2010 TIPS Steering Committee Meeting Summary

May 11th – 13th, 2010: Santa Fe, NM

Attendees

State Steering Committee Members:
Julian Calabrese – Montana, WIEB; Carl Campbell – Kentucky, IMCC; Larry Evans – West Virginia, IMCC; Don McKenzie – Wyoming, WIEB; Greg Melton – Arkansas, IMCC; Doug Mullins – Virginia, NAAMLP; Kathy Rossmann – Ohio, IMCC; Mark Schlimgen – Texas, IMCC; Tim Wilson – Kansas, IMCC
OSM Steering Committee Members:
Roger Calhoun – Charleston Field Office; Sarah Donnelly – Headquarters; Lou Hamm – Western Regional Office; Al Klein – Western Regional Office; Len Meier – Mid-Continent Regional Office; Roy Morrison – Headquarters; Bob Postle – Western Regional Office; Dan Rivers – Western Regional Office; Mike Robinson – Appalachian Regional Office; Ken Walker – Western Regional Office
Other OSM Employees:
Karyn Evans – Western Regional Office; Tonya Mullins – Western Regional Office; Eric Perry – Appalachian Regional Office; Steve Trujillo – Western Regional Office; Jessica Villanueva – Western Regional Office
State of New Mexico:
Jim O'Hara; Mike Tompson; Linda DeLay

Action Items:

1. **Mobile Computing Evaluation** – The value of user feedback regarding loaned and seeded equipment was emphasized. The best way to get customer feedback is through a standardized form. Current forms and policies were discussed but it was felt that better follow-up and diligent use of a standardized form is needed.

Status – The TIPS **Mobile Computing Team** is tasked with reviewing Montana's evaluation form. The team can either modify it or use their current form. This new process will be for equipment that is seeded technology or loaned. The form will be used to evaluate the worth of the property toward SMCRA uses and to report problems regarding the equipment. The Team will address this issue in June.

2. **Software Distribution Procedure** - A more reliable process for preparing and shipping new software and software updates is needed.

Status – A revised procedure has been drafted and is expected to be put in place by the end of June. This will ensure that TIPS-provided software is distributed timely and in a reliable format for states, tribes, and OSM offices.

3. **Topcon Mobile Computing Contact** - A TIPS contact person for the Topcon mobile computing devices is necessary, because of special software and connection issues.

Status – **Completed.** Min Kim, in OSM's Mid-Continent Region has been designated as the Topcon contact.

4. **Mobile Computing and Remote Sensing Team Workload** - Both the Mobile Computing and Remote Sensing TIPS efforts have great value to SMCRA applications, and are in great demand by TIPS customers. Additional personnel resources are needed to meet that increased support demand in these two critical applications.

Status – **Completed.** This issue has been raised to OSM management and additional resources will be allocated if they are available. OSM management will continue to monitor the issue.

5. **TIPS Website Update** - There is a need to update the TIPS website to provide for the download of software, satellite imagery, and applications for mobile computing. There is also a need for Web 2.0 applications such as Wikis and Blogs to disseminate information and communicate with the SMCRA customer base. The website can use a more up to date and accessible look and interface.

Status – An update of the TIPS website is underway, and the new website is planned to launch in the second quarter of FY 2011, and the Steering Committee will be advised when it does. A briefing on the progress was provided at the Steering Committee meeting.

6. **Getting Remote Sensing Imagery on Mobile Computing Devices** – There is a need to better integrate Remote Sensing technology with Mobile Computing GPS devices. Most of these devices can display satellite imagery, but only if it is compressed enough to fit on the GPS field device.

Status – TIPS is improving the TIPS website to allow download of data from the site. Once this improvement is complete, the Mobile Computing and Remote Sensing Teams will explore providing downloads of applications and data in the field. This may take two or more years to complete due to the process of getting the required IT security approvals from the Department of the Interior, and obtaining any necessary software vendor permission. The Steering Committee will be kept informed.

7. **Service Managers Workload** – TIPS Service Managers are a critical component of TIPS services. Yet, most of them serve as Service Managers as a collateral duty and simply do not spend enough time with their customers. Service Managers must spend more time with their customers to assist their customers with TIPS tools, to better understand customer needs, and to better communicate those needs to TIPS management.

Status – This issue will be brought to the attention of OSM Management for further discussion. TIPS will continue to monitor the situation with key OSM managers.

8. **Advanced Skills Courses** – Provide specialized classes for more advanced learning.

Status – **Completed.** Most Success Teams are already over-extended in course management and development, so available resources is an issue. Nevertheless, some have already begun development of advanced courses (The CAD Team has developed an advanced course covering the exchange of data with ESRI's ArcGIS format). Advanced courses will continue to be developed as time and resources allow. Otherwise the Teams will continue to offer advanced courses from the software vendors which TIPS has provided for several years. No further action is needed.

9. **Applied Exercises in TIPS Classes** - TIPS classes should continue to incorporate more applied exercises where students bring in real data to use in the classroom as examples.

Status – **Completed.** Some TIPS classes currently request that students bring work projects/data to class for applied learning. However, all course managers will be informed of the feedback received, and will be asked to encourage their instructors to request ongoing work projects from their students for incorporation into exercises. The 2010 implementation of the TIPS eLearning platform will easily facilitate instructor/student dialogue via blogs and WIKIs before, during, and after class.

10. **High Resolution Remote Sensing Imagery** – There is great demand among SMCRA offices for high-resolution aerial and satellite imagery as well as radar imagery.

Status – **Completed.** This is an **ongoing task** of the Remote Sensing Pilot Project that continues to be a high-priority initiative of TIPS. The Pilot Project is projected to be completed in May of 2011. No further action is necessary.

11. **Timely turnaround of Remote Sensing data from NGA** - To date the data obtained from the National Geospatial Intelligence agency through the TIPS Remote Sensing Pilot Project has not always been timely, and cloud cover issues have contributed to delays, especially in Tennessee. There is a need to improve the turnaround time of obtaining satellite imagery.

Status – **Completed.** Discovery and resolution of issues like this is part of the purpose of the Pilot Project. TIPS staff is in contact with the NGA to improve product delivery. No further action is necessary.

12. **Steering Committee Constituent Survey** - This year's method of delivering TIPS Constituent Reports is the best method to date. It can be improved further by developing a survey for constituents that can be sent to TIPS customers and delivered to TIPS management and the Steering Committee representatives.

Status – TIPS will offer a survey prior to next year's Steering Committee meeting through Metrics that Matter. The format will ask TIPS customers a standard set of questions concerning TIPS tools and offerings that work well and ask where improvements can be made. It will include an overall satisfaction rating with TIPS. The Steering Committee members will be provided with the draft survey instrument for comment before it is used next year.

13. **AutoCAD deployment** - There have been delays in AutoCAD 10 deployment and the stability of AutoCAD 9.

Status – This is a known issue and the **CAD Team** is tasked with developing a solution.
14. **Stand Alone Software** - Many customers have come to depend on TIPS keeping stand-alone software up to date, even when the software cannot be shared through TIPS internet licensing. When does TIPS no longer support such software?

Status – **Completed.** In the past, TIPS provided updates to the Terrasync and ArcPad mobile computing software as the updates became available. At this Steering Committee meeting, TIPS announced that these software tools provided with mobile computing devices will no longer be supported. Each Mobile Computing device provided through the "Seeding Technology" initiative will come with the Terrasync and ArcPad software, but updates will be the responsibility of the office that receives the equipment. No further action is necessary.

TIPS continues to provide access to the ten copies it owns of AquaChem software on a loan basis to those customers that need to use it. TIPS has previously decided not to make any further purchases of updates to this software. AquaChem requires a computer port-dongle to function. It is anticipated that demand for TIPS' aging copies of AquaChem will eventually disappear.

15. **TIPS Success Stories** - More TIPS success stories need to be published. This is the best way to communicate the value of the TIPS tools to SMCRA customers.

Status – **Completed.** Success Stories are routinely posted on the TIPS website. There is a constant need for more, and the TIPS Service Managers will be tasked with speaking with their customers about this need. TIPS customers are asked to be aware of this need and to help as much as possible. With the revision of the TIPS website, RSS feeds will be available for website topics. TIPS website visitors will have the option of subscribing to an RSS feed that sends notification that the Success Stories have been updated.

Constituent Reports from States

Reports from the IMCC and WIEB representatives are brought to the meeting as compiled from the constituents they represent. This feedback is summarized at the Steering Committee meeting, including the items they felt should be emphasized as services they have come to rely upon. Issues identified as areas where improvement is needed have been elevated to the action items listed above as appropriate. Positive outcomes of the TIPS Program are:

1. The **ESRI Enterprise License Agreement** is a boon to GIS use throughout the Department of the Interior and state SMCRA authorities nationwide. GIS use is critical to SMCRA-work nationwide.
2. TIPS' policy of assisting with **emergency replacement of critical hardware** originally provided by TIPS has been a successful and necessary endeavor.
3. The **support** provided by TIPS software experts via telephone and the web is critical to the success of TIPS.
4. The TIPS **Training Room** that was built by the **Alaska** SMCRA programs has proven to be a successful endeavor and should be used by the TIPS and NTTP Training programs.
5. **TIPS training** is WONDERFUL and ESSENTIAL!
6. The TIPS **Geospatial Conferences** that have been held in 2004 and 2007 have proven to be a highly successful venue for communicating the effective use of technology tools to administer SMCRA. One example is the culmination of electronic permitting and project tracking tied to electronic records keeping that has been shared by the SMCRA programs in Colorado and Montana after learning of the technology at the 2007 TIPS Geospatial Conference. This type of technology transfer among SMCRA partners must continue to be exposed.

Issues that need to be addressed for improvement:

1. Software distribution – A reliable procedure for preparing and shipping new software and software updates is needed. ***Action Item No. 2.***
2. A TIPS contact person for the Topcon mobile computing devices is necessary, because of special software and connection issues. ***Action Item No. 3.***

3. Both the Mobile Computing and Remote Sensing TIPS efforts have great value to SMCRA applications, and are in great demand by TIPS customers. A greater effort is needed to meet that increased support demand in these two critical applications. ***Action Item No. 4.***
4. Service Managers are a critical component of TIPS services. Yet, most of them serve as Service Managers as part of their collateral duty and simply do not spend enough time with their customers. Service Managers must spend more time with their customers to assist their customers with TIPS tools, to better understand customer needs, and to better communicate those needs to TIPS management. ***Action Item No. 7.***
5. As TIPS customers progress in their proficiency with TIPS tools, there is a greater need for more advanced or specialized classes in the use of those tools. ***Action Item No. 8.***
6. There is a very great need in SMCRA for high resolution remote sensing imagery. ***Action Item No. 10.***
7. This year's method of delivering TIPS Constituent Reports is the best method to date. It can be improved further by developing an electronic survey for Steering Committee members to send to their constituents in order to gather feedback on TIPS services. Reports will be generated and provided to Steering Committee representatives prior to the meeting so they can contact constituents for additional information or clarification if need be. ***Action Item No. 12.***

Constituent Reports from OSM Offices

As with the IMCC and WIEB reports above, issues identified by OSM offices as areas where improvement is needed have been elevated to action items.

Positive outcomes of the TIPS Program are:

1. TIPS has provided the means to access **remote sensing data**. This has proven extremely useful to SMCRA programs.
2. TIPS is leading in the development of **new innovation and technology.**
3. The TIPS initiative of **"seeding technology,"** by purchasing tools that may be useful to SMCRA offices and placing one or two of these tools in an office where it is most needed has been very successful. Once the office sees the value of the tool, they usually buy more with their own funds. This initiative has improved the technological capabilities of several state and tribal offices while reducing costs to OSM.
4. The **training needs survey** conducted annually and cooperatively by the NTTP and TIPS Training Programs is a successful and necessary exercise.

Issues that need to be addressed for improvement:

1. There are competing assignments vying for the time of TIPS Service Managers. Most TIPS Service Managers serve as collateral duty and cannot spend adequate time with TIPS customers. ***Action Item No. 7.***
2. Software distribution – A reliable procedure for preparing and shipping new software and software updates is needed. ***Action Item No. 2.***
3. To date the data obtained from the National Geospatial Intelligence agency through the TIPS Remote Sensing Pilot Project has not always been timely, and cloud cover issues have contributed to delays,

1. especially in Tennessee. There is a need to improve the turnaround time of obtaining satellite imagery. ***Action Item No. 11.***
4. There is a need to better integrate Remote Sensing technology with Mobile Computing GPS devices. Most of these devices can display satellite imagery, but only if it is compressed enough to fit on the GPS field device. ***Action Item No. 6.***
5. There have been delays in AutoCAD 10 deployment and the stability of AutoCAD 9. ***Action Item No. 13.***
6. Many customers have come to depend on TIPS keeping stand-alone software up to date, even when the software cannot be shared through TIPS internet licensing. When does TIPS no longer support such software? ***Action Item No. 14.***
7. There is a need to update the TIPS website to provide for the download of software, satellite imagery, and applications for mobile computing. There is also a need for Web 2.0 applications such as Wikis and Blogs to disseminate information and communicate with the SMCRA customer base. The website can use a more up to date and accessible look and interface. ***Action Item No. 5.***
8. More TIPS success stories need to be published. This is the best way to communicate the value of the TIPS tools to SMCRA customers. ***Action Item No. 15.***
9. TIPS classes should incorporate more applied exercises where students bring in real data to use in the classroom as examples. ***Action Item No. 9.***
10. Both the Mobile Computing and Remote Sensing TIPS efforts have great value to SMCRA applications, and are in great demand by TIPS customers. A greater effort is needed to meet that increased support demand in these two critical applications. ***Action Item No. 4.***

Business Networking Issues

During this year's meeting there were four overarching themes that the discussions brought to the fore: 1) software, 2) training, 3) tools and technology, and 4) the geospatial initiative. The Steering Committee was asked the question, "If there were budget cuts in the TIPS program, what initiatives would have highest priority?" The results from the discussions are below. The Geospatial Initiative discussion has been separated from the other three because its discussion concerned issues outside of potential budget cuts.

1. Software

A means to assess software usage and value is needed. With the signing of the MOA's we can begin to count software usage through the remainder of FY10 and into FY11. That will result in a method for each of the Success Teams to develop a consistent process to evaluate software needs. Once that process is in place with the ability to track software usage, TIPS will have the data needed to determine which software is being used, and which software is not used enough to justify its cost. This may result in the recommendation that some software be eliminated.

Software will be assessed for cost utilization, number of users, and how specialized the software is in regard to SMCRA. Specialized software with relatively few users but high SMCRA value includes most of the hydrology software and the Galena Slope Stability software. Although these software tools have few users their role in SMCRA is essential and their continued support by TIPS is also essential.

2. Training

If there are budget cuts, consider the following in order of implementation:

1. Hands on Instructor Led training has the most value because of bonds formed and techniques shared.
2. Reduce conferences and advanced vendor-supplied training.
3. Use the blended delivery method for short classes. Blended delivery means that students take an on-line course that includes a weekly facilitated meeting with the instructor, or a course may be on-line with the instructor giving weekly assignments for completion.
4. Reduce student travel by driving versus flying (taking into consideration cost and time spent on the road).
5. Cut classes based on attendance and the training needs survey (This is a current practice in the TIPS training program).
6. Cut training classes and other items that are not in support of the national priorities (more priority to national priority issues).

3. **Tools and Technology** – Services in order of priority are:

1. TIPS license servers
2. Remote Sensing and Mobile Computing
3. TIPS Regional Training Rooms
4. Seeding Technology and Emergency Funds should be combined to the end of the year. Seed technology as a loan until it is decided if it is useful.

Geospatial Initiative

TIPS has been directed by OSM to lead the Bureau's Geospatial Initiative. This represents an addition to the TIPS current responsibilities of: 1) Providing technology tools, 2) providing training in those technology tools, and 3) providing technical assistance in the application of the tools. In reference to this new responsibility, the TIPS Steering Committee has the following recommendations regarding geospatial efforts:

- Once the new Geospatial Steering Committee is established under the approved OSM Geospatial Strategic Plan, it should review all activities currently being carried out by the National Coal Mine Geospatial Committee (NCMGC) to determine which activities should continue to be supported by TIPS in the future. Once this is complete, the NCMGC should be dissolved. Steering Committee members recommend that more state people be involved, and that more Regulatory Authority input be solicited.
- The ASTM process of establishing coal mine data standards appears to be slow, cumbersome and costly. It is a drain on resources with OSM and states. The new Geospatial Steering Committee should review the process we use for establishing coal mine data standards and determine if we should continue to use ASTM or change to some other process.

Closing Remarks by Committee Members

• Focus on new **best practices** and get them out to customers. A newsletter, blog, Wiki or website to transfer technology is recommended.

• Customers count on **TIPS to provide two critical functions**: 1) Provide the technology software needed to do their SMCRA jobs, and 2) Provide training and support in that software.

• **Constituent report** delivery was better during this meeting.

• **Micro-training sessions** on the website would be useful – E-Learning sessions on individual aspects of TIPS software use. Several micro-training sessions would constitute a full training course.

• Better methods for getting **information** into the hands of TIPS users are needed. The danger with this is that there is a potential for expansion of TIPS if word gets out, and TIPS does not currently have the resources to handle an increased workload.

Suggestions for Next Year's Meeting

• Use **electronic survey** (i.e. Metrics that Matter) for Steering Committee members to gather input on TIPS services from the constituents that they represent.

• Continue to use a **breakout session** for constituent reports – this worked very well.

• Do not create paper copies of the meeting materials. After the meeting, **upload the information** to the TIPS website or an external SharePoint site.

The **TIPS Outstanding Contributor award** was announced during the dinner on Wednesday night. The two recipients were Richard Lamkie and William Shuss, both working for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Rick and Bill developed and tailored the Introduction to GPS with Garmin eTrex Vista HCx course for Pennsylvania inspectors and have delivered on-site classes educating over 130 PA students. The inspectors are now required to use GPS on a daily basis to document disturbed and reclaimed acreages for full cost bonding, and often use them to document locations of highwalls, water samples, and complaints. Rick and Bill also modified the Blasting Log Evaluation Program course to specifically address unique Pennsylvania blasting regulations.

The **TIPS Commendable Service award** was also announced this year as a special acknowledgement. The two recipients are Joseph Matyus and Jeffrey King, both working for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Joe and Jeff both went the extra mile when delivering a TIPS class in February 2010 during Pennsylvania's second largest snow storm. They ensured the safety of the students and completed the class despite the closure of the Appalachian Regional office where the course was conducted.