

IMPROVE Steering Committee Meeting Summary

July 12, 1994

Overview

A meeting of the IMPROVE Steering Committee was held at the NPS Air Quality Office in Lakewood, CO on July 12, 1994. A list of participants is attached. The primary objective of the meeting was to determine how to cope with \$100k EPA funding shortfall for the IMPROVE Network. Another important topic of discussion was the possible role of the IMPROVE Program in a national regional haze program, and the implications for funding and management of IMPROVE. Also a number of issues concerning steering committee and IMPROVE Program procedures were discussed and decisions made. A presentation was made on the status of optical, meteorological, and photographic monitoring. The remainder of the summary is organized by major topic area and does not necessarily reflect the order of discussion during the meeting.

IMPROVE Procedures

A significant change in steering committee procedures was decided upon during the meeting. The steering committee resolved to meet on a quarterly basis with at least one meeting annually to be in person, the others to be by conference call. Previously, full steering committee meetings were always in person, on roughly an annual basis. This was adequate when NPS and EPA provided most of the resources to the program, because of frequent communication between those two agencies. A greater need exists for interagency communication now that the FS and FWS are also providing substantial resources to the program.

In connection with the decision to increase the frequency of meetings, the steering committee agreed that closer tracking of administrative and technical activities committed to by steering committee members would be desirable. The principal means to carry out this tracking should be the meeting summaries, preparation of which is the responsibility of the steering committee chair. Commitments made during this meeting are summarized at the end of the meeting summary.

During the meeting Rich Fisher announced his imminent departure from FS duties for a one year period. During his absence, Ann Achesen, FS Missoula, MT and Donna Lamb, FS Washington, DC will share Rich's visibility related responsibilities. Rich also introduced Scott Copeland who was hired by CIRA to provide assistance to the FS on visibility/air quality data collected at their monitoring sites, including the IMPROVE FS sites.

Rich Fisher recommended that IMPROVE adopt a reporting approach involving three levels of reports: IMPROVE Network Annual Reports, Site Specific Annual Reports, and Regional (multi-site) Reports on an irregular schedule. The February 1993 IMPROVE report published by CIRA is an example of an annual report. A mock-up of a site specific annual report was distributed at the meeting. Its purpose was to provide an overview of the data from the optical, scene, and aerosol monitoring at each site in a way that is understandable to managers. The report format would be modular to cover different monitoring configurations at various sites and would lend itself to efficient production with much of the report produced by computer processing of data files. Regional reports are less standardized and would be produced only on an as needed basis. The steering committee agreed to the recommendation concerning reports and agreed to provide comments on the mock-up of the site specific reports to Scott Copeland.

The need to formalize the agreement of the various parties to cooperate and jointly manage IMPROVE was discussed. A subcommittee consisting of Bruce Polkowsky, Dan Ely, Sandra Silva, and Scott Archer was setup to revive and amend as needed the previous draft MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that was written many months ago but never acted upon. One issue to be resolved would be whether the state air quality organizations can be a party to such an agreement. The subcommittee is expected to report on progress by the next meeting (approximately 3 months).

NPS has produced a draft IMPROVE video that summarizes the objectives, management, operations, and data from the network. Those that have seen it believe the draft is good and the video should be put into final form and made available for distribution to interested organizations. Along similar lines, the NPS indicated that it was preparing a brief (4 to 8 page) visibility primer that summarizes in easy to understand terms visibility issues and the role of the land managers and EPA. These could be sent to those on the IMPROVE Newsletter mailing list.

John Molenar gave a brief update on the operations of the network. He indicated that cameras have been stolen at two sites, Weminuche and Okefenokee. He recommends discontinuing photographic monitoring at these sites (Weminuche has 5 years of slides & Okefenokee has 6 months). The steering group concurred. He also indicated that the new lamps now being used in the transmissometer have different aging characteristics compared to the previous lamps. This is delaying somewhat the release of transmissometer data, though by end of summer they should be caught up. John indicated that the transmissometer site path at Chiricahua should be changed to improve the measurements. The steering committee concurred.

Funding Shortfall

EPA's funding for FY94 is \$100k less than anticipated (\$90k instead of \$1M). This unanticipated shortfall was a repeat of the shortfall of the previous fiscal year, which was handled by discontinuing optical monitoring at two IMPROVE sites. This year's funding problem was identified in the spring and the response from the NPS was that two entire sites would need to be shut down to recover that cost. The optical monitoring at two IMPROVE sites was already down because of difficulties in the field (Lye Brook with icing and operator problems and E.B. Forsythe (Brigantine) to prevent sea salt damage).

In April the steering committee chair developed a draft policy to determine an equitable method for the steering committee to identify sites that would be decommissioned due to insufficient funds. By that policy the agency that was responsible for the funding shortfall was required to nominate sites that it supported for shut down; other steering committee members would also be able to nominate any site; and the steering committee would select by vote which of the nominated sites to decommission. Based upon this draft policy EPA nominated Dolly Sods and Mesa Verde to be shut down. They were selected from a list of 18 of the 30 IMPROVE sites that EPA arbitrarily identified as those it was responsible for supporting. In other words this approach requires that each site have a sole sponsoring agency that provides all of its funds. Some of the steering committee members felt that there was an inequity in this approach for deciding how to make cuts in the network. It was felt that the process which had been conducted by phone and fax up to this point would have to be addressed in a face to face meeting.

Prior to the meeting Mark Scruggs prepared two budget breakouts reflecting different approaches for determining the division of EPA's funds to the IMPROVE sites (less \$45k required for common expenses like the newsletter). In one, the EPA resources were divided to the three land management agencies based upon the number of protected Class I Areas they were responsible for (e.g., FS has 88 of the 156 areas and so would receive 56% of the EPA funds for its IMPROVE sites). The other approach divided the EPA funds equally to each of the IMPROVE sites (i.e., \$28,500 per site). Applying either of these methods, the funding provided by the FS for their IMPROVE sites is insufficient to cover their share of the expenses. This results from there having been no FS funds in the early IMPROVE years though there were many FS sites. In the last few years the FS has been contributing resources for new sites, but has not supplemented the budget to cover some portion of the cost of the original FS sites. By either of the two resource apportionment approaches prepared by Mark Scruggs, it would be appropriate to look to the FS to either reduce monitoring or to provide additional resource to cover the current resource shortfall.

After a lively discussion the steering committee rejected any approach to apportion the EPA resources to sites or agencies. Instead they decided that resources should be used in common to support sites on the basis of their individual merits and their value to the network as a whole. The discussion lead to the following conclusions.

All sites follow IMPROVE monitoring protocols can be called IMPROVE sites regardless of where they are located and who funds them.

The IMPROVE steering committee will apply a site evaluation criteria to identify the critical sites among those of member organizations and these will be the core IMPROVE network sites.

A subcommittee consisting of Scott Archer, Rich Fisher, Rich Poirot, Scott Copeland, and Joe Elkins was established to draft site evaluation criteria and to determine what should constitute an IMPROVE protocol.

During the course of the discussions Mark Scruggs indicated that in having to work up the budget breakouts for the IMPROVE network he came to the conclusion that NPS could restructure the way it calculates management costs for the IMPROVE program which would in effect reduce the \$100k shortfall this year. If optical monitoring at E.B. Forsythe and Lye Brook were not re-installed this year the cost of the IMPROVE network would be covered. The steering committee seemed satisfied that this would work as a temporary solution until site evaluation criteria were developed and applied. The practical problems which prevented optical monitoring at these sites must be resolved since they may well be reinstated at some time in the near future. John Molenaar was asked to look into solutions for both the icing and sea salts problems at these two sites.

The following funding related items were also brought out in the meeting. Joe Elkins indicated that he has prepared a proposal at the request of his management for a much expanded IMPROVE Network with an additional \$2M per year budget starting in FY96. Sandra Silva indicated that the FWS plans to conduct IMPROVE monitoring at Moosehorn, Cape Romain, Wichita Mts., and Lostwoods. Dan Ely indicated that STAPPA/ALAPCO has written a letter to EPA indicating that they felt that given all of the unfunded air quality related requirements by the federal government on states, that the 105 State Air Grants Program should not be paying for IMPROVE. Bruce Polkowsky will consider whether a response to that letter should be written which would indicate that if the IMPROVE network were to disappear, the states would have to replace it with

monitoring of a similar level of sophistication which would be expected to cost more if done on an individual state level. Rich Poirot distributed a handout to those present which indicated the status of the NESCAUM Program as well as availability of statistical methods and data developed under the auspices of NESCAUM.

Regional Haze Policy & IMPROVE

Bruce Polkowsky provided information about the potential role of the IMPROVE Network in a future policy on regional haze. As he presently envisions it, a regional haze policy might be managed by multi-state regional commissions (like the GCVTC) which would develop strategies to make progress in meeting the national visibility goal for Class I Areas (i.e., no visibility impairment from man-made sources). Ambient visibility/air quality monitoring would likely be the primary means to track progress. IMPROVE could be the model for the required monitoring program, since it has been successful in producing high quality data of the type needed to track trends and because it has well documented procedures. It would be useful for IMPROVE to formalize its management through a MOU and to prepare concise protocols and strategy documents which could be easily adopted as part of a national strategy on regional haze. The monitoring program could be a national monitoring program such as IMPROVE, or it could be programs in each of the multi-state region using the IMPROVE approach.

Commitments

All of the following are due prior to the next meeting not yet scheduled but sometime in September 1994:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Responsible Persons</u>
Prepare & distribute summary for previous steering & agenda for next meeting	Marc Pitchford
Comment to Scott Copeland on the draft site-specific report	All steering committee members
Draft & distribute an MOU for IMPROVE	Bruce Polkowsky, Dan Ely, Sandra Silva, & Scott Archer
Finalize the IMPROVE video & distribute to the steering committee	Bill Malm
Draft & distribute a site evaluation criteria & guidelines for standard IMPROVE protocols	Scott Archer, Rich Fisher, Rich Poirot, Scott Copeland, & Joe Elkins
Investigate & propose solutions to monitoring problems at Dolly Sods & Lye Brook sites	John Molenaar

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IMPROVE Steering Committee Meeting Participants
July 12, 1994

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Phone</u>
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Dan Ely	STAPPA/ALAPCO	303 692-3228
Sandra Silva	USFWS	303 969-2814
Mark Scruggs	NPS	303 969-2077
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Scott Archer	USDI-BLM	303 236-6400
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