



Annual Meeting of CHWA CESU

October 28, 2015

UMCES-IMET, 701 E. Pratt Street, Room 2038, Baltimore, MD 21202

Members Present: Laura Bankey, Robert Brent, Charmaine Dahlenberg, Eric Davidson, Bill Dennison, Tom Fish, Nicole Guardo, John Hom, Barbara Jenkins, Dwane Jones (conf. call), Kristin Kehrwald, Christine May, George Middendorf (conf. call), Peter Newman (conf. call), Ami Riscassi, David Velinsky, Perry Wheelock, Cheri Yost (conf. call), and Walter Zachritz.

Guests Present: Russell Hill

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Eric Davidson at 9:35 a.m. Eric welcomed the attendees, and asked attendees to introduce themselves and state their affiliations. Eric provided a brief outline for the meeting, and introduced Dr. Russell Hill. Russell, director of the Institute of Marine & Environmental technology (IMET) presented a brief PowerPoint presentation about IMET's research and associated programs, and entertained questions.

Tom Fish was introduced by Eric. Tom noted that he is positioned at the Department of the Interior, and mentioned that he participated in an interagency CESU Council meeting the day prior. The CESU Council is working to provide modest funding for the operational support of CESUs. Federal agencies will be asked to contribute \$1,800 annually to each CESU in which they participate. That rate of \$1,800 will be locked in for the next five years. Cheri Yost noted that the CESU Council asked directors for costs per tasks conducted by the CESU hosts (read: administrative head institution) to arrive at that figure, and their CESU Council's top priorities for CESUs across the nation include, updating websites, improving communications, and coordinating reviews [CHECK THIS.] Eric stated that AL has requested about \$12,000 in funding to support the CHWA CESU coordination.

Tom noted that two process changes to amendments have been made: 1) the process to approve new partners requires a standard vote but no longer requires signatures from all participating CESU institutions and agencies, rather, partners will be provided a copy signed by the host and the new partner; and 2) new changes to amendments for signatures allows for a new process for amendments as hosts can sign rather than 100% of signatures.

Tom mentioned that there was discussion at the CESU Council meeting about the development of an expert database and a national project database or project catalogue. He was asked if the catalogue could be used as an expert database, and noted that that option was being examined.

Tom asked the attendees to participate in that national CESU meeting which is scheduled for June 14-16 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV.

Cheri commended the CHWA CESU for tackling projects that the CESU Council has made national priorities, and offered her services for technical assistance.

Tom noted that changes to the OMB Circular include a provision re: federal agencies adhering to indirect cost rates. The Department of the Interior has developed new language as a result of the Super Circular. David Velinsky noted that the indirect costs are capped at 17.5%, and any federal work garnered through the CESU has to be capped at the same rate per the OMB. Tom replied that federal agencies must observe FNA unless policy is in place to allow for deviation from that rate. He mentioned that other agencies/departments haven't issued other policies to allow for deviation, and there needs to be documentation that shows the creation of policy re: the OMB Circular. Tom asked for volunteers for an Indirect Cost Rate Working Group to address this issue of direct cost or modified direct costs. David noted that administration often has issues with the fixed rates, and faculty can be discouraged from taking or applying for CESU funds. Walter Zachritz mentioned that CESUs are attractive [to Federal agencies] because of their lower indirect cost rates in this era of tightened budgets and funding cutbacks, and suggested that raising the rate could have a ripple effect in terms of discouraging the use of CESUs. Eric noted that universities and research partners are facing the same cutbacks as the Federal agencies and that indirect cost recovery is important for universities and NGOs.

Eric provided an update of the CHWA CESU. He mentioned as priorities increasing funding for agencies, improving minority institution participation, participating in national CESU director calls, overhauling the website, and establishing in-person and virtual meetings. He noted that he was surprised by the difficulty in getting data on projects funded through the CHWA CESU, and mentioned that the funding charts in the Strategic Plan are inaccurate. Participating institutions should want to know these data as a way of showing the value of the CHWA CESU. The issue was raised about how to report on funding garnered through the regional and national CESU networks. It was suggested that there be a caveat in agreement requiring the reporting of data on an annual basis. While the NPS will be working at the national level to obtain information from federal partners that can be passed down to the regional CESUs, we will request each nonfederal partner of the CHWA CESU to submit copies of the cover pages of their agreements.

Kristin Kehrwald "toured" attendees through the proposed CHWA CESU database. Attendees discussed possible improvement to the database of experts, the submission of information for inclusion in said database, and project reporting. The group discussed the value of the site from the perspective of Federal agencies.

Other items of interest posed to the group included: a tour of the National Aquarium in Baltimore at the meeting's close, the NPS's BioBlitz planned for May 20-21 in DC, a request for volunteers to serve on the planning committee for the national CESU meeting in June, and the venue for the next annual CHWA CESU meeting (The National Academy of Science, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the Shenandoah Center, and the Patuxent Research Facility).

Lunch was provided, and Dr. William Dennison, VP for Science Application for the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, presented on "The Challenge of Assessing Natural Resources Across a Dizzying Array of National Parks: Battlefields, urban parks, roadways, and natural wonders." Bill was asked by Tom and Perry to consider presenting at the national CESU conference next year, and entertained a number of questions about his national and international work.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm.