



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
CIVIL WORKS
108 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-0108

SACW

22 May 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL FOR CIVIL AND
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Interim Federal Interest Determination (FID) Guidance

1. References:

- a. SACW memorandum (Realignment of the Investigation Phase and Federal Interest Determination to Ensure Effective Use of Federal Resources), 23 February 2026
- b. SACW memorandum (Prioritization of Effort Within the Army Civil Works Program), 23 February 2026.
- c. SACW memorandum (Propelling Project Delivery through Early Actionable Increments for complex water resources problems), 23 February 2026
- d. SACW memorandum (Smarter Real Estate Acquisition), 23 February 2026

2. Purpose: To provide clarity on OASA (CW) coordination with the Corps on RAPID. I am providing the following interim guidance on behalf of Mr. Telle and Mr. Forsgren for the Federal Interest Determination (FID) and preliminary study scoping efforts to be concurred by HQUSACE and OASA (CW). With the provision of this interim guidance, the July 28, 2025 "Implementation Guidance for Section 905(b) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, as amended, Federal Interest Determination" is immediately rescinded. The 14 individual pieces of guidance issued in February 2026 by Secretary Telle, particularly "Realignment of the Investigation Phase and Federal Interest Determination to Ensure Effective Use of Federal Resources" provides the basis this new interim guidance. The additional guidance provided herein is to facilitate the many fruitful engagements between OASA (CW) and HQUSACE and the MSCs. Final guidance will be issued over the next year as we learn more from the initial application of the RAPID framework to new studies and ongoing studies.

3. The following interim guidance shall take effect immediately:

- a. Development of an FID and preliminary study scope.

(1) The FID shall be carried out at full Federal expense for a cost of not more than \$100,000 and must be completed not later than 45 days after receipt of funds.

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FIDs will be developed for all new start studies, General Reevaluation Reports and spin-off studies. FIDs may not be suitable for Comprehensive studies, Watershed studies, or Limited Reevaluation Reports or generally for studies that do not result in a federal investment recommendation.

(2) For Limited Reevaluation Studies and Validation Studies for projects in Preconstruction Engineering and Design (PED) or Construction, under a Design Agreement, the team will first confirm Federal interest and develop a scope that includes identification of any potential policy concerns for OASA (CW) review and approval. A briefing to OASA(CW) is required to gain approval prior to proceeding.

(3) Watershed and Comprehensive studies will also require early coordination with OASA (CW). After executing the necessary study cost share agreement, a scope and the study execution strategy, which must prioritize contracting and leveraging non-federal capabilities, will be developed as a cost-shared effort. If contracting is not feasible, clear rationale and justification to accomplish the work in whole or part must be provided. OASA (CW) approval is required prior to initiating work.

b. The District Commander will base the FID on existing information to the greatest extent practicable. A FID will assess the probability that alternative plans can be formulated to alleviate a clearly identified water resources problem, with the benefits exceeding the costs, in compliance with the current statutory and policy requirements for recommending water resources development projects to Congress.

c. The District Commander will consider the breadth of known economic, environmental, and social benefits that may accrue to the given community, including those identified by the relevant community. The completion of a FID by a District Commander is not a major Federal action requiring National Environmental Policy Act analysis.

d. The scope of the FID should include the following, at a minimum:

(1) Study authority

(2) Concise discussion of relevant prior studies, reports, and existing projects

(3) A reasonable assessment of specific water resources problems opportunities relevant to the study authority and study area

(4) An assessment of whether the water resources problem and solution align with at least one of the USACE core missions (flood damage reduction, navigation or ecosystem restoration)

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(5) At least one potential solution to address identified problems and opportunities

(6) Preliminary evaluation of solutions to include environmental impacts and whether expected benefits have a reasonable likelihood of exceeding relative costs

(7) NFI's interest in participating in the feasibility study support of identified potential solutions

(8) An assessment as to whether the study will likely identify at least one actionable element that can reach a 35% design maturity level within 3 years and \$3 million dollars

(9) The need for any policy exceptions

(10) Determination as to whether a study or project is or is not in the Federal interest

e. Feasibility studies will be conducted for no more than three years and \$ 3 million dollars. To ensure that teams are focused on Building Infrastructure Not Paperwork (BINP) and are seeking early actionable elements within the context of potentially larger comprehensive water resources problems, HQUSACE and OASA(CW) will be engaged in scope development and scope management throughout the study lifecycle. During the FID phase, and within the first \$100,000, the study team will develop a study scope that includes the following information:

(1) Study Information

(a) Type of Study (pre/post authorization)

(b) Clear description of problems, needs, objectives, opportunities and constraints

(c) Future without project conditions

(d) Identify level of NEPA and any significant environmental factors, with an eye towards appropriate information and compliance actions during each life cycle phase (planning, design, implementation and OMRR&R). Suggest possible phasing of this work for decisions in each phase but gaining permitting level compliance prior to construction.

(2) NFI Capabilities as a study sponsor and/or in project implementation

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- (3) How the effort fits within the core USACE mission areas
- (4) Any known or likely interagency challenges
- (5) Any known or likely implementation challenges (legal, fiscal, geographic, etc)
- (6) Real estate challenges (see ref 1. d.)
- (7) Decision Risk assessment (areas of concern: technical or policy)
- (8) Mechanisms to advance work in alignment with BINP (in-house, NFS, contract); modeling tools (PL & EN), data availability, etc.

f. Approval of a completed FID will be documented in writing. District Commanders will submit a completed FID through the MSC for synchronized concurrence by HQUSACE and OASA (CW). District will hold at least one vertical team meeting no later than 30 days after initiation of the FID with HQUSACE and OASA (CW) prior to the completion of the FID. Study team coordination with the vertical team beginning with the FID and over the study lifecycle is expected to propel the delivery of infrastructure.

g. Upon concurrence by HQUSACE and OASA (CW) of a positive the FID, a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA) may be executed between the District Commander and the NFI to commence the study. The scope of work supporting the FCSA must reflect any requirements identified by HQUSACE and OASA (CW).

h. If the completed FID determines that Federal interest is not substantiated, the NFI will be provided notice and apprised of available cost-shared technical assistance authorities to aid in further advancing water resources solutions for local implementation.

4. Questions regarding the policy in this memorandum should be directed to Mr. Douglas Gorecki, Project Planning and Review at douglas.j.gorecki.civ@army.mil or (703) 697-0718.

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Project Planning and Review)

CF:
Mr. Bush, Chief of Planning and Policy