

II. PROCESS OVERVIEW

The ADG embarked upon a process that was designed to elicit the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in the development and analysis of a series of alternatives. A series of ten two-day meetings were held starting in April and ending in August of 1998. Over the course of these ten meetings, a very deliberate process was followed that was designed to satisfy the ADG's charge given the spectrum of representation, the timeframe allowed, and available information. The basic tenets of the process are illustrated in Figure II-1. The meetings were designed, managed, and facilitated by a professional team with the goal of encouraging quality information exchange in an unbiased manner in support of the ADG charge. The meetings were open to the public and several people came to observe, as did members of the press.

This chapter provides an overview of the process defining the framework for the ADG activities. The results of these activities are provided in subsequent chapters. The present chapter also touches on some of the important dynamics of the ADG in terms of how they interacted and postured entering into this process. The overall "group attitude" about the activities is a key dimension of the progress of the ADG. Several points in this regard are made in this chapter.

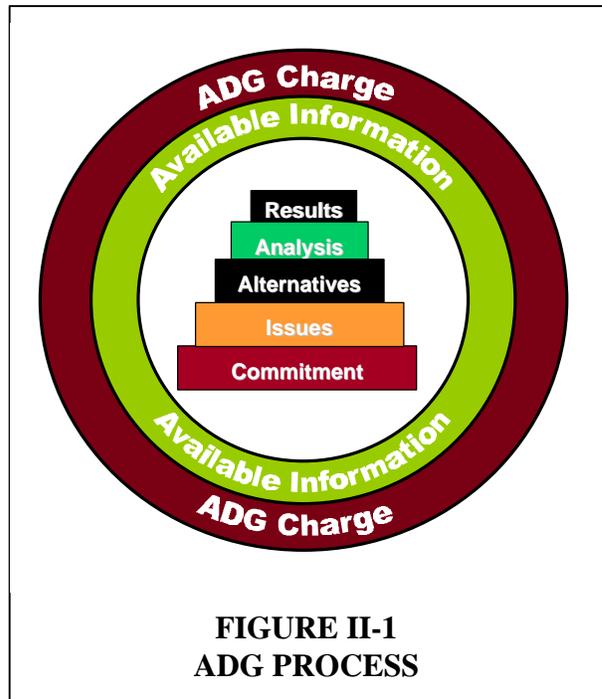
CONTROVERSY AND COMMITMENT

A great deal of controversy surrounded the creation of the subject EIS and the ADG's role in it. Some factions were supportive, while others were either opposed to the idea, reluctant, or skeptical. A significant portion of the first three meetings was dedicated to answering the question of why this initiative was needed and how it was in the Corps purview. Overall, most saw that examining the region in a systemic and holistic manner would improve the regulatory process in southwest Florida. The first meetings were instrumental in solidifying commitment from participants through hearing each other's concerns and defining issues.

Commitment consisted of two elements. First, they would be required to spend twenty working days (ten two-day meetings) over a five-month period plus special assignments and review time. Indeed, participation in the ADG was going to be a time-consuming venture. The second element was commitment to the nature of what was needed to occur within the ADG for it to be truly successful. This required complete and honest delivery of information during the process at all times. Rephrased: Bring everything to the table. Also, ADG members were expected to be able to represent and consider the opposing perspectives requiring creativity, compromise, and negotiations. Holding to positions with no room for compromise was counter to the spirit of what was being sought in the ADG. This commitment, as shown in Figure II-1, was the foundation on which the process could be built.

ISSUES, EVALUATION, AND RESULTS

Information on issues associated with southwest Florida were brainstormed by the ADG. The ADG gained an understanding of each other's perspectives and learned details of the Corps and county regulatory processes. Further discussion of these issues formed the basis for creation of evaluation factors used to examine the merits of alternatives. All issues were reviewed by the ADG and resulted in twelve categories of issues. The ADG agreed that consideration of these twelve categories, as alternatives were analyzed, would accommodate the major areas of impact that could be addressed within an EIS setting.



The next stage of the process brought the ADG toward how these issue categories could be utilized to discriminate among proposed alternatives. The discriminators were referred to as evaluation factors. Each of the issue categories was analyzed by factor specialty groups, which were formed within the ADG. These factor specialty groups were tasked with closely considering how a series of measures could be used to represent the issues surfaced by the ADG. Representation in these factor specialty groups was driven by expertise and interest. Specific measures along with data sources were identified by each factor specialty group. Again, these were presented, reviewed, and accepted by the ADG in their entirety.

Alternatives were created for the entire study area by focusing on four subareas that the ADG termed zooms. For each zoom the ADG created a series of alternatives that were intended to represent the range of issues facing southwest Florida. Some alternatives utilized hydrologic features, while others applied selected management criteria. The result was the creation of twenty-eight alternatives. Each of these alternatives was examined according to measures and evaluation factors developed based upon the twelve issue categories.

This analysis of alternatives allowed the members of the ADG to explore the merits of each alternative as well as the motivation, or drivers, behind what made a particular alternative better or worse than its fellows. From this, the ADG was able to provide results to the Corps on a set of alternatives and used the factors to evaluate those alternatives, all of which will be used in the EIS.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND BEST PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

The ADG was going to be covering some highly sensitive topics, some of which would be based on scientific fact. However, much of what was being addressed in the ADG had to be approached from best professional judgment. Many participants in the ADG were generally uncomfortable with this situation but recognized that assumptions and judgments—sometimes crude—would be unavoidable in order for progress to be made on this initiative.

The concept of using available data as illustrated in Figure II-1 was very difficult to enforce, as the tendency of most members of the ADG was to do higher level, typically quantitative, analyses to support decisions. Fortunately, for many of the issue categories, a great deal of information was already available. For example, many of the layers of GIS data needed to evaluate ecosystem, and wildlife parameters were published and readily available.

In order for the ADG to have the best available information to support its analyses, several presentations were made by experts inside and outside the ADG. Each presentation was requested specifically by the ADG and was typically scheduled at the beginning of a pertinent session. Thus, the information offered would be fresh to the ADG participants. Typically, presenters would provide handouts to the ADG members and would utilize overheads/slides to support their remarks. All of this information was made part of the record, and technical reports provided were made part of the ADG's library of information. This information was frequently referred to during the analyses and deliberations of the ADG, and will be utilized further by the Corps as it develops other sections of the EIS. A full listing of the references brought to the ADG is found in Appendix B.

FACILITATION AND MANAGEMENT OF MEETINGS

The ADG meetings were professionally designed and facilitated and generally followed the design shown in Figure II-1. The meetings were structured to ensure efficient and effective communication of information in moving toward completion of the ADG charge. The process moved forward at a pace the group was able to handle, depending on progress. An iterative system of checks and balances was instituted with a steady push to completion of the ADG goals.

The facilitation team was commissioned to operate in an unbiased manner giving all involved parties an opportunity to offer ideas. All members of the ADG were given the opportunity to provide their perspectives in this process. Consensus was sought at critical junctures. Ground rules, designed specifically for and by the ADG, were established at the first meeting and governed all activities. For example, a policy for alternate members was established, and a system of showing thumbs up or down was used to quickly demonstrate agreement.

The facilitation team documented all activities and kept records of the proceedings. Each set of meeting notes was reviewed and subsequently approved by the ADG as an accurate reflection of what occurred at each meeting. The facilitation team with assistance from the Corps developed the present report, acting as a ghost-writer for the ADG.