**Interagency Coordination Meeting**

(June 2017)

This bulletin is to serve as a guidance document for Department of Transportation staff on the purpose and processes of the Interagency Coordination Meeting, (previously called the LEAN/PMM meeting).

**Background:**

In the summer of 2012, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) held a joint LEAN process to streamline the acquisition of environmental permits because there is wide recognition of how this adversely affects project delivery. The most significant interagency realization during this process was that the DOT often did not involve DEEP until just prior to permit submission, at the semi-final design stage. Typically, many decisions relating to the project scope and impact had already been made at that time; subsequent changes to the design for permitting reasons or otherwise were highly undesirable, possibly delaying project delivery. As a result, DOT and DEEP agreed to begin holding monthly screening meetings together on individual projects earlier in the design process. These meetings offer the opportunity to daylight environmental concerns early, have a recurring forum for engineers to resolve environmentally-related issues as they arise, promote better and more continuous communication between the agencies and to document the discussions and decisions made. All of these factors should allow the DOT and DEEP to improve their respective business practices by enhancing project delivery and more efficient and streamlined environmental permitting.

**What is the Interagency Coordination Meeting?**

Interagency meetings are held at the DOT Headquarters building, on the third Thursday of each month (unless circumstances require rescheduling.)   The meeting is a project-oriented face-to-face dialogue between Department engineers (including consultant engineers) and regulatory agency staff.  It is an open forum which gives engineers the opportunity to discuss projects early in the design phase, specifically those projects with permitting/environmental issues, alternative-impact tradeoffs, or those with unique challenges and gives the regulatory agencies early introduction to the projects that will ultimately require permits.  Discussions at these meetings often balance environmental constraints, engineering design and project delivery issues covering a wide variety of topics that may affect projects (mitigation, safety, schedule, best management practices, constructability, M&PT, construction cost, “permitability”, local concerns, etc.). The intent is to have a full and complete vetting of all issues, based on available information, in an attempt to deliver the transportation capital improvement while making the best environmental recommendations and documenting the decisions.

**Who is at the meeting?**

Interagency Meetings are attended by staff from the various regulating agencies: Connecticut DEEP staff from IWRD, OLISP, Fisheries and sometimes Flood Management, Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), sometimes the EPA, US Fish & Wildlife, as well as DOT staff from the Office of Environmental Planning (OEP), Engineering, Environmental Permit Coordination Unit (EPC) and Hydraulics & Drainage.

**LEAN/PMM Meeting vs Interagency Coordination Meeting**

Previously, the meeting between the DOT and regulating agencies was divided into two parts - LEAN and Project Manager’s Meeting (PMM). The LEAN portion of the meeting was typically for projects in preliminary development, with the PMM portion generally utilized when a project was nearing permit submission. The Interagency Meeting now combines these two previous meetings to enable a more robust discussion of project level environmental issues and a consolidated and efficient approach to the subsequent guidance provided. The information presented by engineers at Interagency Meetings should enable more informed decisions to be made that endure through the environmental permitting process and subsequent construction phase of any given project.

**When should you go to a meeting?**

Generally, every project requiring environmental permits should be presented at an Interagency Meeting. Projects may need to be presented more than once through their design development depending on the complexity of the environmental impacts and/or direction given at a prior meeting. A project may be identified for a meeting as a result of a PNDF Part 2 meeting, recommendations based on the 30% design reviews, monthly solicitations to Engineering managers, or by recommendation of OEP/EPC.

Presentations to Interagency Meetings may be made at various stages in the design phase but are generally made at either of two different points of a design:

1. Conceptual/Preliminary Design stage:
	* to help decide between alternatives and discuss associated consequences;
* ask a specific question;
* discuss best management practices/potential mitigation requirements that should be incorporated into a project;
	+ to discuss expected permits/authorizations and establish a preliminary time frame for obtaining permits.
1. Just prior to semi-final/permit preparation/submission:
* to verify the permits or authorizations that will be required;
	+ to make sure that everyone is on the same page and to familiarize regulators with projects that they will soon see as permits; and
	+ to hopefully shorten permit review iterations/timeframes.

The two groupings above contain a sampling of reasons a project may be on the agenda and is not intended to be all inclusive.

Each project on the agenda will be given a time slot, based on complexity of the project for presentation and discussion that will typically be 30 minutes.

**Getting on the Agenda**

A detailed agenda will be formulated a few weeks before each month’s Interagency Meeting, listing the specific projects along with FDP, a short project description and the issue/goal to be discussed. (An example is attached below.)

Projects proposed to be on an upcoming agenda should be identified three (3) weeks in advance of the meeting to provide sufficient time to prepare a presentation and produce a final meeting agenda. (The meeting schedule and a sample agenda are provided below.) It is expected that agendas will be sent out 2 weeks before the meeting with ProjectWise links to any available review information.

 

 Meeting

 schedule

Engineers should provide project descriptions, design plan pdfs, draft PowerPoint presentations, and other pertinent information to OEP/EPC at the time that the agenda is being formalized about two weeks before the meeting.  This should allow DEEP and USACE staff to become familiar with the project related issues and be more able to make decisions at the Interagency Meeting.

**What to bring to the meeting/presentation**

Because all the different regulatory agencies are represented, it is important that Interagency Meetings are productive and allow complete and lasting decisions to be made.  Therefore, it is imperative that engineers come prepared for the meeting.  The project manager/engineer is responsible for the presentation at these meetings. Please be sure to bring proper staff representation that is able to answer expected technical questions (ie: hydraulics/drainage engineers, structural engineers, environmental scientist if your consultant did the identification/reports.) Sometimes city/municipal officials or staff may attend. (If a municipal official is present, it is requested that the Project Manager introduce them at the start of the meeting.)

A concise yet comprehensive PowerPoint presentation is highly recommended. It should summarize all pertinent project information, and present photos and resource maps. Meetings are held in a smart room so that Department drives/networks, USB ports, ProjectWise, and Google Earth can be accessed.  It has been found to be good practice to have the ability to toggle between your PowerPoint presentation, Google Maps and Design Plan pdfs – to be able to move around and zoom in for questions.

The information presented by engineers at the Interagency Meetings should be complete, with the goal of enabling final decisions to generally be made at the meeting. A checklist-style guide is provided (below) for PowerPoint presentations for Interagency Meetings to help engineers be concise, complete and consistent. Certainly, the information presented in your presentation also must be tailored to your specific project, its stage of development, location/resources and what permits you need. (Samples of “good” PowerPoint presentations will also be provided to engineers)



**Pre-meeting Discussions on Presentations**

In order to ensure consistency and completeness, EPC will look over presentation material prior to the Interagency Meeting and may give additional guidance if needed. If suggestions are numerous or best transmitted in person, an informal meeting may be scheduled to review the presentation with OEP, H&D and EPC - offering suggestions based on past experience and more familiarity with regulatory staff.

**Presentations**

Presentations should be clear and concise. Please do not replay your Preliminary Design or Public Informational Meeting presentation. As stated earlier, a PowerPoint presentation with quick access to plan pdfs and google maps has been found to be very effective. Although not typically done, non-digital paper displays or paper handouts may be acceptable for a very simple project or for one returning with one minor issue to discuss.

Please keep the time allotted for your presentation in mind. Plan your slides and detail accordingly to allow for both your presentation and questions/discussion with regulatory staff afterwards.

**The Municipal portion of the Interagency Meeting**

Following the monthly Interagency Meeting, a related meeting will be held. The intent of this meeting is to provide a forum and guidance for town staff to discuss municipal projects in the **State-Local Bridge** and the **LOTCIP** programs with the regulatory agencies. At this meeting, town staff or the Town’s engineer present their projects to DEEP IWRD/DEEP Fisheries staff, and USACE staff. The only representation from the Department will be EPC staff. This portion of the Interagency Meeting allows Municipalities the opportunity to comply with new 401 Water Quality Certification requirements. If it is determined that a Town project should follow this process, the Town (or its engineer) should coordinate with CTDOT-EPC to be scheduled for an Interagency Meeting.

**Documentation of Decisions - After the Meeting is over**

The information presented and decisions made at the meeting will be preserved for future reference. It is the intent of OEP/EPC to have the documentation generated from specific projects to be included in the final permit application.

Report of Meeting: A Report of Meeting will be developed by OEP/EPC staff to document discussions/decisions made at the meeting. These will be discussed at the following month’s meeting, revised as needed and accepted.

Attendance sheets: Attendance sheets will be circulated around at each meeting, which may become important (maybe years later) to determine who was present at your presentation when a determination was agreed to.

Engineering Presentations: Presentations and any other information supplied/used for the meeting (plan sets, project descriptions…) will be saved.

The agenda, reports of meetings, attendance sheets, PowerPoint presentations, pdf plans, and other supporting information, are saved (memorialized) by EPC for future reference by DOT or regulatory staff. They can be found in the Interagency Coordination Meeting Subdirectory on ProjectWise either through the ProjectWise Explorer link or Web link below:

**ProjectWise Explorer link**[**Web link**](https://ctdot.projectwiseonline.com/SitePages/Home.aspx?location=ctdot.projectwiseonline.com%3ACTDOT&link=pw%3A%2F%2Fctdot.projectwiseonline.com%3ACTDOT%2FDocuments%2FP%7B15c5a2d4-c347-46d1-bac1-ea1e46f38fa6%7D%2F)

Please be guided by this information and distribute it to your staff and others that would benefit.   If you have any further questions, please contact Andrew Davis of the Office of Environmental Planning (OEP) at 860-594-2157 or via email at andrew.h.davis@ct.gov or Dave Harms of the Environmental Permit Coordination Unit (EPC) at 860-594-3291 or via email at david.harms@ct.gov