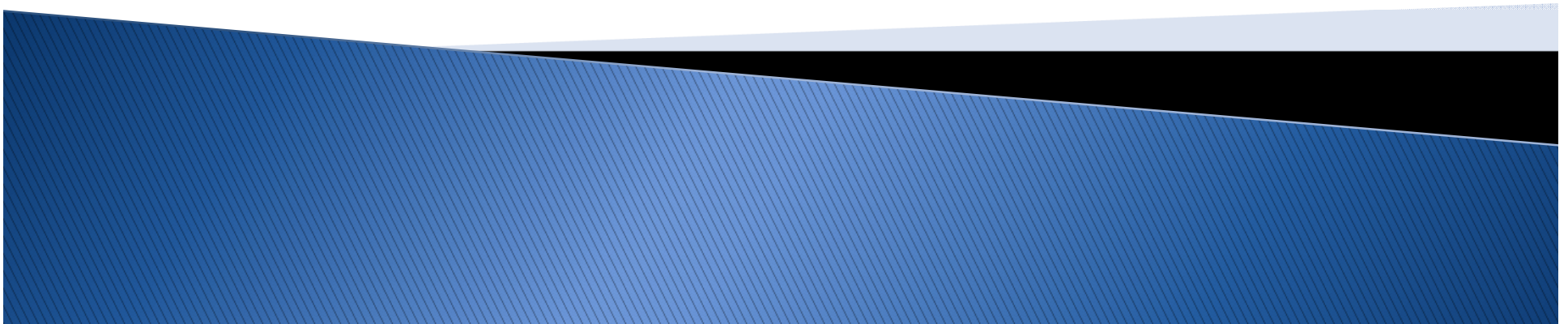


# Merger Effective Strategies

Interagency Forum Presentation  
December 11, 2014



# Background + Aim

- ▶ Summer 2014

- Merger Management Team (MMT) discuss the need for an initiative aimed at improving NEPA/Section 404 Merger process.

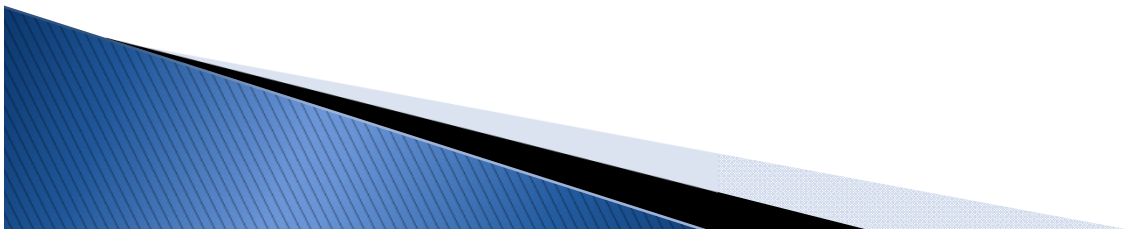
- ▶ September 2014

- Workgroup comprised of NCDOT Merger Team members.



# Merger Effective Strategies Workgroup

- ▶ Jennifer Harris, NCDOT
- ▶ Andy Williams, USACE
- ▶ Ron Lucas, FHWA
- ▶ Dr. Cynthia Van Der Wiele, USEPA
- ▶ Marella Buncick, USFWS
- ▶ Marla Chambers, NCWRC
- ▶ David Wainwright, NCDWR



# Workgroup Activities: Review Process

1. Merger Surveys
2. Facilitation Training Takeaways
3. Merger Roles and Responsibilities
4. Merger 01 Procedures Manual
5. Public Service Code of Conduct



# Effective Strategies: Focus Areas

- ▶ Merger Screening
- ▶ Merger Meeting Packet Delivery
- ▶ Merger Meeting Packet Content
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Keeping Meetings on Task and Point



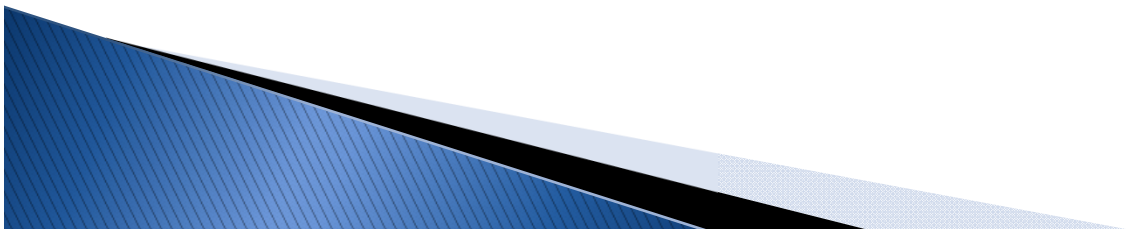
# Effective Strategies: Merger Screening

- ▶ Review *Merger Guidelines* to ensure consistency in screening criteria.
- ▶ Inclusion of a project (or not) into Merger process.
- ▶ Address Merger screening procedures at a future Interagency Meeting



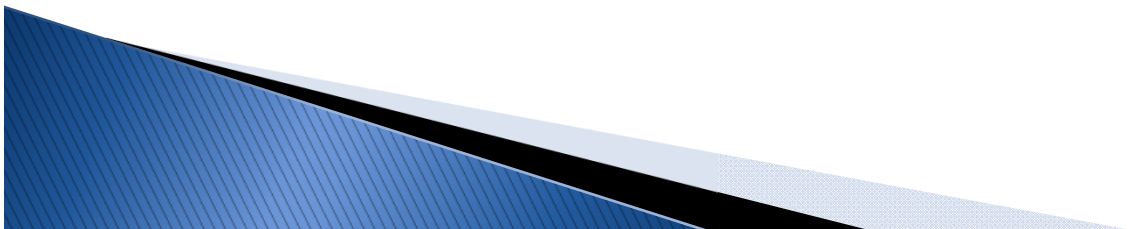
# Effective Strategies: Merger Screening

- ▶ Potential role for MMT—
  - Perform a periodic review of projects and screen for inclusion (or not); provide rationale for decisions.



# Effective Strategies: Meeting Packet Delivery

- ▶ Send out 3 weeks prior to meeting.
- ▶ Provide URL link along with Outlook meeting requests / updates.





# Effective Strategies: Meeting Packet Content

- ▶ YouTube Video- develop an overview of the meeting packet/material for team members to view.



# Effective Strategies: Meeting Packet Content

- ▶ Standardize format of Merger packet content.
- ▶ Discuss merger packet information needed for the next concurrence meeting.



# Effective Strategies: Meeting Packet Content

- ▶ NCDOT + Consultant Team
  - How will the team use this information? How will this information aid the team in decision-making / achieving consensus?
  - QA/QC all data included in the merger meeting package!
- ▶ NCDOT
  - Conduct an internal review of what types of studies/ modeling are typically performed and the corresponding data provided.



# Effective Strategies: Meeting Packet Content

## ▶ NCDOT

- Meet FHWA representative one-on-one to discuss project and appropriate packet content for CP1.
- Coordinate with USACE to assess potential for incorporating SOFEA info/format into Merger packets.



# Effective Strategies: Communication

- ▶ Pre-Meeting Communication among Project Sponsors + Consultant Team
  - Plan out meeting agenda and content.
  - Discuss potential benefit of site meeting prior to CP2A.



# Effective Strategies: Communication

## ▶ Pre-Meeting Communication

- Send summary of key milestones, actions, updates, etc. on projects that have not met in awhile.
- Consider holding update / status / informational type meeting before scheduling a CP meeting.



# Effective Strategies: Communication

## ▶ Pre-Meeting Communication

- Schedule a meeting with *new* Inter-Agency team members prior to a Merger meeting.
- Consider holding update / status / informational type meeting before scheduling a CP meeting.



# Effective Strategies: Communication

## ▶ Post-Meeting Communication

### ◦ NCDOT Project Manager

- Provide Merger meeting minutes to team in a timely fashion.
- “Ride herd” on follow-up action items identified during Merger meeting.
- Report back to Merger team on the status of action items.





# Effective Strategies: Communication

## ▶ General Communication

- Establish “project store” to post information.
- Establish NCDOT Point of Contact to contact regarding new agency representative and their contact info.
- Start a project “blog” to post updates, status, upcoming events, etc.



# Effective Strategies: Keeping Meetings on Task / Point

- ▶ Plan out meeting to ensure that—
  - “Right” topics are covered;
  - Sufficient time is allocated for effective discussion among team.
- ▶ Agenda outline with time allocated for each topic.
- ▶ Review agenda at beginning of meeting.
- ▶ Create ‘parking lot’ during meeting for off–topic or out of sequence discussions.
- ▶ Commit to addressing ‘parking lot’ issues to determine best course of action.



# Effective Strategies: Keeping Meetings on Task / Point

- ▶ Use a timekeeper (as needed).
- ▶ Collectively use facilitation skills to ensure meeting time is used effectively.
- ▶ Allow flexibility in meeting format and expectations/outcomes to allow questions, raise concerns, and enable meaningful team discussion.
- ▶ Collaborative spirit; good attitude towards questions.
- ▶ Sidebar conversations are sometimes effective.



# Effective Strategies: Keeping Meetings on Task / Point

- ▶ Get to meetings early / on-time.
- ▶ Ensure audio/visual equipment is fully operational.
- ▶ Make sure call-in members have same info as other attendees.
- ▶ Check that remote participants can hear meeting.
- ▶ Remind call-in attendees to mute phones.



# Effective Strategies: Miscellaneous

- ▶ Review Merger 01 periodically—
  - Be familiar with procedures.
  - Aid in ID'ing internal issues.
  - ID areas for revision/clarification
- ▶ Merger documents– Roles & Responsibilities, Guidelines, Effective Strategies– should be accessible to all team members.



# Conclusion

- ▶ Every project is different– the scope, the constraints, and the personnel involved.
- ▶ Different tools are needed for different situations.
- ▶ The strategies identified may provide the tools you may need in the near future.
- ▶ **Creating a more efficient decision making process!!**





*Questions???*

