

Best Practices in Partnering

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Agenda

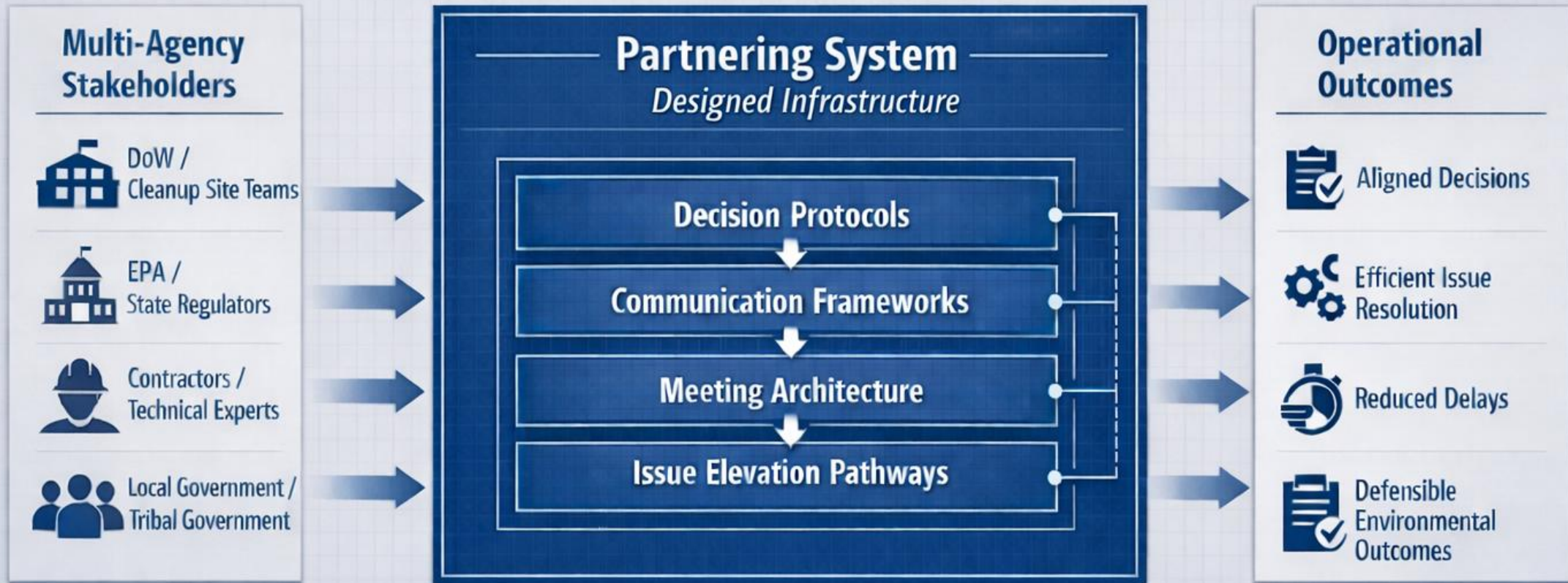
- **What is Partnering?** – Tim Sueltenfuss
- **Why Use Partnering?** – Karin Harker and Natalie Romanoff
- **Fort Wainwright, Alaska Case Study** – Dennis Shepard
- **Q&A and Wrap-up** – Tim Sueltenfuss

What is Partnering?

Tim Sueltenfuss

Galen Driscoll

What is Partnering?



Partnering is a structured, process-driven approach to collaboration that enables environmental cleanup teams to align decisions, resolve issues efficiently, reduce delays, and deliver defensible outcomes through defined communication frameworks and issue elevation pathways.

Partnering is Not Just “Staying in Touch”

Informal Coordination

- ✓ Reactive
- ✓ Inconsistent
- ✓ Person-Dependent



Partnering System

- ✓ Structured
- ✓ Repeatable
- ✓ Predictable



What Partnering Looks Like in Practice

- Layered System, Not Ad Hoc Coordination
- Foundation → Interaction → Performance → Output
- Aligns teams to clear roles and decision authority
- Enables structured communication and issue resolution
- Reinforced through documentation and accountability
- Designed to keep projects moving

THE PARTNERING STACK

7 HABITS THAT BUILD HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

A layered approach to engineered collaboration and defensible decisions



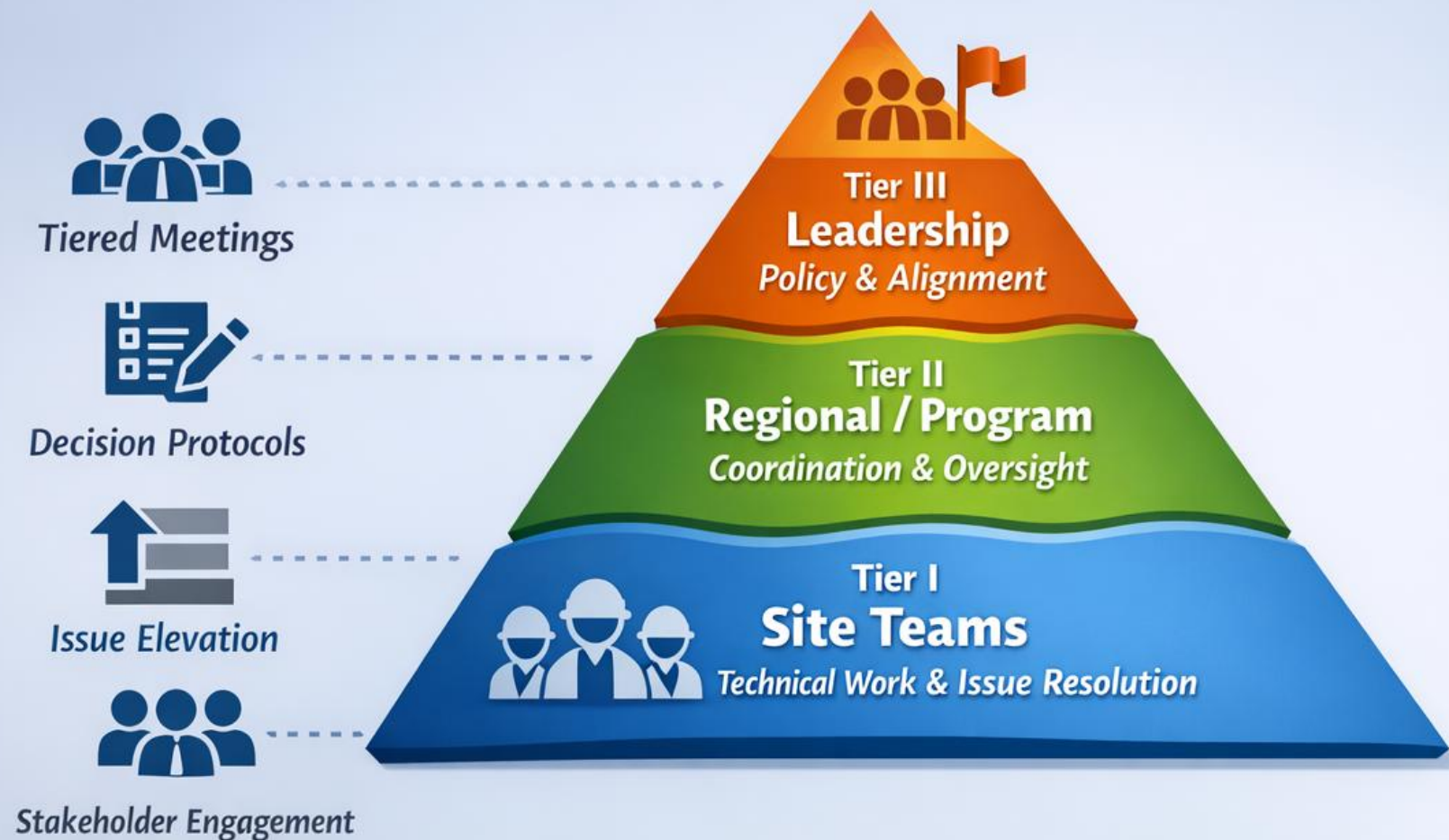
STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS • BETTER DECISIONS • SUCCESSFUL CLEANUPS

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GREAT OUTCOMES ARE BUILT IN LAYERS — START AT THE FOUNDATION.

Forms of Partnering

An Integrated System for Collaboration



Variants

- ✓ Site-Specific
- ✓ Regional
- ✓ Topic-Based (PFAS, Groundwater)

Recurring Meetings | Elevation Pathways | Shared Documentation | Milestone Tracking

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Partnering = Engineered Collaboration System

Partnering is a structured, process-driven approach to collaboration that enables environmental cleanup teams to:

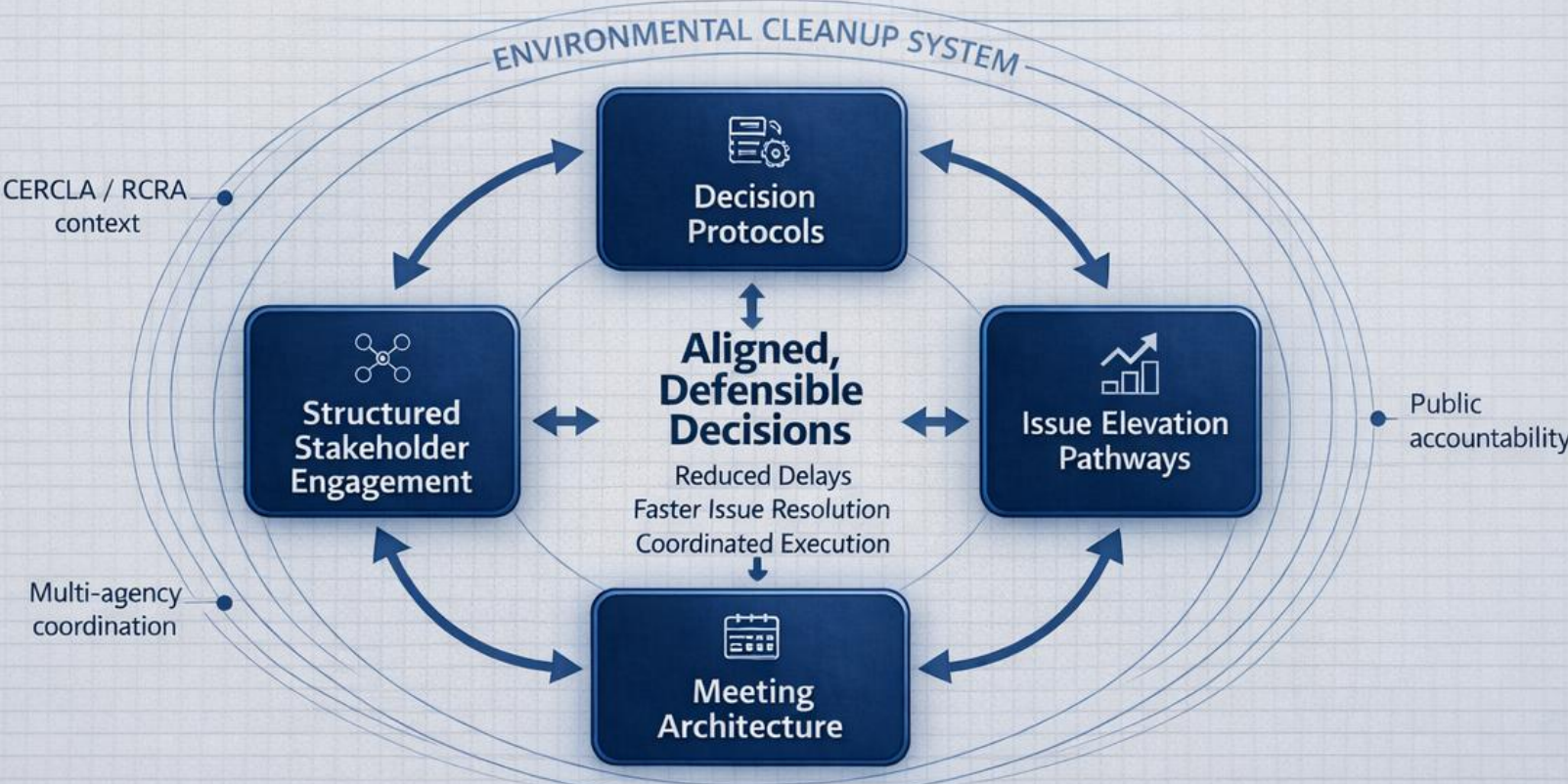
Align
decisions

Resolve issues
efficiently

Reduce
delays

Deliver
defensible outcomes

...through defined communication frameworks and issue elevation pathways



Not coordination by conversation → coordination by design

Why Use Partnering?

Karin Harker and Natalie Romanoff
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

Overview / Takeaways

- Difference between Informal vs Formal Partnering
- Establishing a Formal Tiered Partnership Structure
- Key Commitment Factors
- Pitfalls to Avoid
- Achieving Successful Outcomes

Partnering Background Information

FORMAL



Contract or an Agreement



Outlining roles, responsibilities, & expectations between parties involved



Defined goals



May require a facilitator

vs

NON-FORMAL



Informal collaboration



Less structured agreements



Based on verbal understandings & mutual trust



Less defined roles & expectations

AZ Formal Partnering



AZ Non-Formal Partnering



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**



Considerations: Moving to Formal Partnering

- Build Trust & Relationships
- Communication Improvements
- Dispute Resolution
- Efficiency
- Entering a New Phase or Milestone
- Escalation / Decision-Making
- Expedite Clean-up
- Improved Collaboration
- Legal or Compliance Issue
- New or Emerging Contamination
- New Regulations
- Project Management
- Shared Knowledge
- Upline Management Gap
- Project Scope & Budgetary Control

Times have changed...

Beginning Stages

- Work with Management on Framework
- Develop Scope & Details
- Add Partnering to Joint Execution Plan (JEP)

Partnering

- In-Person Kick-off Meeting / Quarterly
- Developed a Charter
- Meetings Conducted by a Facilitator
- Pre-planned Agenda Topics
- Escalation Matrix (Tier 1 to Tier 2, etc.)



Charter

- Purpose / Desired Outcomes
- Typical Attendees
- Meeting Structure
- Ground Rules
- Conclusion & Review Period of Charter



Introduction

This document describes enduring aspects of the Arizona Army Tier II partnering team. It indicates the purpose and desired outcomes of the forum, typical attendees, standard meeting structure, and ground rules. Charter appendices may be added in the future to document specific agreements and approaches.

Purpose and Desired Outcomes of the Arizona Army Tier II Partnering Team

Purpose

Support and enhance ongoing environmental restoration activities at Army and Army National Guard (ARNG) installations within Arizona to satisfy obligations under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and protect human health and the environment.

Desired Outcomes

- Clean up sites efficiently and quickly while achieving each agency's goals and metrics.
- Promote and enhance existing lines of communication among all parties.
- Promote understanding of each agency's organizational structures, reporting relationships, and funding mechanisms.
- Share lessons learned and encourage broad application of successes.
- Discuss current technical issues.
- Collaboratively identify, discuss, and resolve impediments to reaching common environmental restoration goals.
- Avoid regulatory disputes and disagreements when practical.
- Address pertinent agenda topics throughout the year on a schedule that acknowledges each organization's document preparation and funding cycles.

Typical Attendees

Typical attendees include managers or designated representatives from the below agencies. Tier I partnering team members, national agency representatives, agency support staff, contractors, and subject matter experts may also participate based on agenda topics.

- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
 - Karin Harker – Manager, Federal Projects Unit
 - Natalie Romanoff – Military Munitions Response Program Technical Manager
- U.S. Army Environmental Command (USAEC)
 - TBD - Environmental Support Manager
- US Army National Guard (USARNG)
 - Walt Gee – G-9 Cleanup and Restoration Branch, Cleanup Program Manager
- Arizona Army National Guard (AZARNG)
 - Kim Birdsall – Remedial Project Manager
- Meeting facilitation – Galen Driscoll

Challenges

Current State

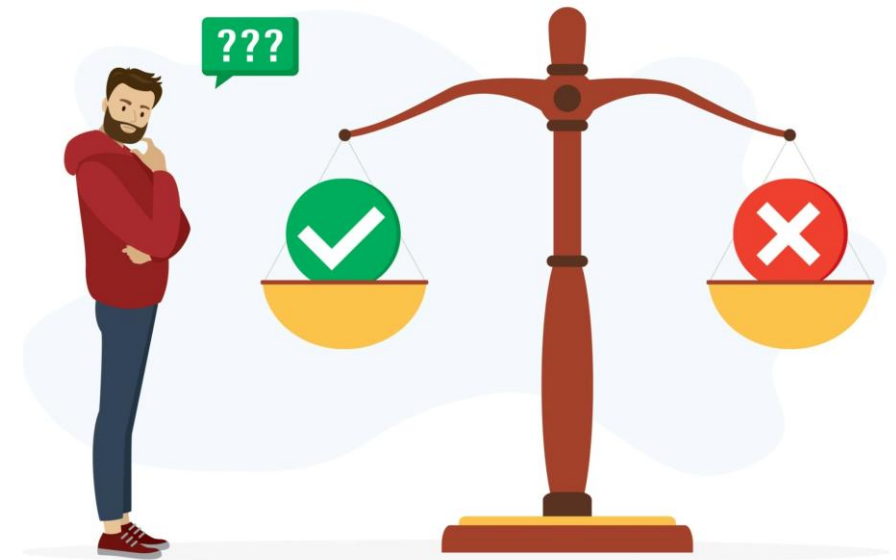
- Resources Loss
- Funding Cuts

Resulted

- Loss in Facilitator
- Reduction Tiered in-person meetings

Maintained

- Virtual tiered meetings, as needed
- Communication channels
- Partnering / escalation matrix
- Charter





Success

DoD Commitment

Leadership buy
in, check-ins &
follow through on
action items

Pre-Work

Setting
framework
together,
direction & value
for the team

Build Charter

Developed during
kickoff meeting,
provides
direction & living
document

Open Lines of Communication

Silos opened,
increased
communication &
sharing of agency
project information



Tiered Partnering at Fort Wainwright, Alaska (FWA)

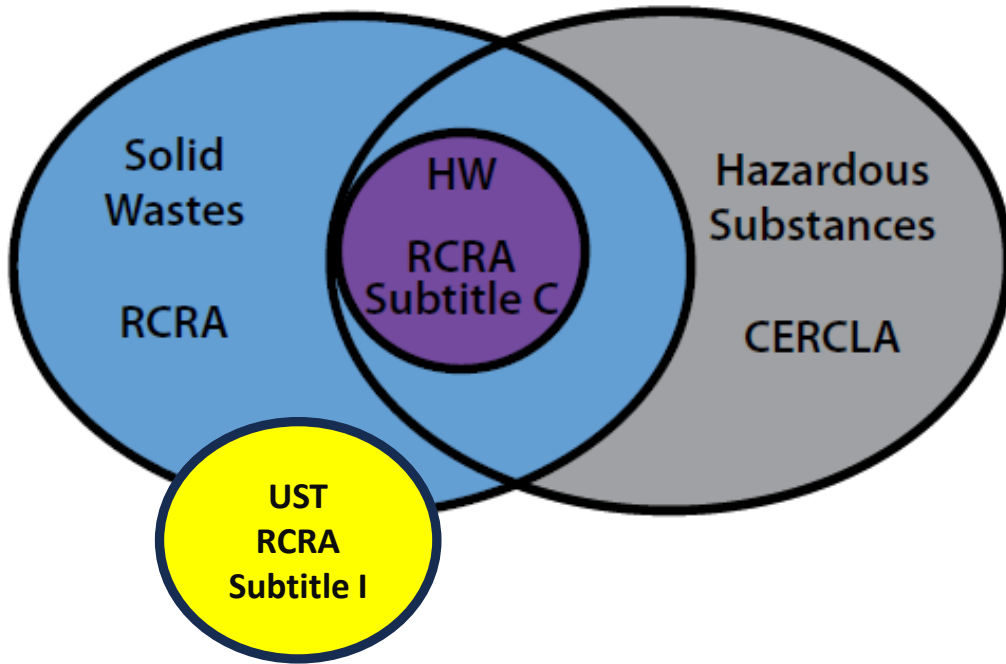
Dennis Shepard

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

FWA Cleanup Program Facts

- **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)**
 - National Priorities Listing in 1990
 - Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA) under CERCLA in 1992
 - FFA was amended in 2007 to allow Project Managers to Add Operable Units
- **RCRA**
 - RCRA Part B Permit issued in 1991
 - Permit Renewal Application Pending
- **Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)**
 - RCRA Delegation – No formal acceptance of Alaska hazardous waste laws by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to delegate RCRA Authority
 - Operated under Memorandum of Agreement circa 1989 to 1996, when authority was returned to EPA
 - Two-Party Compliance Agreement with Army signed in 1992 prior to FFA

FWA Cleanup Program Regulatory Oversight – It's Complicated



- Decision making framework and final decision authority defined by laws and Executive Orders
- State laws and regulations apply to federal property with certain limitations
- Correction of environmental damages from past spills or releases governed by:
 - **CERCLA** – Primary and preferred due to detailed framework, broad scope, and well-defined authorities
 - **RCRA Corrective Action (Subpart C)** – Applies to permitted facilities to address releases of hazardous waste or constituents from solid waste management units
 - **RCRA Underground Storage Tanks (USTs) (Subpart I)** – Applies to petroleum-related releases from USTs only

FWA – Challenges to Progress

- Primary Challenge: Communication and Collaboration!
 - Productive communication and collaboration hindered by lack of clarity and/or overlap of regulatory authorities, and poorly defined and agreed to roles and responsibilities
- Results of Communication and Collaboration Challenges:
 - Documents languished due to uncertainties and competing interpretations of the RCRA permit, the FWA FFA, and the 2-Party Agreement.
 - ADEC Remedial Project Managers (RPMs) frustrated because state petroleum regulations and applicability were being questioned on petroleum only sites. EPA RCRA was being deferred to in most cases and petroleum only sites were not being transferred to ADEC under a two-party (State-Army) agreement.
 - FWA RPMs struggled with overlapping requirements for Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) preliminary assessments under the RCRA permit and site investigations under ADEC regulations.
 - Regulatory Agencies (Region 10 EPA CERCLA, Region 10 EPA RCRA, and ADEC) each have separate procedures to apply to discovery of potentially contaminated sites.

FWA – Why Partner?

- **Purpose:** Achieve progress in the FWA Cleanup Program through enhanced communication and collaboration between all agencies.
- **How:** Institute structure through establishment of charter, routine engagements, and standard operating procedures (charter appendices).
 - Codify site notification/intake and tracking process
 - Establish defined process to overcome stalemates/disagreements to prevent stagnation and promote progress

FWA Partnering - Tiered Approach

- Initiated multi-tiered partnering process for FWA Cleanup Program in September 2023
- FWA Tiered Partnering Structure:
 - Tier 1 - (RPMs-project level), the Tier 2 middle managers (program level), and the Tier 3 senior managers (leadership level) from each agency (U.S. Army, EPA CERCLA, EPA RCRA, ADEC).
 - Partnering Charter finalized February 2024.
 - Partnering Charter Appendix 1 (Issue Elevation Process) finalized April 2024.
 - Partnering Charter Appendix 2 (Notification Process) finalized May 2024.

Partnering Benefits

- General Benefits: achieve technical environmental restoration goals, avoid disputes, mitigate delays, share lessons learned, build and strengthen relationships, and improve communication.
- Partnering at FWA has provided for a much more cooperative environment and a more effective Tier 1 RPM team.
 - Tier 1 RPM relationship building through discussion, joint progress, and team building.
 - Tier 1 has a defined process to elevate challenging issues to the Tier 2, so a more cooperative relationship has formed.
 - Tier 2 interactions focus on supporting Tier 1 and facilitate solutions that satisfy regulatory and policy requirements for all agencies.
 - Tier 2 supports clarification of agency approaches/priorities and concerns.
 - Tier 3 provides senior level leadership focused on empowering and resourcing lower levels along with an outlet for decision making when Tier 2 cannot reach resolution.
 - This approach saves time and energy when a policy discussion and decision is needed.

FWA Partnering Achievements

- Partnering has improved the communication between all agencies.
- Partnering has provided a much more cooperative environment and a more effective Tier 1 RPM team.
 - During the Government shutdown in 2025, because the team has built robust communication channels and trust, the team was still able to retain momentum.
- Sites are being successfully assigned to appropriate regulatory program (RCRA, 2-Party, FFA) with agreement of all agencies.
- Documents that languished due to unresolved issues are being submitted, reviewed, and approved.
- A cooperative team effort to solve problems has been established.
- Development of a Partnering Charter and Appendices documents process and agreed approach for future RPMs.

FWA Partnering Achievements



Wrap-up and Q&A

Thank you!

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survey here:**

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