

VIRTUAL SEDIMENT ACTION COMMITTEE

Charter – April 25, 2013 – John R. Gray, Office of Surface Water

This document authorizes the formation of a Virtual Sediment Action Committee (VSAC) and describes its vision, membership, and mode of operation.

AUTHORITY: VSAC is hereby formed as a permanent committee under the authority of the U.S. Geological Survey, Water Mission Area, Office of Surface Water (OSW). The USGS Office of Water Quality, National Research Program, Coastal and Marine Geology Program, selected Science Centers, and other USGS Mission Areas and entities involved in sediment data-collection and/or geomorphological activities are invited to be VSAC participants, collaborators, or advisors, as appropriate and arranged. Additionally, mutually beneficial collaboration with non-USGS organizations, including the Subcommittee on Sedimentation and Federal Interagency Sedimentation Project, and Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrological Science, Inc., and other public, private, and/or international entities is encouraged as deemed appropriate.

The OSW retains the sole right to modify this Charter.

VISION: Consistent with the charge of the original Sediment Action Committee (see “background”), VSAC will serve as a “good sounding board to the OSW on fluvial sediment and geomorphology issues germane to the USGS and those who rely on USGS data.” VSAC will:

1. identify, prioritize, address, and attempt to resolve current technical and policy issues associated with fluvial sediment and geomorphology germane to the USGS and its collaborators and customers,
2. endeavor to anticipate future technical challenges and policy issues,
3. formulate future goals for USGS sediment and geomorphology programs, and
4. identify and advocate the ways and means to resolve present and future technical and policy issues, and to achieve the prioritized goals.

SCOPE: VSAC will focus on issues and challenges to USGS sediment programs, including those that have a bearing on water-quality, geomorphology, and perhaps other issues accepted by VSAC for consideration. When in doubt, the OSW will assist in delimiting VSAC’s scope.

MEMBERSHIP: An Executive Director representing and reporting to the OSW will select and chair a Technical Board (TB). The TB, of no specified size but probably less than ten, will function as a standing committee comprised of nationally recognized sedimentologists and geomorphologists who are willing to participate in VSAC without the requirement for routine support.

A VSAC Fluvial sediment Interest Group (FIG) – the more populous the better – will include any USGS employee who opts to join, plus others as determined acceptable by the TB. Those willing to lead or participate in a VSAC Temporary Thematic Workgroup and whose nomination (including self-nomination) is approved by the Executive Director become members of the FIG. FIG membership can, at the discretion of the member and the Executive Director, continue after participation in a Temporary Thematic Workgroup that has completed its assigned task. The OSW through the Executive Director retains the authority to add or remove TB and FIG members as apropos. No routine support is provided to FIG members. Non-USGS employees may participate in a FIG as affiliate members if approved by the TB.

Temporary thematic workgroups under VSAC will be comprised of interested and topically knowledgeable hydrographers participants. Each Temporary Thematic Workgroup is led by one person designated by the TB; the leader is usually she/he who proposed the thematic topic. Temporary thematic workgroups serve for the duration of time it takes from issue identification through submission of a proposed resolution to the Technical Board and subsequent acceptance or rejection of the resolution.

MODE OF OPERATION: It is anticipated that the large majority of VSAC business will necessarily be transacted by remote audio-visual means to include phone conferences, webinars, and other means for effective communication among and within VSAC entities (although the VSAC might include face meetings when the congregation is serendipitously organized for another purpose, such as a USGS data or sediment conference where many VSAC members might already be attendance). Once identified and formed, each Temporary Thematic Workgroup deliberates largely autonomously on a timetable mutually agreeable with workgroup members and the TB to produce and submit a written document on the issue-at-hand that:

1. Adequately describes the background/history of the issue, and its relative urgency, if any,
2. Evaluates the salient issues that any potential solution must take into account,
3. Indicates the level of agreement within the group (i.e., were outcomes determined unanimously, by majority decision, etc.),
4. Identifies and prioritizes potential solutions based on technical tractability, cost, and other criteria, and
5. Provides one or more recommendations to the Technical Board on which, if any, of the identified potential solutions should be adopted.

The TB, in turn, evaluates the findings and any recommendations from a Temporary Thematic Workgroup, and decides by majority vote to accept or reject any specific recommendation(s) (in the event of a tie vote, the Executive Director will cast the deciding vote). Accepted recommendations are submitted to the OSW for concurrence, modification, or rejection. Those accepted by the OSW may be codified and advertised as either interim or permanent decisions through the OSW Note series or a Technical Memorandum, respectively.

VSAC HISTORY/PREDECESSORS: The original Sediment Action Committee (SAC) was formed in the 1980s within a year or two after (and in part as a response to sedimentation issues associated with) the 1980 Mt. St. Helens eruption. The original SAC had at its disposal \$250,000 annually allocated by the USGS Volcano Hazards Program, administered from the Cascades Volcano Observatory, Vancouver, WA. SAC's mission was to function as a "good sounding board [on USGS sediment issues] for the Office of Surface Water."

By the mid-to-later 1990s, with the streams draining Mt. St. Helens carrying but a small percentage of their immediate post-eruption sediment loads, already-diminished SAC funding was terminated. Then-Chief of the Office of Surface Water, Tom Yorke, abolished the SAC in or about 1998.

Not surprisingly, the types of issues addressed by the SAC persisted after the SAC's abolishment. A meeting of a temporary Sediment Action Committee -- the 1st Ad Hoc SAC -- was held in December 6-7, 2001, at the USGS National Training Center in Lakewood, CO. The second such meeting was convened in January 2008 at the Arizona Water Science Center, Tucson. Summaries from the first two Ad Hoc SAC meetings (in the case of the 1st, a draft summary is all that persists; a final summary with recommendations accepted by the Office of Surface Water resulted from the 2nd meeting) are available at: <http://water.usgs.gov/osw/techniques/sediment.html#adhoc>