



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

PLANNINGahead

Winter 2024 - Issue 01



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Planning Ahead is a quarterly publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Planning Community of Practice (PCoP). Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the USACE or the Department of Defense.

Previous issues of Planning Ahead can be found on the Planning Community Toolbox: www.corpsplanning.us.



WINTER 2024 FRONT COVER — HOUSES ALONG THE BEACH AT KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE. (SOURCE: ISTOCK)



Greetings, Civil Works Planning community!

Welcome to 2024! I recall when I thought 2001 was way out in the unimaginable future – and now we’re nearly a quarter century past that. I think it’s fair to say that many unforeseeable events have shaped our Planning program, workforce, and methods of delivery during the recent and further-ago past, and we are still being shaped today. I will touch on a few of those shaping forces here, and touch on what we are doing to modernize to respond to drivers of change.

PRIORITIES: Leaders set their priorities and provide their intentions. Fortunately for us, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) (ASA(CW)) Michael Connor and our Chief of Engineers LTG Scott Spellmon have been very clear about their priorities. One of Mr. Connor’s priorities is “Modernizing Civil Works,” particularly in serving underserved communities and enhancing economic and environmental resiliency for those communities. The Chief’s priorities are

VIEW FROM THE TOP

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF PLANNING & POLICY – ERIC BUSH

framed around innovation, the people we depend on to deliver our program, partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, and readiness (efficient and cost-effective delivery of our program). Their priorities have transformed Civil Works in dramatic fashion! Importantly, this transformation is occurring during record work levels, giving us opportunity to implement their intentions.

WORKLOAD: Yes, we have a record number of studies underway, driven largely by “supplemental” appropriations, and we have risen boldly to that challenge. Recent Water Resources Development Acts (WRDAs) included record numbers of project authorizations and investment recommendations. And we are still executing nearly 100 (!) recently funded feasibility and post-authorization studies, while giving greater emphasis to leveraging our Tribal Partnership, Planning Assistance to States, Flood Plain Management Services, and Continuing Authorities programs, including

special programs targeting economically disadvantaged communities.

OUT-SIZED COST GROWTH:

I expect this is a major topic of discussion in your workplace. I assure you that is so at HQ! We are experiencing major, and with some projects unprecedented and alarming, cost growth pressures in all phases of project lifecycles. Many of these cost growth drivers are “uncontrollable” and therefore easier to explain, like inflation and supply chain effects. However, other factors causing our cost estimates to balloon are within our control, including technical completeness and methods of delivery. For studies, I have observed a concerning trend of significantly expanded scopes and high cost estimates reflected in Vertical Team Alignment Memorandums (VTAMs). Study cost estimates in the \$10-\$20M range for all but the simplest studies are becoming commonplace. This places many of our partners at an extreme financial disadvantage to access our services/



expertise and pressurizes our budget (same top line = fewer studies). Bottom line: we need to continue to apply a risk-informed framework to scoping our studies and identify what can be accomplished in the study phase with the funding we actually receive through the appropriations process (because usually, that's what we asked for!)

MODERNIZING PLANNING:

I believe we must always be looking for opportunities to improve and adapt to current and future conditions. It's now been a full ten years since WRRDA 2014 codified the 3x3 feasibility study framework. This has proven to be a remarkably effective study delivery paradigm, with record numbers of project authorizations coming through recent WRDAs. However, as we also know, many new requirements have also been added in the intervening years and our basic costs (for things like

labor, IT support, travel, and contract support) have grown, too. It is time to re-look comprehensively at our planning process and program. In that regard, I appreciate that many of you provided your views through the recent Civil Works Planning Questionnaire, the results of which were briefly summarized at the November Planning Workshop in St. Louis, and will be provided in more detail in an upcoming PCoP webinar.

The next step in our continuous improvement journey will be listening sessions with each MSC and the OASA(CW), beginning in January. The purpose of these sessions is to focus on specific barriers and opportunities to improve quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of our studies. From my perspective, this is the 2024 version of the "17+1" team that developed SMART Planning and the 3x3 study framework. Everything is on the table

for consideration; there is no such thing as too many good ideas! Please discuss in your work units and provide your feedback to your regional Planning Chief.

Other modernization initiatives include updating our doctrine (examples include Agency Specific Procedures; implementing our new Tribal Consultation policy and updating the Tribal Partnership Program guidance; Engineer Regulation 1105-2-103, formerly the Planning Guidance Notebook, and the accompanying Engineer Pamphlets; guidance for non-structural flood risk reduction) and deep-diving feasibility study metrics and execution progress reported on the "Revolutionize Performance Metrics" dashboard at the monthly Delivery Review with Commanders (DRC) meetings with HQ.

MORE CHANGE IS COMING:

Though we are accustomed to change in USACE, I anticipate significant changes in the coming year, including WRDA '24 (new authorities and requirements and more projects authorized for future construction), rulemaking for the Agency Specific Procedures implementing the 2014 Principles, Requirements and Guidelines for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies (PR&G), and changes in key leadership (commander) positions at HQ. We will have a new Chief of Engineers and a new Deputy Commanding General for Civil Works later this year!

CLOSING: I remain honored and grateful to be part of our amazing community of Civil Works Planning practitioners. Best wishes for a successful and satisfying 2024!

GETTING TO KNOW HQ

WELCOME TO NEW HQUSACE PLANNING LEADERS

Please join us in welcoming two new members of the HQUSACE Planning leadership team!

The Planning & Policy Division has selected a new permanent Chief of the Office of Water Project Review, **Hank Gruber**

(coming from the North Atlantic Division), who previously served as the Acting OWPR chief earlier this year.

In addition, **Jeff Strahan** (coming from the Office of Water Project Review) has been selected to be

the USACE Senior Economist/Senior Economic Policy Advisor within the HQUSACE Planning and Policy Division.



Hank Gruber



Jeff Strahan





PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

BEFORE THE FLOOD: THE USACE TECHNICAL CENTER OF EXPERTISE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Jim Gourley, Technical Writer with the Seattle District, recently shared an overview of the USACE Technical Center of Expertise for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures with Planning Ahead.

Sometime this year, the Kennebunk River's banks will overflow, and its waters will inundate portions of Kennebunkport, Maine.

Some of the town's most at-risk buildings date back to the 1830s and are eligible for listing on the national register of historic places. How do you modernize a touchstone of American heritage without erasing its historic character?

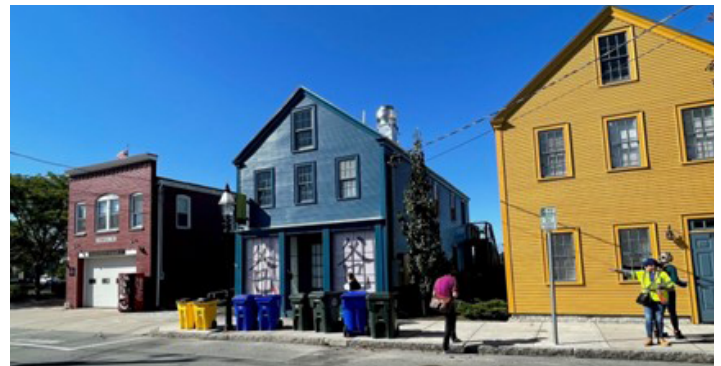
Luckily for Kennebunkport, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Technical Center of Expertise (TCX) for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and Structures serves as the nation's preeminent organization for just such a task. Led by Lys Perhay, the TCX supports the Corps of Engineers' Silver Jackets program in

cooperation with partners in every state and several U.S. territories.

Perhay's team integrates scientific and engineering methods, coordinates interagency relationships, and marshals national and state resources to serve local communities. Since its founding in 1993, the team has become a vital resource to communities trying to plan for the complex interplay of environmental, economic, and cultural factors. Planning plays a vital role in supporting the Corps of Engineers Civil Works water resources development mission.

"Waterways were major transportation veins in early European settlement history, which leaves a lot of historic buildings in the path of floodwaters," says Perhay.

The TCX assembles a diverse background of experience, with past work in the Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Park Service, City Planning, and the construction industry. More coastal and riverside



PICTURED ABOVE: THE TCX TEAM SURVEYING IN KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND.

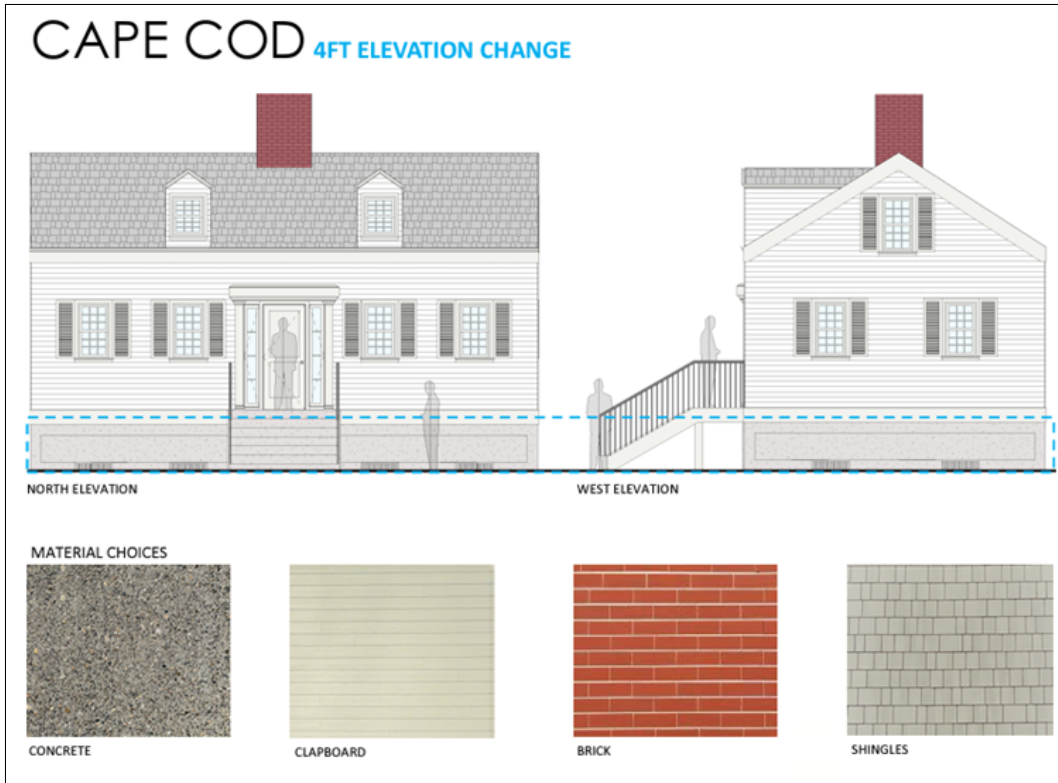
towns across the nation are seeking the TCX's help as they deal with the impacts of climate change.

In Kennebunkport, floods stem from a trifecta of early snowmelt, rising sea levels, and violent nor'easters. With its economy dependent upon tourism, the town sought the Silver Jackets' help to preserve its landmarks from floods without putting taxpayers or local business owners underwater financially.

"Planning requires applying broad expertise to local conditions," Perhay says. "Our process begins with risk assessment through

document analysis, including historic and climatological research. The Silver Jackets then conduct a site survey to assess specific building conditions and meet with local stakeholders to learn about their priorities"

After the survey phase, Perhay's group assesses the most effective option in terms of flood mitigation, sensitivity to historic character, and cost. The Center's report to Kennebunkport will highlight a range of options and their relative costs and benefits. The TCX emphasized non-structural methods, which minimize changes to the appearance of buildings. The



A CAPE COD HOUSE WITH A PROPOSED 4 FOOT ELEVATION THAT IS SENSITIVE TO HISTORIC CHARACTER.

strategy serves the town’s objectives and ensures it retains its charming character. “We’re not here to stop someone’s project or interrupt business,” Perhay explains. “We’re here to help people solve real world problems while staying

compliant with federal guidelines.”

The Silver Jackets along with the Center are also working in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and will soon begin helping communities in Virginia and the recovery

effort in Lahaina, Hawaii. Perhay encourages growing interest in the team’s work.

“Any federal agency can request our services, and we hope to work with more communities as part of the government’s increased

interest in environmental justice.”

More information can be found on the Center of Expertise’s website at www.nws.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Historic-Preservation.

> What’s New on the Planning Community Toolbox

The Planning Community Toolbox is the “go to” website for current planning policy and guidance, and links to the tools that can support planners and planning decision making. Recent additions of interest include:

- Several new pieces of **implementation guidance for the Water Resources Development Act of 2022** are available on the [Guidance Memo collection page](#). Seven other pieces of implementation guidance are

slated to be published, and will be posted on the Toolbox when available.

- Engineer Regulation 1105-2-103, Policy for Conducting Civil Works Planning Studies** has been published! This ER supersedes chapters one, two, and three of ER 1105-2-100, the Planning Guidance Notebook. [The Planning Guidance Notebook page on the Toolbox](#) has been updated to reflect these changes and is now the Core Civil Works

Planning Guidance page. Future updates to this page will follow as the appendices of ER 1105-2-100 are finalized and published as Engineer Pamphlets.

- New Economic Guidance Memoranda (EGM) for FY24** have been published to the Toolbox. [EGM 24-02: Unit Day Values for Recreation for Fiscal Year 2024](#) contains a detailed description of the application of the unit day value (UDV) method as well as unit day values to

be used for the current FY. [EGM 24-03: Cost Sharing for Territories and Tribal Nations](#) provides the updated cost share waiver amount for U.S. Territories and Tribal Nations for FY2024.

Looking to spread your wings? Job openings across Planning are frequently posted on the Toolbox’s home page under Notices.

Visit the toolbox online at www.corpsplanning.us.





TELLING YOUR STORY

2023 NATIONAL PCoP WORKSHOP TAKEAWAYS



PICTURED ON THE LEFT: HANA SCHLANG (CENTER) AND HER RPEC COLLEAGUES EXPLORING ST. LOUIS DURING THE 2023 NATIONAL PCoP WORKSHOP WEEK.



presentations given spoke to the importance of optimism, hope, and empathy. Being mindful in the work that you do has profound effects; for example, focusing your work and language to be asset based rather than deficit based is crucial for strengthening the voices of our local communities and understanding their histories and stories. Expressing gratitude and connecting with your planning community can be influential in facilitating engagement with local communities and creating change through the work we do.

When it was my turn to tell my story, I shared that what motivates me as a planner is my passion for community and doing my best to leave the world a better place than I found it. I challenge you all to find one person each day to express gratitude for and strengthen your connections, whether it's with the people you work with, your local community, or your family. You will see how optimism and gratitude changing your story can also impact the stories of those around you. Cheers to telling our stories!

panel discussions, breakout sessions, and overall perspectives of much of the work that is currently happening within the Corps. As a new planner, I gained a lot of knowledge throughout the week, with many engaging discussions over recently updated guidance, Environmental Justice, Comprehensive Benefits, tools for community outreach, planning innovation, and more. There were many opportunities for attendees to ask questions, as well as collaborate in small breakout groups with planners from other districts.

While I grew in my planning knowledge and learned about some of these new tools and resources, several other big takeaways resonated with me that I will also carry with me throughout my planning career. Many of the stories shared and

RPEC; however, my duty station is Galveston, TX. I have been with USACE for 1.5 years and was previously a seventh-grade math teacher. My story has always involved the military; I was a “military brat” and grew up constantly moving around the U.S. and even overseas. I always felt fortunate for my upbringing, as I had the opportunity to meet people from vastly different backgrounds and travel to places all over the world. Ultimately, my passion for connecting with people and communities is what led me to this opportunity to be a planner for the Corps.

The week I spent at the National PCoP Workshop was a reminder of why I am passionate about my role and responsibility as a planner. Each day of the workshop, I had the pleasure of hearing the stories from planners across the U.S. in addition to lessons learned,

Hana Schlang, a social scientist and planner with the Regional Planning Environmental Center (RPEC), recently spoke with Planning Ahead about her experience attending the 2023 National PCoP Workshop, which took place 14-16 November 2023 in St. Louis. Workshop materials, including presentations, recordings, and a post-workshop Q&A can be found on the 2023 National PCoP Workshop page on the Knowledge Management Portal.

Every planner has their own story – what motivates them, why they are passionate about planning, and why they do what they do. I had the opportunity to attend and share my story, along with many others, at the National PCoP Workshop this past November.

To share a little about my story – I am a planner with the Fort Worth District’s



PCoP NEWS FLASHES

PLANNING COMMUNITY UPDATES

Updated Planning Workforce Development Guide Now Available

The [Planning Workforce Development Guide](#), initially published in 2020, has been updated to include Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) and Career Roadmaps for all Planning Sub-Communities of Practice: Plan Formulation, Economics, Environmental, and Cultural Resources. The guide, now available on the Planning Community Toolbox, is intended to provide PCoP members guidance in holistic development based on their individual career goals and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to excel in USACE water resources planning.

Updated Civil Works Tribal Consultation Policy

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Mr. Connor has [published a memorandum](#) directing USACE to apply the Updated Civil Works Tribal Consultation Policy, which provides guidance and definition for the agency to build the collaborative and close relationships required for proper stewardship of the Nation's water resources and to fulfill its constitutionally required treaty and trust

responsibilities. In addition, MG Graham has [provided direction](#) to the MSC

Commanders to ensure consistent application of the policy to all of Civil Works, emphasizing that fulfilling USACE's responsibilities to Tribal Nations resulting from the Federal Trust Doctrine between the United States government and Tribal governments requires education, consistency, and accountability.

New Scoping Guide Published

A new [Scoping Guide for Civil Works Planning Studies](#) was recently published to the Planning Community Toolbox for use by study teams. The guide highlights some of the key procedures, processes, and guidance that a study team should use during the initial scoping phase of a study, which is generally the first 90 to 120 days from the execution of the Feasibility Cost Share Agreement. It focuses on best practices for collaboration during initial scoping, which is critical for a study's success during this fast-paced timeframe when the foundation of the study is being developed. Please note: the Scoping Guide for Civil Works Planning Studies does not discuss the process

required in law for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping.

CPCX Core Competency Webinar Series

The Collaboration and Public Participation Center of Expertise (CPCX) is launching an annual "core competencies" webinar series. Webinars will occur quarterly, and will explore the four foundational pillars of collaboration and public participation: facilitation, public participation, conflict resolution, and risk communication. The recording, slides, chat, and other materials from all webinars can be found on the [Collaboration and Public Participation \(CPP\) CoP SharePoint](#). To join the CPP CoP distribution list for future webinar announcements, please contact Stacy Langsdale.

Supervisors' Hub Now Available on Knowledge Management Portal

The Planning Workforce Development Committee has created a [Supervisors' Hub within the PCoP Knowledge Management Portal](#), which includes supervisor resources and tools and ideas for connecting with others in the supervisory community.

There are a variety of resources within the hub related to hiring, retention, and staff training, as well as leadership and management tools. Additionally, there is an [MS Teams channel](#) that supervisors can join, providing them a place to ask questions and learn from the experiences of others; see the Supervisors' Hub for details on joining.



PCoP Hot Topics

Can't wait for the next edition of Planning Ahead? Get the scoop on key initiatives and information from Headquarters on investing in our people; implementing clear and efficient guidance and processes; and demonstrating readiness and meeting our partnership commitments in the monthly PCoP Hot Topics newsletter. Find the latest in your email inbox or on the Planning CoP SharePoint. To be added to the newsletter email distribution list, email us at hqplanning@usace.army.mil.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FY22 NATIONAL PLANNING AWARD RECIPIENTS

In this edition of Planning Ahead, we celebrate the FY2022 Awards for Planning Excellence and Planning Achievement, Enterprise. The Planning Excellence award is designed to recognize an individual's contributions to advance the state of the art of the practice of Civil Works Planning, and the Outstanding Planning Achievement award recognizes a Civil Works planning project delivery team for the accomplishment of an outstanding planning activity. We are also recognizing our Noel Clay Planning Champion awardees, who are individuals that have been instrumental to Civil Works Planning success by providing leadership, encouragement, and support to project delivery teams, and our Lifetime Achievement awardees, who have distinguished themselves by making significant and lasting contributions to the USACE Planning Community during their career.

PLANNING EXCELLENCE (ENTERPRISE)

TODD NETTLES
Mobile District & Deep Draft Navigation Planning Center of Expertise

Todd Nettles is recognized with the FY22 Planning Excellence Award (Enterprise) for his incredible contributions to the success of dozens of Deep Draft Navigation Chief's Reports and his tireless devotion to the USACE Navigation mission.

Todd is a senior leader within the Mobile District, the South Atlantic Division, and USACE. Since 2013, he has

served as the Deep Draft Navigation Planning Center of Expertise (DDNPCX) Technical Director. Additionally, Todd is tasked with the execution of all economic analyses performed in support of the USACE Civil Works Deep Draft Navigation and Small Boat Harbor business lines. To accomplish this work, Todd leads 6 DDNPCX employees and another 10 deep draft navigation economists throughout USACE, overseeing the efforts he assigns to them. As the Technical Director, he plans, directs, and supervises a multi-disciplined staff engaged in technical studies for deep draft navigation economics,



encompassing traffic projections, transportation rate analysis, and economic modeling studies.

One of Todd's major accomplishments has been the continual improvement of relations between USACE and the nation's port authorities. Having worked as a navigation

economist prior to his current role at the DDNPCX, Todd had the necessary expertise and the foundational relationships with ports through past analyses work to form strong bonds and effectively lead the program. After several years as Technical Director and demonstrating program excellence, Todd is largely responsible for the positive relationship USACE enjoys today with these entities.

In addition to these accomplishments, Mr. Nettles achieved a tremendous amount in FY22. A few highlights include:

- In his role as lead economist, oversaw 30



feasibility studies, 4 dredged material management plans, 2 validation study reports, and 6 CAP studies;

- Developed South Atlantic Division Regional Planning Guidance with the USACE Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), titled “Deep Draft Navigation Ship Simulations and Plan Formulation;”

- Led monthly discussions with each MSC and District staff to discuss issues, schedule planning, and methodologies of ongoing navigation business line projects.

Beyond his core responsibilities, Mr. Nettles also manages the Deep Draft Navigation Model Certification Program and the DDNPCX Review Management Organization. His involvement extends to setting research and development priorities for USACE deep draft navigation planning and contributing to the development of USACE navigation policy.

With an annual portfolio of over 30 deep draft navigation studies, Todd’s efforts have led to the successful completion of over 40 projects which directly impact the nation’s economy. Whether mentoring and training his staff or providing technical expertise, his contribution to the Planning program nationwide is vast.



JENNIFER HENGGELER Kansas City District

Jennifer Henggeler is recognized with the FY22 Planning Excellence Award (Enterprise) for her work as the Senior Economist for the Kansas City District, regional Planner/Economist for the Northwestern Division (NWD), and national water supply subject matter expert for the Water Management and Reallocation Study Planning Center of Expertise.

One of Jennifer’s most significant FY22 accomplishments is her work on the Stockton Lake Water Supply Storage Reallocation Feasibility Study. She acted as the lead plan formulator, economist, and project manager, leading a multi-disciplinary team in the development of the draft report. Jennifer’s ability to collaborate with stakeholders was duly recognized, as the Southwestern Power Administration (SWPA) praised her for integrating them continuously throughout the project.

Jennifer’s excellent communication was also on display in FY22 when she supported the Section 203 Tribal Partnership Program’s Soldier Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project. Jennifer was able to develop a rapport with Tribal members, gaining their insight throughout the project. She articulated the complex cost share requirements of Section 203 to the Tribe and worked to explain how the formulation process reached the tentatively selected plan; a process they were unfamiliar with. Jennifer also was pivotal in developing the scope of work for the Lower Missouri Flood Risk and Resiliency System Plan, which was centered around reducing risk and improving resiliency in the 735-mile Lower Missouri River corridor.

Jennifer’s leadership prowess is further highlighted by her work with the Water Management and Reallocation Study Center of Expertise. She has been asked to mentor staff from other districts to teach them about water supply reallocation studies,

and since 2022, she has served as a planning mentor to the Omaha District’s Bear Creek Reallocation Study. In FY22, Jennifer also assisted the USACE Headquarters Water Supply Business Line Manager with the Water Supply Handbook update and led the contract award for the Water Supply Handbook.

To complement her leadership abilities, Jennifer helped in the development of two projects in FY22 that exemplified her technical skills: the development of Kansas City District’s customer feedback survey protocol, which utilized customer surveys to discover data trends, and the District’s E-Correspondence Tracking Site, which shifted document routing for the Commander’s signature to an online system. These projects were integral in streamlining USACE processes.

Since joining USACE in 2008 as a Plan Formulator and Economist, Jennifer has diligently worked to become a subject matter expert across multiple business lines and is a nationally recognized Senior Economist. Additionally, she has served as an excellent ambassador for the District, regularly communicating and developing strong partnerships with non-federal sponsors, stakeholders, and the Headquarters vertical team. These qualities and achievements solidify Jennifer as a worthy recipient of the 2022 Planning Excellence Award.



**NOEL CLAY
PLANNING
CHAMPIONS**



JULIE BEAGLE
San Francisco District

Julie Beagle, the Environmental Planning Section Chief and Engineering with Nature (EWN) Program Manager for the San Francisco District, is recognized as a Noel Clay Planning Champion for leading the Upper Guadalupe Flood Risk Management General Reevaluation team through the formulation and design of nature-based features in a highly constrained river system, resulting in a solution that is both the National Economic Development (NED) and the Comprehensive Benefit Plan.

Based on Julie’s guidance, the study team incorporated channel configurations that effectively engineered with nature in a complex urban river system. Despite numerous challenges in the project area related to protected fish species, high cost of mitigation, surrounding socially

vulnerable communities, and other impediments, Julie persevered in leading the team to consider innovative nature-based measures and facilitated collaboration across disciplines. The resulting recommended plan not only matched the effectiveness of the previously authorized plan, but also provided over \$350 million in cost savings, along with enhanced environmental and social benefits.

Julie also facilitated collaboration among resource agencies, the Flood Risk Management Planning Center of Expertise, and the USACE River Engineering Committee. The culmination of her efforts was a plan that effectively reduced flooding and gained validation from the included stakeholders. Her achievements underscore her dedication to overcoming longstanding obstacles and driving innovative approaches to water resource challenges.

RENA WEICHENBERG
North Atlantic Division

Rena Weichenberg, Environmental Team Lead for the North Atlantic Division (NAD), adeptly mentors planners with a balance of guidance adherence and pragmatism that has resulted in collaboration and streamlining across projects and programs, the delivering of policy-compliant projects, the reduction of flood and coastal storm risk, and projects that sustain the economy through navigation benefits.



Additionally, her role spans 14 states and the District of Columbia, requiring extensive knowledge of environmental regulations and laws, and the many partners that she collaborates with.

Assuming her current position in 2016, Weichenberg oversees policy compliance for Coastal Storm Risk Management, Flood Risk Management, Navigation, and Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration. She provides expertise, advice, and encouragement throughout the enterprise in the Environmental Sub-Cop, Supervisory Oversight Group, Research Advisory Review Groups, and is the NAD Business Line Manager for the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration business line. She is also the NAD Planning Lead for Water Resources Development Acts. As the lead for resource agency coordination, she routinely holds joint informational sessions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Apart from her technical achievements, Weichenberg is recognized for her leadership qualities, treating others with respect, offering time and expertise generously, and fostering strong relationships. Despite an unparalleled workload and leading projects in diverse geographic regions, she has successfully built a robust cadre of environmental experts and planners in NAD. Her contributions embody a commitment to interpersonal relationships and selfless service.

**LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT**

BARBARA BLUMERIS
New England District

Barbara Blumeris (pictured on the right with a colleague on a site visit to the St. Croix River in Maine in 2022) has distinguished herself as a leader in Civil Works Planning through her dedication, professionalism, and integrity over the course of 35 years. Barbara has led planning studies and projects in all





USACE business lines, and recently helped lead the completion of the New Haven Harbor, Connecticut Navigation Improvement Feasibility Study Chief’s Report. She has been pivotal as a lead planner and project manager in over 100 planning efforts, including a major on-going watershed study for the greater metropolitan Boston Harbor region in Massachusetts, as well as a Dam Safety Modification Study for the State of Vermont on Waterbury Dam.

Notably, Barbara has provided technical support to the Coastal Storm Risk Management, Flood Risk Management, and Deep Draft Navigation Planning Centers of Expertise, and has led or served on dozens of Agency Technical Review teams. Barbara is recognized as a Water Resources Certified Planner and a planning mentor supporting study teams in this capacity.

TOM KENDALL
San Francisco District

Serving as the Planning Branch Chief for 22 years, Tom Kendall’s comprehensive knowledge of the Civil Works portfolio at the San Francisco District, the trust he fostered with sponsors, and his transparency has sparked dedication from those around him. His leadership resulted in the authorization of 15 projects and the implementation of nine Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) projects during his tenure.

Tom played a crucial role in supporting the San Francisco District’s Planning workforce, expanding involvement in various programs, and furthering the District’s CAP workload. His dedication extended to teaching colleagues across the agency, serving as an instructor for numerous regional Introduction to Planning

courses, leading Planning Associate and Leadership Development Program sessions, and delivering talks on planning policy and professional development at regional planning workshops.

Tom also provided valuable input on policy development and research concerning sea level rise, ultimately leading the charge in evaluating District experiences applying the Engineering Circular on “Incorporating Sea Level Change Considerations in Civil Works Programs” to decision documents. Tom continues to provide excellent support to San Francisco District planners as a re-hired annuitant.

MIKE MAGLEY
South Atlantic Division

For over 20 years, Mike Magley championed the consistent success of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), including helping to push forward the first CERP

authorization in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000, and has continued to be a key leader in the advancement of the CERP program to meet the vision authorized by Congress and the President.

Mike’s influence extends beyond leadership roles, as he consistently supported project teams grappling with CERP’s complexities. Since the program’s start, changes to project staff have been numerous, and Mike has been there to teach new planners about the CERP program and how to execute it.

His role as a bridge between the District and Headquarters has been essential to the success of CERP, with his work contributing to the signing of eight Chief’s reports. As a re-hired annuitant, Mike continues to work with the South Atlantic Division CERP team to continue the momentum on this critical USACE program.





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

FY22 OUTSTANDING PLANNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER SOUTH ATLANTIC COAST STUDY TEAM SHARES REFLECTIONS & BEST PRACTICES



12

The South Atlantic Comprehensive Study (SACS) used watershed planning concepts to identify actions to better develop coastal resiliency along the 65,000 miles of shoreline that makes up the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Lead Planner Ashleigh Fountain and the SACS team recently shared with Planning Ahead their reflections on the study process, along with best practices for consideration by other study teams.

Reflecting back on the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS), and all that we were able to accomplish truly exemplifies what an honor it was to be a part of this team. I solicited input from my teammates to share their lessons learned and successes and I was blown away with an overwhelming number of carefully considered and poignant responses. No surprise there, at least for me! Being a part of the SACS and working with this incredible team, the 2022 Outstanding Planning Achievement award winners, was one of the most fulfilling opportunities of my career. That is not only my sentiment – below are some of the responses I received from my amazing colleagues.

I would also say that the study introduced me to a number of other stakeholders across the region that I previously had not known, even some in our own area of responsibility (AOR). I have had many follow-on discussions and enlightening conversations with folks that I never knew prior to the study.

I think the study did a great job engaging a large number and variety of stakeholders.

*– Drew Condon,
Jacksonville District Engineering*

Looking back on SACS in my rearview mirror, I must admit that I was proud to have been involved in the Study, and feel it

was one of the most fulfilling of my long environmental career. I felt that I was contributing to a highly significant topic that is critical to the resiliency of the southeastern coastal longevity of our nation. I take much pride in my contribution.

*– Kat McConnell,
Mobile District Environmental*



“

I was very proud to be a part of the SACS team because of the study's purpose that addressed a significant societal issue of coastal flood risk.

– **Kip Webber,**
Jacksonville District Planning

Working on SACS was the pinnacle of my career thus far. It was an incredibly challenging study. Working on something from the “ground-up” while leading a team of biologists from a division I did not work in was tough. However, with the support of the SACS environmental team, the SACS command team, and Debby Scerno from SAD, we developed an incredible environmental product. I was very fortunate to work with a high-performing team. I learned so much from them, became a leader, and gained confidence. I met so many people in USACE I may never have known if it weren't for SACS. I am very proud to have been a part of this study and this team.

– **Kristina May,**
Baltimore District Environmental

”

My SACS teammates also shared best practices, lessons learned, and other general advice they felt would be helpful for other study teams to consider in their own work:

LOGISTICS

- **Develop a detailed schedule.** While painful on the front end, it was really beneficial in terms of being able to track progress at any time. It is also helpful to identify if additional time (and/or funding) will be needed early on.
- **Take care of people.** Complex, multi-year studies can take a toll on the team. When setting milestones, take into consideration what is scheduled around the end of the calendar year. Consider holidays and team fatigue – everyone needs a break at some point!
- **Regularly scheduled PDT meetings** (at the various levels) really helped keep things in focus and kept the team all on the same page and working towards the same outcome.
- **Create clear roles and responsibilities.** At the team level, who is the ultimate deciding member or group of members for decisions on what the documents need to look like?
- **Have a slide deck** that can be easily transformed for various audiences. This should be “plug and play” with all of the basics about the study.
- **Have an engagements tracker** that all team members can update. You will inevitably be asked for this information.

- **Ensure clear identification** of the products (Report, Appendices, etc.) early on to reduce re-working of documents later. With regional teams, it's important to have standardized products. Consistency is key. Bringing in outside help early, especially for organization and writing-related tasks, can be an enormous help and allow the team to focus on the content.

- **In a large study, it's important to not get bogged down and overwhelmed with all the input.** To get a quality product in a timely manner, it is important to allow the key study team members the time to come up with a plan and then solicit feedback from others. If you get caught trying to please everyone, then nothing will get done.

- **Revisit study goals often.** It's going to get messy. Whenever the team is going around in circles, reference the study authority, word for word, and the study goals to help “see the forest through the trees.” Most likely, the team has spent a considerable amount of time wordsmithing those study goals, and for good reason.

COMMUNICATION

- **Establish a dedicated study email address.** So simple, yet so very helpful. Have a dedicated person who

will regularly monitor this email but have multiple people with access to it.

- **Communicate with stakeholders early and often** through newsletters, website updates, regularly scheduled webinars, etc.
- **Have a dedicated outreach lead.** With a study with so many stakeholders and engagements, this was critical. The outreach lead, project manager, and planner worked closely on the Communication Strategy, but the outreach lead was responsible for disseminating updates to stakeholders via various means.

- **Leverage local knowledge.** Multiple long-term relationships were forged because of the SACS, with some stakeholders working with and engaging with USACE for the first time. Based on the power of these relationships, coastal resiliency has been advanced, and continues to advance. Future partnership and projects with USACE are contingent on these collaborative initiatives.

- **Engage the Centers of Expertise regularly.** Engage your policy reviewers, review manager, and Regional Integration Team (RIT) routinely. Don't wait for the pre-milestone or in-progress review-frenzy to bounce new ideas off of these great resources!



PRODUCTS AND TOOLS

- Spend the time and funding to develop necessary tools early on. This may delay some of the initial milestones, but the idea is that the quality of the products could be better informed. Many of our Tier 2 products, such as the Tier 2 Economic Risk Assessment and Coastal Hazards System, were extremely useful in assessing risk. However, these tools were developed later in the study and simultaneously with the analyses and report products. This proved difficult in getting the results incorporated into the reports.
- GIS platforms provided ease of access to information both internally and externally. Consider if and who will ensure these tools will be kept up-to-date and running.

- When developing a tool for a multi-year, multi-state, complex study such as the SACS, it is important to consider the purpose and desired resolution of costs. Applying an index escalation can be very quick; however, it loses granularity and would increase uncertainty substantially.
- Account for price level updates that will occur over the life of the study and if/when those updates will occur. Planning for these price fluctuations early in any model/tool development provides more accurate results and may reduce study resource needs at the tail end.

The opportunity provided by studies like SACS allows for the Corps to take a hard look at the interplay of cultural resources and climate change impacts on coastal communities throughout our AOR. With sea-level rise, increases in the frequency, duration, and intensity of severe weather events, and changes in the impacts to cultural resources among the most significant processes affecting coastal communities, SACS provided SAD the tools to study some of the real-world impacts to communities who live amongst their own cultural heritage. On the southeastern coast of the United States, today's climate change impacts are magnified by historical environmental injustices and colonial legacies that have heightened the vulnerability of the built environment and communities' own heritage. For many of our coastal focus areas, the examination of cultural resources offered an important record of precolonial climate change and its interplay with the modern communities and the landscape they live on. SACS allowed us to suggest strategies and mechanisms that can inform discussions of resilience in the face of climate change. Stakeholder engagement and understanding the cultural landscape through SACS, allowed the SACS team to detail climate-related challenges facing coastal communities while emphasizing that these responses cannot be successfully addressed without an understanding of the processes that have and continue to disrupt livelihoods, reshaped land and seascapes, threatened intergenerational heritage transfer, and led to increased inequality and climate vulnerability while simultaneously highlighting those communities with cultural resources at the most risk of loss.

— Ryan Clark, Jacksonville District Cultural Resources (now New England District)

> Planning Community Webinars

The Planning Community of Practice (PCoP) webinar series offers planners and their colleagues an opportunity to share information and learn more about trending topics in Civil Works planning and water resources development policy, guidance, processes, and tools.

The series provides an opportunity to discuss important and timely topics for the field, with recent subjects below.

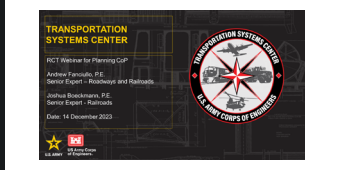
Webinars are held every other Thursday from 2-3 pm eastern. Presentations and the question and answer sessions from each webinar are archived on

the Planning Community Toolbox, and recent webinars are always on the front page: www.corpsplanning.us.

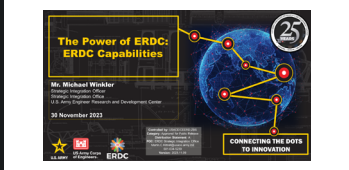
If there is a webinar topic you believe the PCoP would benefit from, please email your ideas to hqplanning@usace.army.mil.



TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS CENTER (TSC) ROLES AND CAPABILITIES (14 DECEMBER)



ERDC CAPABILITIES (30 NOVEMBER)



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NET EMISSIONS ANALYSIS TOOL (NEAT) (19 OCTOBER)



FIND MORE WEBINARS AT:
<https://planning.erdcdren.mil/toolbox/resources.cfm?Id=0&Option=Planning%20Webinars>



PCoP Q+A

GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS & RESOURCES FOR USACE PARTNER & COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES

Are there new guidance documents or resources planners should know about that provide opportunities for USACE's partners and communities, and specifically economically disadvantaged and underserved communities?

Planners should be aware of new guidance for the Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Program and the Tribal Partnership Program when engaging with communities:

- [Economic Guidance Memorandum 24-04: Tribal Partnership Program Reduced Cost Share Eligibility Criteria \(Ability to Pay\)](#) was published in January. All Tribes are now eligible for Ability to Pay provisions within the Tribal Partnership Program. In the past this has been an annually updated memorandum; this change is expected to remain until future legislation or Administration direction necessitates an update.
- Further guidance on providing assistance to economically disadvantaged communities under PAS was also published in January. Section 8119 of WRDA 2022 allows for waiving fees from local governments of economically disadvantaged communities when requesting technical assistance and planning support under PAS. The latest guidance, frequently asked questions, and a Section 8119 example fee waiver are available in the new [PAS Program section](#) within the Partnering with the Corps: Assistance to States, Tribes & Communities collection on the Planning Community Toolbox.

Planners should also understand existing guidance and resources when working with underserved communities:

- The [CEQ Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST) allows users to identify communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution,

and is a required screening tool for many federal programs.

- [Implementation Guidance for Section 160 of WRDA 2020](#) provides an enterprise-wide definition for “economically disadvantaged community,” helping planners understand how to apply provisions in WRDA 2020 and beyond that rely on the Section 160 definition, including Section 8119 for the PAS Program. If you are using Section 160 of WRDA 2022 to justify a project for a program or provision of law, please remember you may justify the project using one of the five criteria listed in the Implementation Guidance. If you are using CEJST, the project area may meet ANY of the eight categories used in the tool. The CEJST tool is the only economic indicator tool that you may use as justification of the community meeting the definition of economically disadvantaged. Tools from other agencies or state agencies may be used during development of a feasibility study to describe an underserved community, but cannot be used as a resource to justify a project under Section 160 of WRDA 2020.

Lastly, planners should keep internal coordination at the forefront when thinking about engaging with communities. It is critical for study team members from all functional areas (Programs, Planning, Engineering & Construction) to get and stay on the same page with a consistent understanding of community needs, ongoing and potential engagement and project opportunities, and existing authorities (both study-/project-specific and continuing).

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS,
CONCERNS, ANXIETIES —
IF YOUR QUESTION CAN HELP
FELLOW PLANNERS, EMAIL US AT
HQPLANNING@USACE.ARMY.MIL
AND MAYBE YOU'LL SEE IT HERE.**

