

Key Information Points
Principles, Requirements and Guidelines
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Agency Specific Procedures
March 2024

- **The Principles, Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Investments in Water Resources govern how Federal agencies evaluate proposed water resource development projects.**
 - The Principles, Requirements and Guidelines update and replace the 1983 Principles and Guidelines.
 - The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works has proposed a rule to establish procedures for the Corps of Engineers to implement the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines.
 - Agency Specific Procedures will serve as the framework for how planning teams will implement the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines. The final rule issuing the procedures will govern for the Corps and is a legally binding document.

- **When the rulemaking to establish the Agency Specific Procedures is complete, the Corps will need to update its planning guidance to match the new framework’s requirements.**
 - Guidance to be updated includes ER 1105-2-103, the new Engineer Pamphlets with business-line planning procedures, and various manuals, guides and checklists.
 - The large volume of guidance requiring updating may warrant the issuance of interim guidance to support teams while more detailed revisions are developed.

- **The 2014 Principles and Requirements modernize the approach to water resources development.**
 - They take a more comprehensive approach to water projects that maximizes economic, environmental, and social benefits.
 - Under the Principles and Requirements decision-making is intended to be more transparent and better informed through risk recognition.

- **While some aspects of Corps project planning will remain the same, significant new elements are being introduced. This presents a challenge for planners to learn new terminology and methods.**
 - Teams will need to build skills to apply broader benefit assessment techniques, expand public and interagency collaboration opportunities, and explore nature-based solutions.
 - Training will be critically important and must receive the highest priority to provide planners with the information and skills they will need to use the procedures.
 - A critical evaluation of the scope of changes in guidance and the execution of a rigorous training program is needed. Implementing the new procedures will be a large undertaking and the timing of these activities needs to be synchronized and closely coordinated.

- **The single federal objective of contributing to national economic development consistent with protecting the environment is changing.**
 - Recommendations will be aimed at meeting the broader federal objective of reflecting national priorities, encouraging economic development and protecting the environment by seeking to maximize sustainable economic development, seeking to avoid the unwise use of floodplains, and protecting and restoring the functions of natural systems and mitigating unavoidable damage to natural systems.
 - Communicating this sea change in planning philosophy will be challenging and requires a coordinated plan with messaging, training, assessment, and adaptation.

Agency Specific Procedures
Key Information Points & Frequently Asked Questions

- **For additional information see the documents available on the Planning Community of Practice website at <https://planning.erdc.dren.mil/toolbox/guidance.cfm?Id=269&Option=Principles%20and%20Guidelines>.**

Frequently Asked Questions
Principles, Requirements and Guidelines
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QUESTION: What are the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines?

ANSWER: The Principles and Requirements and Interagency Guidelines (PR&G) are the guidelines federal agencies use to develop water resources projects. The Principles, Requirements and Guidelines replace the 1983 Principles and Guidelines. The 1983 Principles and Guidelines were narrowly focused on a set of economic parameters that often limited the full consideration of the economic, environmental, and social costs and benefits. There are three components to the PR&G—the Principles and Requirements, the Interagency Guidelines, and Agency Specific Procedures. The Principles and Requirements were released in March 2013 and set the overarching policy direction. The Interagency Guidelines were finalized in 2014 and provide a common framework for agencies to implement the Principles and Requirements. Each water resource agency then develops Agency Specific Procedures for implementation of the PR&G.

QUESTION: What are the Agency Specific Procedures?

ANSWER: Agency Specific Procedures are the framework for how Corps planning teams will implement the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines. Other Federal agencies (EPA, Agriculture, Interior, NOAA, TVA and FEMA) have their own Agency Specific Procedures used to develop their own projects.

QUESTION: Why is the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works pursuing rulemaking to create the Agency Specific Procedures?

ANSWER: The proposed rule is in response to congressional direction provided in authorizing language in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. Pursuing rulemaking demonstrates a commitment to the PR&G, ensures robust and meaningful Tribal and public engagement, and makes the implementing procedures durable.

QUESTION: How does the proposed rule for Agency Specific Procedures relate to the recently issued Engineer Regulation (ER) 1105-2-103 – Policy for Conducting Civil Works Planning Studies?

ANSWER: ER 1105-2-103 is the current guidance covering how teams conduct civil works planning studies. The new ER replaces parts of the old Planning Guidance Notebook (ER 1105-2-100). Additional updates of the ER 1105-2-100 appendices are being prepared and will soon be issued as new Engineer Pamphlets. Collectively the new ER and the pamphlets will serve as planning guidance for study teams. The proposed rule for issuing Agency Specific Procedures is going through rulemaking

and it does not currently apply to Corps of Engineers studies. If issued as a final rule the Agency Specific Procedures will serve as the framework for how planning teams will implement the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines. If the procedures are issued as a final rule, the Corps would need to update ER 1105-2-103 to reflect the new procedures. The timing of the rulemaking is uncertain at this point but likely would not be completed until later in 2024 or in 2025. That would be followed by some amount of time needed to update ER 1105-2-103.

QUESTION: When do we transition studies to the Principles and Requirements and Interagency Guidelines? When do the Agency Specific Procedures take effect?

ANSWER: The Principles, Requirements and Guidelines are replacing the 1983 Principles and Guidelines. The Corps of Engineers will implement the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines through a set of Agency Specific Procedures. The rulemaking to establish Agency Specific Procedures is in the early stages (Proposed Rule). It still requires public comment consideration and then release of a final rule. This is a lengthy process and may not culminate until late 2024 or in 2025. At this point, the 1983 Principles and Guidelines for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies (P&G) continue to apply to all Corps studies evaluating proposed water resource development projects. Likewise all other guidance (such as the comprehensive documentation of benefits in Civil Works feasibility studies) and policy (such as the requirement for every district to have an Environmental Justice communications plan) remains in place to be applied to studies. Official direction will be issued on when to use the Principles and Requirements and Interagency Guidelines and the Agency Specific Procedures.

QUESTION: What is the authority for the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines?

ANSWER: The Principles and Requirements were established pursuant to the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-8), as amended (42 U.S.C.1962a-2) and consistent with Section 2031 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-114). In the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, Congress instructed the Secretary of the Army to revise the Principles and Guidelines for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

QUESTION: Is the requirement to select a National Economic Development Plan being eliminated in Corps of Engineers Civil Works planning studies?

ANSWER: Yes. The selection of the National Economic Development Plan will no longer be required. However, the methods used to evaluate economic outputs will remain an important part of the planning and evaluation of alternatives in studies.

QUESTION: What is the Federal objective in water resources planning?

ANSWER: The 1983 Principles and Guidelines federal objective of contributing to national economic development consistent with protecting the Nation's environment is

changing. The 2014 Principles, Requirements and Guidelines describe the Federal objective as reflecting national priorities, encouraging economic development, and protecting the environment. The objective is rooted in the National Water Resources Planning Policy established in Section 2031 of WRDA 2007. Because the provision is in law it applies to all Corps of Engineers planning studies.

QUESTION: What are ecosystem services and how are these used in the new procedures?

ANSWER: The Agency Specific Procedures introduce the concept of Ecosystem Services to be used in evaluations to capture the benefits of alternative plans to solve water resources problems. Ecosystems provide services to people. Ecosystem goods and services are things provided by nature that are of use to humans. A variety of metrics may be used to measure ecosystem services and these may be monetary or non-monetary measurements. The ecosystem service concept provides an analytical framework which can be commonly used across agencies, fully articulates the tradeoffs inherent in a decision, and provides additional information to the decision-maker regarding the full range of benefits and costs associated with a proposed alternative. Evaluation methods should apply an ecosystem services approach to appropriately capture all effects (economic, environmental, and social) associated with a potential Federal water resources investment. The ecosystem services approach is a way to organize all the potential effects of an action (economic, environmental, and social) within a framework that explicitly recognizes their interconnected nature.

QUESTION: How is the proposed rule related to the comprehensive documentation of benefits policy directive memorandum?

ANSWER: The documentation of benefits policy reinforces the requirement to present information in reports about all four accounts in the 1983 Principles and Guidelines. The memorandum also establishes equal consideration of economic, environmental, and social benefits. It calls for certain types of alternatives to be included in a final array of alternatives for coastal and flood risk management studies. The comprehensive documentation of benefits memorandum is a precursor to the proposed Agency Specific Procedures and establishes similar considerations and reporting requirements. This foundational change in planning considerations is helping to build the transparent presentation of plans beyond the single purpose of economic development constrained by environmental and social considerations. A significant difference between policy and the proposed Agency Specific Procedures will be the elimination of the requirement to select a National Economic Development plan as the recommended plan for authorization (unless the ASA(CW) approves selection of a different plan).