

## **MINUTES of ORBA Steering Committee Conference Call 18 May 2020**

**1. Call to Order** – approximately 1:00 PM EDT

**2. Roll Call**

**Steering Committee Members Present:** Richard Harrison, Marty Hettel, John King, Chris Lorentz, Kari Mackenbach, Heather Mayfield, Chuck Somerville, Mike Steinmaus, Harry Stone, Jeff Thomas

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Laurel Cornell, Brian Farkas, Sarah Hippensteel-Hall, Carey Johnson, Robin Peak

**ORBA Advisors Present:** Brandon Brummett, Charles Goad, Gail Hesse, Jim Lazorchak, Jordan Lubetkin, Laura Mattingly, David Wicks

- 3. Adoption of the Agenda** – Chuck (CS) requested to adopt a modified agenda, below. The proposed modifications were accepted without comment.
- a. proceed with review and approval of the minutes of the 27 April call (item 4)
  - b. proceed with a brief report from the Chair (item 5)
  - c. move to item 8a for comments from L. Mattingly and H. Stone on finalization of PAS project
  - d. move to item 8d for brief update on ORBA/ORBCRE Planning
  - e. then move to 8f for action on working group leader nominations
  - f. then move to 9b for action on ORBA Treasurer nomination
  - g. then move to 8b for ORBA SWOT analysis discussion
  - h. resume regular agenda as time allows
- 4. Review and approval of minutes of the 27 April Conference Call** – Minutes of the 27 April 2020 call were adopted as distributed.
- 5. Report from the Chairperson** (Chuck Somerville) – CS made a brief statement of thanks to those whose work led to the completion of the Ohio River Basin Strategic Plan: Laura Mattingly (USACE Project Manager), Harry Stone (ORBA Project Manager), Richard Harrison (Executive Director of ORSANCO, ORBA fiscal sponsor), Carey Johnson (Commonwealth of Kentucky, provided cash match). Harry Stone (HS) thanked members or ORBA who supported the completion of the project and everyone who provided comments on the drafts of the plan. Laura Mattingly (LM) thanked people who attended webinars and live workshops. She also thanked people who submitted comments.
- 6. Regular Reports from Other Committee Members**
- a. Financial Update (Chuck)

- b. Update on Website/Social Media (John King/Heather Mayfield) – at the end of the call, JK reported that he had posted a Tweet about Harry Stone’s interview with the Allegheny Front.
- c. Update from the AWI Liaison (Marty Hettel)
- d. Update from the ORBCRE Liaison (Chris Lorentz)

**7. Reports from Working Group Leaders**

- a. Sustainable Growth & Competitiveness (Harry Stone)
- b. Water Quality, Availability, and Management (Richard Harrison)
- c. Restoration and Protection (Sarah Hippensteel-Hall/Chris Lorentz)
- d. Enterprise and Infrastructure (Kari Mackenbach)
- e. Research & Education (Heather Mayfield/Chris Lorentz)

**8. Unfinished Business**

- a. PAS Agreement – Next Steps (H. Stone/Laura Mattingly) LM informed the group that the last day to receive comments on the plan was Friday (15 May 2020). USACE will work on addressing comments, finalizing graphics, and will then go through an internal review process. The final document is expected to be out by June 12<sup>th</sup>. HS will continue to work with LM to consider/incorporate/address comments. The draft will be circulated to ORBA Steering Committee again before it is finalized. Jeff Thomas (JT) asked if there would be additional opportunity to submit comments. LM noted that the comment period had been extended by approximately one month to June 15<sup>th</sup>, and that they would be unable to continue to accept comments. Richard Harrison (RH) noted that they needed time to consider all of the comments, but indicated that he would work directly with JT if his group had comments/edits.

b. ORBA Strategic Planning for 2020-2023

- i. ORBA Vision Statement
- ii. ORBA SWOT Analysis – CS noted that we had received one set of comments on the SWAT analysis document that had been sent out with the meeting materials. An additional set of comments was received and noted on the call by HS. The table below captures the comments that were received by the time of the call, and additional comments made during the discussions of the Steering Committee.

HS and CS asked for additional bullets to be added to the table, as well as edits or objections to the existing points.

We currently have a Vision statement, and with the completed SWOT analysis, the next step will be to set goals and determine actions that will help ORBA address the points in the SWOT table. HS volunteered to put together the next steps of the organizational planning process.

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b>  <b><i>What does ORBA do well? What unique resources can ORBA draw on? What do others see as ORBA's strengths?</i></b></p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>  <b><i>What could ORBA improve? Where does ORBA lack needed resources? What do others see as ORBA weaknesses?</i></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engagement and support from significant organizations, e.g., USACE, ORSANCO, KY, NWF, ORBCRE, EPRI, Thomas More, Marshall, and others</li> <li>- ORBA-ORSANCO (with FORE and Thomas More University) fiscal sponsorship agreement</li> <li>- Committed volunteers including some retired folks with available time</li> <li>- Periodic summits for collaboration</li> <li>- Joint meetings with ORBCRE provide synergies</li> <li>- ORBA viewed as an honest broker focused on collaborative priorities and is politically neutral</li> <li>- Some of the most active organizations within ORBA are already doing significant work in the ORB</li> <li>- There is frequent communication <i>via</i> monthly meetings of the ORBA leadership</li> <li>- The commitment of key leaders to the project who have moved ORBA's strategy forward</li> <li>- Engagement of the Fish Habitat Partnership</li> <li>- Takes a comprehensive/holistic approach to basin priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No staff to move ORBA forward; overly reliant on volunteers with limited time and limited succession plan for loss of key people</li> <li>- Limited high-level engagement from states</li> <li>- Very limited funding for outreach/action</li> <li>- Weak public relations, communications, and marketing - ORBA largely unknown</li> <li>- Limited committed membership, particularly (among major Basin states) from PA and TN, and virtually no membership from minor basin states</li> <li>- Relationships create public perception issues</li> <li>- Working groups ad hoc and limited effectiveness</li> <li>- Joint meetings dilute focus on ORBA priorities</li> <li>- Missing engagement of key organizations (e.g. US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service)</li> <li>- Some of the proposed actions within the goal areas of the strategic plan are immense and will be challenging for this organization to accomplish</li> <li>- Lack of funding, no current fundraising plan</li> <li>- ORBA's name not widely known, and may create confusion with other organizations doing similar work</li> <li>- No communication or marketing plan in place</li> <li>- Most members have not provided feedback on website</li> <li>- Messaging sometimes confusing, even internally, e.g. the Vision Statement in the SWOT document differs from the Vision Statement in the ORB Strategic Plan</li> <li>- Lack of identity as a basin (many areas within the basin don't identify with the basin)</li> <li>- Lack of ability to account for the waters of the basin</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b>  <b><i>What opportunities are open to ORBA? What trends can ORBA take advantage of? How can we turn a strength into an opportunity?</i></b></p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b> <b><i>What organizations or external factors could harm ORBA's efforts to achieve its vision? ORBA's weakness expose ORBA to what threats?</i></b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish an interagency advisory group (use restoration initiative as a first focus)</li> <li>- Encourage creation of a Council of Ohio River Basin Governors (use restoration initiative as a first focus)</li> <li>- Develop budget to address SWOTs; determine ways to secure funding for budget</li> <li>- COVID-19 creating recognition that scientific predictions can/do happen - use this to gain recognition for rare and non-linear threats</li> <li>- Focus on low hanging fruit/sustainable job creation for each goal</li> <li>- Engage to strengthen and inform the Ohio River Basin Congressional Caucus of priorities</li> <li>- Develop a fundraising plan which includes funding a staff person</li> <li>- Define a list of expectations for Working Group leaders so that they are clear on their responsibilities</li> <li>- Prioritize objectives and strategic actions under the goal areas of the ORB strategic plan according to what can be reasonably accomplished by volunteer leadership, and plan to build up from there</li> <li>- Set detailed timelines for priority goals</li> <li>- Establish additional opportunities for ORBA leadership to meet and plan outside of the ORBCRE conference</li> <li>- Leverage work on the Ohio River Recreation Trail</li> <li>- Leverage broad group of stakeholders that exist in the basin (e.g. NWF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COVID-19 creating huge national debt sucking up federal, state, and private funding for Basin-wide priorities</li> <li>- Lack of ORB “crisis” to galvanize support, particularly among states, for strategic priorities</li> <li>- ORSANCO’s financial trends and ORBCRE’s leadership transition threaten some of ORBA’s key relationships/strengths</li> <li>- Opposition to ORBA as the lead for regional planning and/or opposition to regional planning</li> <li>- Rotations of commanders in USACE make it difficult to ensure a consistent commitment and focus on ORBA’s efforts</li> <li>- Covid-19 pandemic will use up resources among state and regional entities</li> <li>- ORBA leaders are experiencing increased workloads in their day-jobs as they respond to Covid.</li> <li>- Funding priorities of potential donors may shift in light of the pandemic.</li> </ul>
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c. ORBA Reception/Visits on Capitol Hill

d. How should ORBA/ORBCRE Meeting, Fall 2020 – CS reported that the ORBA meetings would take place on one day, Wednesday (September 30<sup>th</sup>). ORBA meetings will start around 8:00 AM and end at around 5:00 PM. Field trips that seemed to be of particular interest to ORBA members will be moved to Friday (October 2<sup>nd</sup>). The selection for the Thursday morning session will be decided on the next ORBA/ORBCRE conference call, so CS asked for thoughts and nominations for speakers.

HS reported on the ORBA meeting agenda. The schedule provides 50 minutes for each working group, which will be structured in discussion with the Working Group leaders. We propose to have panel discussions associated with the top-line ORBA goals during the ORBCRE meeting times, with technical sessions (research presentations) scheduled concurrently, but not with similar themes scheduled at overlapping times.

Heather Mayfield (HM) noted that several conferences that she normally attends in the fall, have already made plans to go virtual. She asked for thoughts on moving toward planning for a virtual meeting now. John King (JK) noted that his conferences are planning for virtual meetings as a plan B. JT mentioned that his meeting in September had been changed to virtual. Chris Lorentz (CL) reported that the American Fisheries conference in August had just decided to go virtual. Sarah Hippensteel-Hall (SH) noted that large meetings have gone online, and that it is possible to create a meaningful online conference. HM noted that changes to school schedules could also make it difficult for some people to attend a face-to-face meeting. SH made the point that a virtual meeting could increase the likelihood of attracting a high-profile plenary speaker, and that more people with limited travel budgets will be able to attend in a virtual format. Jim Lazorchak (JL) said that his agency did not consider travel to conferences to be essential, which could also limit face-to-face attendance. JL mentioned the possibility of a hybrid meeting, in which some attendees could be present face-to-face and others could join *via* an online meeting platform.

CS asked if anyone on the call had experience controlling access to an online meeting. HM said that she would reach out to the leadership of the River Rally to learn how they managed access to their meetings. He asked again for thoughts on an appropriate plenary speaker for the meeting.

At the end of the call, CS called for ideas on a plenary speaker for the meeting and for proposals on sessions to be scheduled during the meeting.

- e. Seeking Partnerships with Mitigation Banks
- f. ORBA working groups and group leaders – discussion of nominees and selection of leaders. CS noted that Working Group leaders are appointed by the Steering Committee, and asked HS for clarification of whether the process required a vote or would be determined by consensus.

HS said that the bylaws are not specific on the process of appointing Working Group leaders. We currently have nominations for leaders of five of the Working Groups. HS recommended that we ask for any objections to any of the nominations. If no reservations are expressed, then the slate of nominees would be adopted by consensus. If any objection is raised, without specifying what the objection is, then the Steering Committee members could stay on the call in executive session to reach consensus on the appointment of group leaders.

CS read the names of the nominees for each of the Working Groups (Richard Harrison for Abundant Clean Water; Marty Hettel for River Transportation & Commerce; Jordan Lubetkin for Healthy & Productive Ecosystems; Heather Mayfield for Knowledge & Education Informed Decisions; and David Wicks for Nature-Based Recreation), and asked if there were any objections to adoption of the slate as a group. No objections were heard, and the slate of nominees was adopted by consensus.

HS thanked the new Working Group leaders, and reminded them that they are voting members of the Steering Committee.

g. Steering Committee Talking Points and Guidance

**9. New Business**

- a. Next SC Call – normally 22 June 2020 at 1:00 PM EDT
- b. Other – nomination of Kari Mackenbach for ORBA Treasurer. CS thanked Kari for her willingness to step into a new leadership role with ORBA. He noted that Kari has been engaged with ORBA from the beginning.

Kari (KM) reiterated that she had been engaged with ORBA for many years and that she was excited about the opportunity to remain engaged at a time when the organization was about to move to a higher level of activity. KM thanked the group for the opportunity to continue working with ORBA.

CS asked for any objections to Kari's nomination to serve as Treasurer of ORBA. No objections were heard, and Kari was officially named Treasurer.