agencies participating in providing data, as applicable. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agencies provided data that were “new” to other agencies. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Data revealed potential issues and opportunities. 4 3 2 1 NA

Workshop Preparation:

- Participants received preparatory materials in advance of the workshop. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Materials produced by proponent were usable and contained appropriate data. 4 3 2 1 NA
- % of participant agencies attending preparatory meetings. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Participants were prepared for discussion and decisions. 4 3 2 1 NA
- If desired by Group, pre-workshop interviews were conducted and useful. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Participants informed/consulted with others within their respective agencies in order to bring agency perspective and ideas to the table. 4 3 2 1 NA

Coarse-Scale Identification of Issues and Opportunities:

- Proponent adequately solicited preliminary issues and opportunities. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Preliminary issues and opportunities were provided to proponent according to agreed-upon schedule. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Preliminary issues/opportunities were realistic and appropriate relative to the process context. 4 3 2 1 NA

- Preliminary issues/opportunities were considered in sufficient advance detail by agencies to facilitate field review. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Appropriate public input was received. 4 3 2 1 NA

Field Review to Refine Issues and Opportunities:

- There was adequate time in the field review to visit the “project” as well as opportunities. 4 3 2 1 NA
- % of the highest-priority opportunities reviewed. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agency “sponsors” of specific opportunities were prepared to guide Group to and discuss the opportunities in sufficient detail. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Field review participants learned useful information. 4 3 2 1 NA

Prioritization Approaches:

- A set of criteria for prioritization of issues and opportunities was agreed-upon. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Issues were prioritized by the group. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Opportunities were prioritized by the group. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Consensus was achieved regarding issues. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Consensus was achieved regarding opportunities. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Prioritization led to initiation of action. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Success measures were developed / approved by the group. 4 3 2 1 NA

Documentation and Reporting:

- Reports adequately captured the results of the process and outcomes. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agency comments were received by proponent according to the agreed-upon schedule. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Reports were delivered to the Group according to the agreed-upon schedule. 4 3 2 1 NA

Agency Representation and Involvement:

- All agencies that agreed to participate were meaningfully engaged in the process. 4 3 2 1 NA
- The appropriate agency representatives were designated to the process. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Participants informed / consulted with others within their respective agencies in order to bring agency perspective and ideas to the table. 4 3 2 1 NA

Agency Follow-Through on Commitments:

- A check-back meeting schedule was developed. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agency follow-through occurred relative to designated tasks. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Follow-through was conducted per agreed-upon timeframes. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Agency commitments were honored. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Proponent commitments were honored. 4 3 2 1 NA
- Recommendations that emerged from the process received agency endorsement and support. 4 3 2 1 NA

EXAMPLE GRADING SYSTEM KEY

Answer to Individual Success Measure Questions	Points
100% or Strongly Agree	4
75-99% or Generally Agree	3
50-74% or Generally Disagree	2
< 50% or Strongly Disagree	1
Not Applicable	NA

Comments: _____

