



**2014 Interagency FRM Project Workshop  
August 19-21, 2014  
Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center  
14 Mechanic Street  
Southbridge, MA**



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2014 Interagency Flood Risk Management Project Workshop brought together 116 participants to share information about interagency flood risk management projects. Participants included 62 representatives from US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), 22 staff from other federal agencies, 26 state representatives and one local government representative. During the two and a half days, participants shared project successes and lessons learned, identified and addressed project challenges, discussed project outcomes and metrics, learned about ways to enhance collaboration and leverage resources, and assessed trends and drives that may impact future projects.

Although focused more broadly on interagency flood risk management projects, many of the projects that were shared are part of the Silver Jackets Program. The Silver Jackets program has made a lot of progress in the past few years. There are now 43 active Silver Jackets chapters. There have been 91 projects initiated in 40 states addressing levee safety, nonstructural solutions and flood risk management. The program provides an opportunity to accomplish a lot with very little resources.

The workshop included five panel presentations, each focused on a different topic.

- The Federal Agency Benefits session included representatives from multiple federal agencies that discussed the benefits that their agencies get from participating in interagency flood risk management projects. Presenters from NOAA/NWS, FEMA and USGS in particular talked about how Silver Jackets directly helps them achieve their agency missions or goals and carry out agency programs. USGS highlighted the important way that Silver Jackets helps them ensure that their tools remain relevant by giving USGS staff direct access to users so the agency can understand and respond to user needs.
- The Interagency Projects session highlighted how agencies are working together to achieve a variety of outcomes through Silver Jackets and other interagency flood risk management opportunities. They stressed that Silver Jackets provides a mechanism to leverage knowledge and resources and create a culture of shared responsibility among team members. Presenters also noted that these environments also help connect local, regional, and national initiatives and identify multi-objective solutions that benefit multiple partners.
- In the Trends, Drivers and Developments session, a series of presenters shared information on new and emerging issues that may impact projects in the future. Some of the things mentioned included changes to the PL 84-99 program, new research on natural and nature-based solutions, and a more risk-based approach to levee safety.

- In the Successful Project Starts session, a group of state representatives talked about how they are identifying and initiating interagency projects. Some of the key themes that emerged through the presentations and discussions included: the need to have a long list of possible projects to choose from so that when funding is available, teams can capitalize on the opportunity; having local project champions; and constantly sharing information on funding resources.
- The Agency Resource Roundtable session helped inform participants about new or underutilized resources at various federal agencies. Some of the programs mentioned included the Community Rating System, more user-friendly programs at HUD, and the new DamWatch tool to help identify and assess dam-related flood risk.

Participants also engaged in several small and large group discussions throughout the workshop.

- The first small group discussion was focused on successful project starts. The group identified the following ideas to help ensure successful project starts: having a long list of potential flood risk management projects that could be pursued when funding is available, having a local project champion, and holding face-to-face meetings at local government facilities to engage them and learn their needs. One suggestion that emerged that is aligned with planned work on the Playbook is having a searchable database of Silver Jackets projects that could be searched to prompt ideas.
- The second set of breakout discussions focused on successful project implementation. Some of the same themes emerged as were identified in the successful project starts session. Additional themes included capturing all of the benefits of each project (beyond just flood risk management), using simple terms that everyone can understand, establishing clear boundaries and resources available from each agency, developing a strategic plan for carrying out a project, and communicating a broader Silver Jackets team vision as opposed to just a Corps vision. Participants also highlighted ways that they know projects are a success, including: if the deliverables that are produced are used, if critical facilities are maintained, if the state takes the lead, and solutions are actually being implemented.
- Participants also had in-depth discussions of key challenges they are facing and identified potential solutions to these challenges. The most critical challenges that participants identified included:
  - Preventing future at-risk development (land use policy).
  - Developing non-structural measures in a structural culture.
  - Identifying shared goal among local, state and Federal partners that will be acted upon at project conclusion.
  - Identifying definitive interagency partner resources within varying funding cycles and funding constraints.
- The final two discussion sessions were aimed at providing participants with an opportunity to develop strategies for increasing their impact on flood risk and communicating key messages from the workshop to those who could not attend.

Some of the follow-up actions that participants agreed to pursue ranged from engaging local sports figures in doing public safety announcements related to flood risk management to renewing efforts to engage local and federal agency partners.

The following award recipients were congratulated: Steve Scissons, SPA, Silver Jackets, Program Manager of the Year; Terry Zien, MVP, Silver Jackets Coordinator of the Year Award; Judy Soutiere, SPK, Silver Jackets Coordinator of the Year Award; and California as the Silver Jackets State Team of the Year.

In terms of workshop follow-up, USACE Headquarters staff agreed to reflect process improvements in the next call for proposals, review the input on challenges and identify and assess where the program can have the most impact, and brief leadership on key outcomes on the messages from the workshop. Teams and MSCs were encouraged to revisit, develop, or implement communications strategies and renew their efforts to engage partners. Everyone was encouraged to review the Silver Jackets website under development and provide their feedback and to participate on Silver Jackets teams.