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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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CECW-ZB

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MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS, AND DISTRICTS

SUBJECT: Further Advancing Project Delivery Efficiency and Effectiveness of USACE Civil Works

1. Beginning 1 July 2017, this office will embark on a comprehensive organizational review of current authorities, policies, regulations, and procedures. The desired outcome is to identify opportunities for enhanced project delivery and increased organizational efficiency and effectiveness by reducing redundancies and delegating authority for decision making to the most practical and appropriate level. As a world class organization, we are committed to reliably delivering the best quality projects and services on time, and within budget. To do so, we must fully implement our Project Management doctrine, recognize risk and uncertainties, and develop mitigation strategies that allow us to accept appropriate levels of risk to improve project delivery. As part of the Civil Works strategy, I intend to operationalize risk-informed decision making at all levels in the organization, and then I expect discipline in documenting these decisions at the appropriate level. The following five paragraphs capture the key lines of effort that I expect us all to advance.

2. **Embrace and Operationalize Risk-Informed Decision Making**. We must change our behavior regarding risk management across Civil Works and in our policies, analytical approaches and models, priorities, and dialogue with sponsors and communities. Civil Works will undertake the following steps to develop a more comprehensive understanding and application of risk-informed decision making and project delivery across the agency:

a. Publish an Engineer Circular entitled *USACE Risk Framework*. This document will establish common principles for assessing, managing, and communicating risk. It will articulate principles and practices that ensure the consideration and application of risk and uncertainty to Civil Works activities and decisions;

b. Require functional areas and programs to develop risk-informed decision making processes for key decisions; and

c. Require all levels of the organization to embrace risk-informed decision making as a key component of project delivery in our day-to-day business in Civil Works. To support these efforts, Civil Works will undertake the following activities:

(1) Designate a USACE Risk Enterprise Lead supported by national risk experts who mentor, coach, and support risk-informed decision making;

(2) Provide informal training opportunities for all levels of the organization on what it means to be a risk management organization. This will take advantage of existing expertise and build on lessons learned from programs already incorporating risk into their activities (e.g., Levee/Dam Safety, Planning, Operations/Asset Management); and

(3) Expand opportunities for participation in graduate-level risk management certification programs across Civil Works functional areas and programs.

3. **Make, Justify, and Document Decisions at the Most Appropriate Levels.** Currently in Civil Works too many decisions that are better made at the Major Subordinate Command (MSC) or District levels are elevated to Headquarters. This results in unnecessary time and cost, which is ultimately borne by our sponsors and stakeholders and degrades our project delivery. We will take a series of steps to rebalance the decision-making responsibilities and authorities across Civil Works to achieve an efficient process that is risk informed and well documented. This will allow Headquarters staff to apply more energy and expertise to strategic decisions that have enterprise-wide impacts. To support this approach, I am directing the following activities:

a. Improve documentation of key risk-management decisions across the life cycle of Civil Works projects. Documentation, including considerations and rationale, is critical to promote risk-informed decision making at all levels of the organization, as decisions often need to be adjusted based on changing conditions or improvements in understanding. Share risk information and rationale for decision making with sponsors and communities to maintain meaningful, transparent, and positive relationships;

b. Utilize Design and Construction Evaluation visits to incorporate additional review, assure consistent documentation of key decisions, and improve problem solving;

c. Discontinue Civil Works Review Boards (CWRB), effective immediately. There are already sufficient reviews and assessments performed on projects without a special board for each project; and

d. Develop guidance to replace CWRB processes consistent with SMART Planning and risk-informed decision-making concepts. Guidance will be developed that engages Senior Executives at the Agency Decision Milestone to agree on an agency-supported plan and a path forward to the final decision document.

4. **Synchronize Headquarters Functions to Support MSC and District Project Delivery**. For the organization to effectively and routinely consider and document risk, Headquarters must play a strategic and supportive role. We will only be successful if functional and technical corporate resources work in a synchronized fashion horizontally. Further, decision-making processes must be vertically aligned to maximize value, support risk-informed decisions, and cooperate to solve delivery challenges. I will lead an effort to review and adjust coordination and synchronization within Headquarters including the following activities:

a. Focus our project delivery processes and mindset to deliver on or ahead of schedule, at or under budget while sustaining a high quality of finished products and services. To support this objective, we will focus on the following activities:

(1) Mentor, train, guide, and drive the Civil Works project teams in implementation of project delivery best practices;

(2) For all Civil Works projects, develop policies and standards that support on time and within budget delivery while assessing and reporting risk; and

(3) Track and provide regular updates on project delivery progress to measure effectiveness, ensure timely problem solving, inform continual improvement, and ultimately drive project delivery.

b. Adjust the framework for discussion and decision making between Headquarters USACE and Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works with a focus on organizational efficiencies and transparency;

c. Sharpen connections between programs, functional areas, communities of practice, and the Institute for Water Resources (IWR) so that the expertise, activities, and products of IWR are more distinctly connected to the operational and strategic goals of Civil Works. As a starting point, every major activity at IWR will have a Senior Executive Service champion who will provide guidance to the scope and relevance of IWR products, as well as promote use of product(s) and results to the field; and

d. Conduct a staffing assessment of Civil Works to inform an approach that ensures staffing flexibility to adjust to changes in workload and promotes professional development opportunities necessary to ensure vibrant, leading-edge personnel, while effectively carrying out our mission.

5. **Integrate and Synchronize Agency Policy and Guidance**. Civil Works has more than 1,000 major policy and guidance publications, including ERs, EPs, ECs, ETLs, etc. In addition, there are thousands more Engineering Construction Bulletins (ECBs) and other informal guidance. Much of our formal and informal policy and guidance is more than a decade old with authors and proponents distributed throughout the enterprise. This has created a situation where the latest policy and guidance can be difficult to locate and is sometimes conflicting or redundant. As such, our guidance is currently not meeting all the needs of our MSCs and Districts. I am directing the following activities to improve the efficiency of development and the quality and timeliness of our Civil Works policy and guidance:

a. Continue to reinforce the policy and regulation guidance update process already begun within Civil Works whereby we use MSCs, Headquarters, and contractor support to review, update, consolidate, or eliminate guidance. This process will include coordinating among senior policy advisors, communities of practice, and functional areas; grouping and prioritizing update and review efforts; and drafting a long-term strategy for document management. The process team will develop approaches to ensure consistent application of agency-wide priorities (e.g., risk-informed decision making, sustainability, and cyber security), promote common definitions, and train team leads in effective policy scoping, writing, and review;

b. Develop and institute a formal Director of Civil Works (DCW) memorandum process that will, when appropriate, provide policy guidance applicable across communities of practice and/or programs. These will not replace the ECBs, Planning Bulletins and other temporary guidance vehicles, but will likely reduce publications specific to a single functional area and reinforce cross functional information or direction; and

c. Review all new/updated policies, guidance, and procedures so that the rationale for elevation of decisions to Headquarters is well-founded and clear. Examples of policies currently undergoing this scrutiny are 33 Code of Federal Regulations Section 408 and the Planning Guidance Notebook.

6. **Incorporate Social and Environmental Benefits into Project Formulation, Design, and Implementation**. The nation and the communities we serve have a variety of objectives for USACE's Civil Works water resources development projects, such as public safety, economic vitality, recreation, and quality of life. Existing policies

and practices in Civil Works are sometimes hampered by a single-objective look at water resource development, which constrains our ability to apply our full technical and problem-solving capability to water resources problems. Fully identifying, describing, and considering a broader array of potential project benefits is important to ensuring the solutions we develop, recommend, and implement are smart investments regardless of potential cost-share limitations. All Civil Works programs should consider how and under what conditions and circumstances expanded objectives and consideration of social and environmental considerations can be undertaken within existing legislated or policy-directed timelines. Also, all Civil Works programs will incorporate those broader objectives and considerations in our daily decision-making processes using qualitative and quantitative approaches where practical and appropriate. The following are some examples of ongoing efforts to achieve this goal:

a. Planning is conducting an effort to incorporate concepts of integrated water resources management, climate variability, resilience, sustainability, natural and nature-based solutions, and ecosystem goods and services into Planning guidance and procedures;

b. Teams working on feasibility studies following the North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study (post-Sandy) are looking beyond coastal storm damage risk reduction to incorporate social and cultural considerations and ecological resiliency; and

c. Levee Safety is working with the Engineer Research and Development Center Engineering with Nature effort and natural resources interests to design a risk-informed decision-making process for consideration of endangered species habitat needs as they relate to vegetation on levees.

7. I look forward to getting your feedback on these ideas and actions and advancing Civil Works policies, procedures, and operations.

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Director of Civil Works

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