



US Army Corps
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PLANNINGahead

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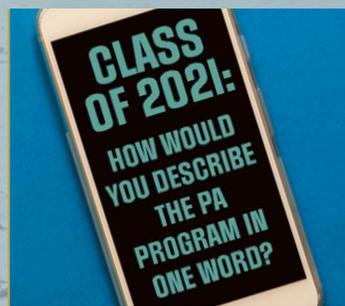
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VIRTUAL VIEW FROM HQ

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING CHIEF OF PLANNING & POLICY – ERIC BUSH



GREETINGS FELLOW CIVIL WORKS PLANNERS, AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2021 brings us, among many other things, another record appropriation for our Civil Works program, another Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and a change in our federal government’s administration. More on those topics, but first I want to take just a moment to reflect on 2020. Let’s start with authorizations: 46 Chief’s Reports were authorized in WRDA 2020, which is a record number for any two-year interval between authorizations. Looking over the list, we had 30 (!) Chief’s Reports signed in 2020 for projects in 16 states and another nine Director’s Reports approved. All I can say is: **PHENOMENAL JOB!** This is one of the best things about working at Headquarters; I get to see the greatness of our Planning Community. You have definitely set a new standard of excellence in program delivery over the past two years.

And, most of this work was done during a pandemic that still has most of us working from home (I am writing this from my home office in Atlanta, GA). One good thing that came from that was proving to ourselves and others that we could be efficient and effective working virtually. We’ve still got some kinks to work out; there is no replacing person-to-person interactions with WebEx. But I think we will see initiatives in 2021 to re-define and transform (revolutionize?) concepts about the future workplace.

Looking forward, we have a new WRDA to implement. We have a team of USACE and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) senior Civil Works practitioners looking over the entire enacted bill to confirm which provisions require implementation guidance and the scope of reports that are required. Once the ASA(CW)’s office approves the list of guidance to be developed, there is a 60-day public notice period to allow interested parties to comment before the guidance is finalized. Look for more detailed information about WRDA 2020 implementation guidance in subsequent issues of Planning Ahead.

We also have new policy from the ASA(CW) directing us to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of all of the benefits and impacts associated with Civil Works project recommendations, including consideration of potential tradeoffs. I’m excited about this! This is the most revolutionary change in how we do Planning since SMART in 2011. There will be some uncertainty and some growing pains, but I am confident we will figure out quickly how to execute the ASA(CW)’s intent. We will only fail if we do not try.

Finally, in closing, I just want to congratulate and say farewell and best wishes to the honorable ASA(CW) R. D. James and Principal Deputy Ryan Fisher. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with them both. Mr. James and Mr. Fisher provided steadfast, timely, and strategic leadership of our Civil Works program. And they have both been courteous, kind, and pleasant to work with. We were blessed over the past four years to have them at the helm. And it is noteworthy that our program reached new heights under their leadership. Farewell and thank you, Mr. James and Mr. Fisher!

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

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



WINTER 2021 FRONT COVER — SHORELINE EROSION IN LEWES BEACH, DELAWARE FOLLOWING HURRICANE SANDY IN 2012. SOURCE: SCOTT SANDERSON, PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT



PLANNING COMMUNITY WELCOMES NEW PCoP DEPUTY

Susan Layton joined the Headquarters team as the new PCoP Deputy in October 2020. Bringing 19 years of experience as a USACE Planner to the position, Susan started out with the Jacksonville District where she worked as a biologist on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and ecosystem restoration plan formulation in the Everglades Program. In 2011 she transferred to the Norfolk District to serve as the Environmental Analysis Section Chief, and then as Planning Chief starting in 2015. Susan is a Water Resources Certified Planner and has also served as an instructor in the PCC3 Planning Capstone Course since its creation.

DEAR PLANNERS:

Greetings and Happy New Year 2021! And what a year 2020 was.... So much happening in our world, and yet YOU ALL showed great resilience and continued to execute – the Planning Community successfully completed 16 Alternative Milestone Meetings, 23 Tentatively Selected Plans, and 32 Agency Decision Milestones in 2020. I would say that is amazing in any year, and especially for a year with unprecedented challenges such as 2020!

As your new Planning Community of Practice Deputy, I want to both introduce myself and, more importantly, applaud these

great accomplishments from last year – you all rock! I couldn't be prouder to be a team member with each of you as we move into the future. On that note, I have a few items I wanted to share regarding some initiatives that we will be focusing on this year. Our PCoP team has multiple efforts ongoing to ensure we are positioned for a successful future.

First, to ensure that we continually assess our performance in order to improve, we have been formulating a "Collaboration and Execution Assessment" (CEA) initiative which will be piloted this year. The primary goal of the CEA Review is to enhance the delivery of

quality Civil Works (CW) planning products in a timely and efficient manner. One way the quality of planning products can be assured is through consistent application of technical, policy, and legal compliance standards. Through the CEA Review, we seek to share lessons learned and best practices within the realms of policy review, quality assurance, and public transparency and reporting of program execution.

Second, as we move into the future, we want to ensure that we are prepared for an ever-changing Civil Works landscape. Over the past few years, we have dealt with multiple supplemental appropriations on top of our

annual allocations. Although we cannot know what the future will bring, we CAN assess our strengths and weaknesses, as well as identify innovative opportunities, to ensure we are poised to not only execute successfully but excel in our future Civil Works planning. We have established a team to take on this Resilient Planning initiative.

These are just a few of the items that our PCoP team is working, and we will continue to provide updates on these items throughout the year. Feel free to reach out to me if you have thoughts or ideas on any of these items, and I look forward to working with you all!

▶ 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.

Have ideas for strengthening our Community or Planning in general? Look for the Suggestion Box on the front page of the Toolbox. In the interest of continuous improvement and

lifelong learning, this suggestion box is provided as a tool for providing input to Headquarters Planning and Policy leadership.

Recent national policy changes and new guidance applicable to Planning are always available on the front page under the Policy and Guidance Updates newsfeed. Recent additions to the toolbox include several guidance memorandums from

the ASA(CW) and Headquarters regarding delegations within the Continuing Authority Program (CAP); Economic Guidance Memorandum 21-01 on Federal interest rates to be used for projects for FY2021, including the federal discount rate, deferred payment interest rates, water supply interest rates, hydropower interest rate, and delinquent payment collection rate; the Comprehensive Documentation

of Benefits in Decision Document Policy Directive memorandum signed by the ASA(CW); and a copy of the new Water Resources Development Act of 2020.

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.





PCoP NEWS FLASHES

PLANNING COMMUNITY NEWS

USACE Planning Delivers for the Nation

Demonstrating the hard work and commitment of USACE planners and our non-federal sponsors, Congress authorized 54 new projects for construction in WRDA 2020. These projects represent completed feasibility reports and their accompanying Chief's Reports or Director's Reports for studies completed in the two years since WRDA 2018. In addition, WRDA 2020 authorizes 27 new feasibility studies, primarily based on WRRDA Section 7001 proposals (Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development) by non-federal entities interested in partnering with USACE to address a water resources problem. Essays!

a provision for 9 new start studies, including 3 flood risk management (1 being coastal storm risk management), 2 aquatic ecosystem restoration, 2 navigation, 1 multipurpose watershed for coastal resiliency, and 1 MR&T investigation. In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 includes the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 as "Division AA" of the bill. Several WRDA 2020 provisions will require development of implementation guidance for the field. HQUSACE will coordinate with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Works to establish the list of provisions requiring implementation guidance – look out for additional information in the near future.

is available in a "distributed learning" format and may be taken on an individual student's schedule. The PCoP is aware of difficulty finding open spots to register for the course; planners encountering this issue should work with their supervisors to request that the appropriate District or MSC Training Coordinator to contact the ULC registrar to discuss resolution.

delineations, flood warning and preparedness systems, inventory of flood prone structures, workshops, and assistance with emergency action planning and flood plain management planning. For more information on the proposal process, please see the Announcement on the PCoP SharePoint homepage.



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.

FY21 Omnibus Appropriations Bill & WRDA 2020

Congress passed and the President signed into law on 27 December 2020 a \$1.4 trillion government funding package that secures federal agency operations through September 2021. The FY2021 omnibus appropriations bill includes a record appropriation for the USACE Civil Works program of \$7.795 billion, including

Updated USACE Civil Works Project Development Process Course Now Available

USACE Civil Works Project Development Process, part of the "Planning Core Curriculum" (PROSPECT Course #86) has been updated to reflect current Planning policy and guidance and students can now register for the course on the Huntsville USACE Learning Center (ULC) website. The course

FY22 Interagency Nonstructural Proposals Now Being Accepted

Each year, funds are allocated from the Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS) program to support interagency nonstructural efforts nationwide. Allocated funds support work by USACE staff (it is not a grant). Nonstructural proposals should seek to reduce human exposure or vulnerability to a flood hazard without altering the nature or extent of that hazard (reducing consequences rather than hazards). Proposed efforts must also be interagency: work should be carried out collaboratively with partners, at least two of which should be governmental entities other than USACE. Some examples of past funded projects include flood hazard evaluations and floodplain



PLANNER PERSPECTIVES: NEW, CURRENT, AND GRADUATING PLANNING ASSOCIATES SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS



THE PLANNING ASSOCIATES CLASSES OF 2020 AND 2021 (AND SOME FURRY “COWORKERS”) VIRTUALLY ATTEND THEIR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COURSE IN SUMMER 2020. SOURCE: NATE RICHARDS, MVD

At the end of last year, the Planning Associates (PA) Program congratulated its Class of 2020 members during a series of week-long graduation events and welcomed members of the new Class of 2022.

The PA Class of 2020 was the first class to complete the “refreshed” version of the Program, with several key changes that started in 2018: shifting the Program

length from one year to two years with a new class starting each year; combining course content and spreading courses out over two years to encourage class mixing; and adding an “application assignment” to the Program’s requirements.

Just as PAs and course instructors were getting their feet under them a year into PA Refresh, the COVID-19 pandemic sent

home members of both the Class of 2020 and 2021 from the “DC Experience” course as USACE went on national “max telework” orders. Course owners with scheduled courses through the summer raced to adapt courses with new strategies for virtual instruction and distance learning.

As a result of the commitment of PAs and instructors, the Classes of

2020 and 2021 were able to complete and pass their final and midterm tests, the Class of 2020 was able to graduate in CY2020, the Class of 2021 members successfully delivered their Capstone Projects in December, and the Class of 2022 will kick off its cycle without any significant schedule changes.





WE RECENTLY ASKED THE PAs — the graduating Class of 2020, current Class of 2021, and onboarding Class of 2022 — to provide us their perspectives on the Program...

CLASS OF 2020: What is your biggest takeaway from your time in the PA Program?

My biggest takeaway would be the value of networking and having the opportunity to be immersed in the Planning world, including getting to understand how the planning and policy world works in Washington, DC.
— Robin Armetta, SAS

The PA Program has gone through a dramatic transformation: first in its conversion to a two-year program, and now in the virtualization of much of its content due to COVID. The instructors have done a phenomenal job of adapting; courses remain relevant, rigorous, and engaging. I'm grateful to have been at the forefront of this modernization.
— Kim Townsend, HQUSACE

The program provided not only education in the business lines I don't often work in, but a connection to many amazing people across the Planning community. Seeing the great work that so many are doing across the organization is inspiring.
— Eric Lynn, NWK

My biggest takeaway from my time in the PA Program is the realization that the Corps' Planning Community of Practice are truly all in this together: the support, understanding, and problem solving to achieve project success is occurring at all levels of our organization!
— Kelly Baxter Osborne, NWD

My takeaway from the PA program is an appreciation for the complexity of work that we do in planning and the need to leverage our expertise across the organization to water resource solutions to water resource problems in our studies.
— Elliott Porter, LRP

The PA program exposed me to a diversity of missions, resources, and talent across the enterprise I may not have had the chance to see otherwise. This highlighted the importance of going outside your comfort zone, building AND maintaining your professional network, and not being afraid to put yourself out there in the pursuit of knowledge.
— Matt Shanks, LRD

Senior USACE leaders continue to make this program a win-win for all by participating and supporting the PA Program. Top level support encourages participants to go the extra mile to learn and grow in their experiences.
— Louise Williams, HQUSACE

My biggest takeaways ...are the relationships I made during the 2 year program and the confidence I gained through the in-class team building, virtual classes, the D.C. experience, job shadowing, to mock interviews. I learned and practiced new skills by playing my "PA Card."
— Dr. Kat McCain, MVP



MEMBERS OF THE PA CLASS OF 2020, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: KIM TOWNSEND, LOUISE WILLIAMS, MATT SHANKS, ROBIN ARMETTA, KAT MCCAIN, ELLIOTT PORTER, KELLY BAXTER OSBORNE, AND ERIC LYNN. CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR GRADUATION! SOURCE: JOY MUNCY, IWR



COMMITMENT
— Erin Maloney, SPK

NETWORKING
— Jenn Shunfenthal, NAO

PERSPECTIVE
— Justin Brewer, NWO

INNOVATIVE
— Steve Stalikas, LRB

PERSISTENCE
— Corrie Stetzel, SPK

FLEXIBILITY
— Jessie Mizic, NWS

INTEGRATE
— Tom Herbert, LRN

**CLASS OF 2021:
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PA PROGRAM IN ONE WORD?**

FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PA PROGRAM, CONTACT JOY MUNCY (IWR, PA PROGRAM MANAGER) OR NATE RICHARDS (RPED-N).

THE PA PROGRAM

is an advanced training opportunity in water resources planning intended to broaden planners' competencies in solving complex water resources problems and challenges, and to strengthen their leadership talents. The Program curriculum is rich in team building, leadership training, experiential training in the USACE Civil Works business functions, case studies, individual and group projects, instructional training and experiences, and provides many networking opportunities with leaders from the public and private sectors.

CLASS OF 2022: What are you most hoping to get out of the PA Program?

What I am hoping to get out of the PA Program is a better understanding of the planning process as well as a better understanding of myself as a leader. — Trish Naquin, MVN

I hope that through the PA Program, I learn and grow as a leader. My biggest hope in the PA Program is to influence change by bringing innovative solutions to solve some of the Corps' problems. — Hannah Hadley, NWW

I would like to bring additional planning knowledge back to the Jacksonville District to better train and mentor new planners. — Amy Thompson, SAJ

My primary goal is to accelerate my planning education. Although I've been full-time with the Corps for over 20 years, I've only been in Planning for about 18 months, so I still have a lot to learn. — Ken Woodard, LRH

I am hoping to gain more experience learning how the planning process is applied across business lines, geographies, ecoregions, and cultural settings that differ from those of my home district. — Alex Hoxsie, LRC

Building professional friendships across Districts, MSCs, and HQ that will help me become a more efficient, reliable policy and guidance resource for my District leadership and colleagues. — Tina Teed, NWP



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: FINDING NEW BENEFICIAL USES OF DREDGED MATERIAL FOR THE DELAWARE RIVER

STUDY AREA COMMUNITY LEWES BEACH, DE AFTER SUPERSTORM SANDY – OCTOBER 2012. SOURCE: SCOTT SANDERSON, PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT

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Scott Sanderson (Philadelphia District) recently spoke with Planning Ahead about his key takeaways from the Delaware Beneficial Use of Dredged Material for the Delaware River Feasibility Study, which considered opportunities to beneficially use dredged material for coastal storm risk management benefits in several Delaware communities. This project was featured in a September PCoP webinar (posted on the Planning Community Toolbox); additional information can be found on the Philadelphia District website.

In March 2020, Lieutenant General Todd Semonite, the 54th Chief of Engineers, signed the Chief's Report for the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material for the Delaware River (State of Delaware) feasibility study. This study was in partial response to a study resolution requesting a review of two Chief's Reports for existing Federal navigation projects: Delaware River between Philadelphia,

Pennsylvania and Trenton, New Jersey; and Delaware River Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to the Sea. The Congressional resolution charged USACE to determine if there were opportunities to leverage the beneficial use of dredged material resulting from the operation and maintenance of these two navigation projects.

The standard practice for navigation projects is to dispose of dredged

material via the "least cost environmentally acceptable disposal" location (this is also known as the Federal Standard). This study examined opportunities to beneficially use dredged material for coastal storm risk management (CSR) benefits in various Delaware communities; this makes it one of the few times USACE has specifically considered such benefits related to a beneficial use project. In particular, the study project team went through the full cost-benefit analysis of beneficially using dredged material for CSR benefits while factoring in sea level rise considerations, as well as impacts of utilizing operation and maintenance dredging from a large-scale Federal navigation project.

The study area was located within the section of the Delaware River watershed that lies within the State of Delaware, the Delaware River itself, and inland bay communities along the Atlantic Ocean coastline of Delaware. The north/south boundaries of the study area extended from the Delaware-Pennsylvania state line to the Delaware-Maryland state line.

The project delivery team (PDT) observed that the study area shoreline was characterized by a flat, low-lying coastal plain with broad marshes and narrow barriers of sand along the bay beaches; therefore, it was susceptible to damages caused by erosion, wave attack, and inundation from coastal storms, along

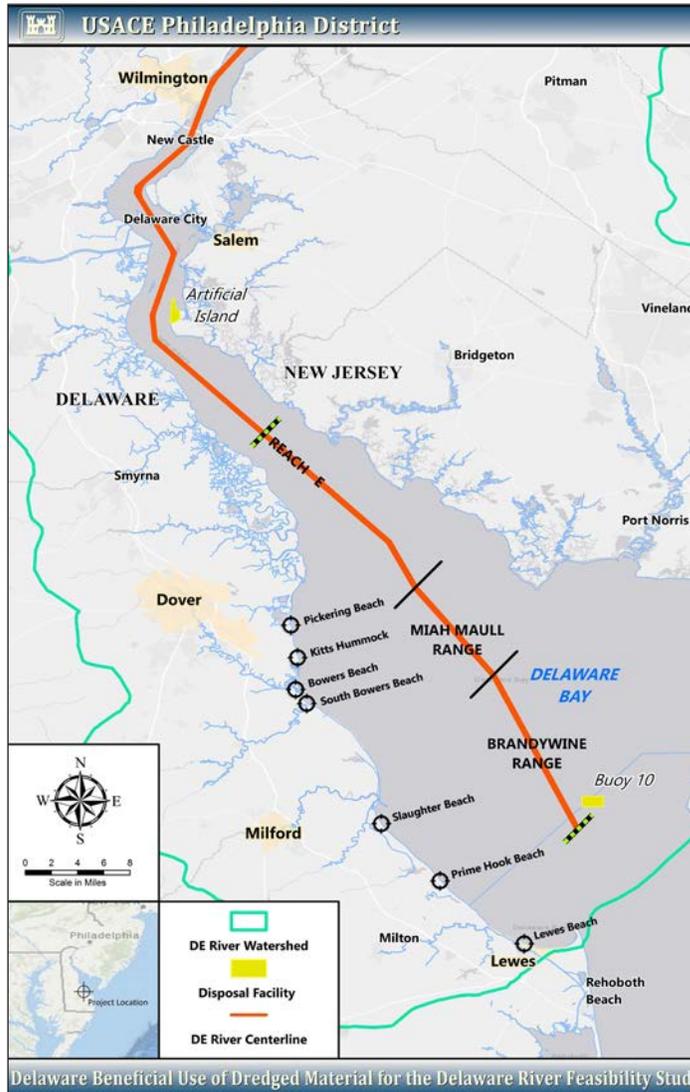


Throughout the study process, the PDT challenged themselves to answer the question: “If this material must be dredged for navigation purposes regardless, why not look for a way to use it beneficially?”

with rising water levels due to sea level change. The nature of the CSRMs problems and the study area characteristics presented an opportunity to beneficially use dredged material to reduce vulnerability to coastal storms by minimizing erosion, wave, and storm-surge related damages to Delaware communities.

During the feasibility study execution, opportunities for beneficial use of dredged material for beach nourishment for CSRMs purposes were evaluated throughout the Delaware shoreline until seven communities were identified for the beneficial use of dredged material from the Delaware River. These seven communities in the recommended plan span approximately 29 miles along the Delaware Bay and include (from north to south): Pickering Beach, Kitts Hummock, Bowers Beach, South Bowers Beach, Slaughter Beach, Prime Hook Beach, and Lewes.

While there are 19 river ranges (with varying lengths and widths) periodically dredged in the Delaware River Philadelphia,



RECOMMENDED PLAN FOR THE DELAWARE BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL FOR THE DELAWARE RIVER FEASIBILITY STUDY. SOURCE: PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT

Pennsylvania to the Sea Federal Navigation Project, the study focused on sediment in two specific ranges. The Brandywine Range and Miah Maull Range were selected as the source areas for beach nourishment at the seven locations in the recommended plan because of the sediment quality historically dredged from these ranges, as well as the anticipated shoaling rates and available sediment quantities.

The Miah Maull and Brandywine Ranges

together represent an estimated future operation and maintenance dredging quantity of approximately 465,000 cubic yards per year. Based on least cost environmentally acceptable disposal requirements, the current standard dredged material disposal practices for these ranges utilize an open-water placement site in Delaware Bay known as “Buoy 10” and/or a confined disposal facility (Artificial Island) located approximately 40 miles north.

The PDT was able to demonstrate the CSRMs benefits of using beneficial use of dredged material instead of disposing in these two standard sites by incorporating multiple sensitivity analyses into the study, by building in the remaining working capacity of the Buoy 10 site into the benefit cost analysis portion of the study, and by qualitatively describing the environmental benefits of beach restoration vs. open-water sediment disposal.

Throughout the study process, the PDT challenged themselves to answer the question: “If this material must be dredged for navigation purposes regardless, why not look for a way to use it beneficially?”

The study concluded that beneficially using dredged material from the Delaware Bay Federal navigation project provided positive benefits to the Nation as it would allow for the continued maintenance dredging of the navigation project while reducing coastal storm damages to people, property, and infrastructure along the Delaware shoreline. The project was recently authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, and the PDT is hopeful that the success of the study will encourage other USACE studies to consider the CSRMs opportunities for the beneficial use of dredged material.



GET TO KNOW THE REPORT TO CONGRESS ON FUTURE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

In 2011, Congress changed the way it was doing business to eliminate earmarks. With a broad interpretation of earmarks that included authorization, Congressional committees sought different avenues for identifying new study and construction authorities for federal water resources

development projects. That new approach crystallized in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 through the Section 7001 provision for a new annual report to Congress – the Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development.

The Report is developed annually by Headquarters on behalf of the ASA(CW) and is based, in large part, on submitted proposals from non-federal entities interested in partnering with USACE on new water resources studies and projects. Completed Chief’s Reports and other recommendations for new project authorizations or modifications to existing project authorizations are also included in the report.

Since 2014, each subsequent WRDA has looked to the annual Reports to Congress on Future Water Resources Development for a list of potential studies and projects to authorize. And, in each WRDA since then, Congress has also underlined its intent for Corps Districts to engage directly with partners – and potential partners – to ensure they are aware of the opportunity to submit proposed studies and projects for authorization through the annual report process.

Districts are the “one door to the Corps,” and must be aware of this annual process and what it takes to be included in the report. District-led, direct engagement with non-federal interests about this opportunity will be far more effective than any broad national communication from Headquarters.

Each year, there is a 120-day open proposal period, generally between May and August, where proposals for new – or modified – study and project authorities are submitted. The proposal period is launched with a Federal Register notice

that is also posted to the Headquarters website and amplified on social media.

Proposals to be included in the annual report are evaluated based on five criteria set forward by Congress:

1 Is the study or project related to USACE’s primary mission areas: flood and coastal storm risk management, inland and deep draft navigation, or ecosystem restoration?

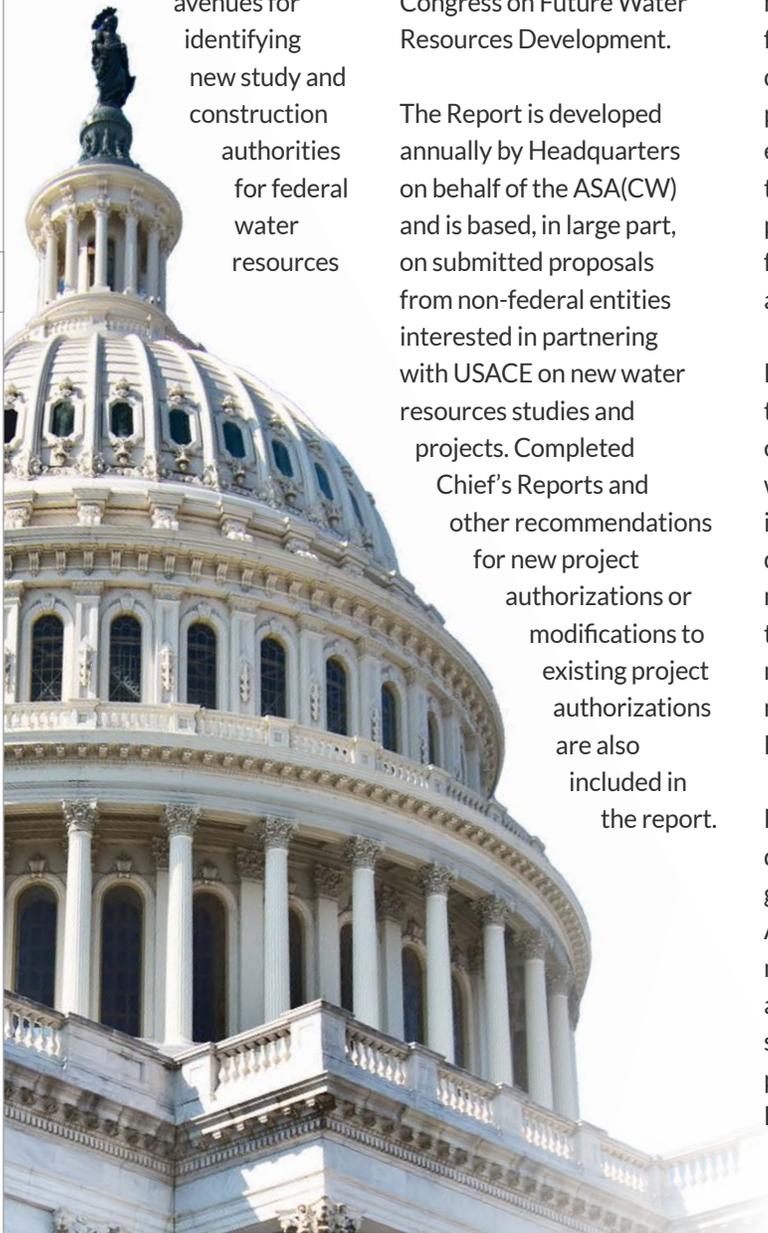
The answer to this question must be yes. In addition, proposed modifications to environmental infrastructure authorities and certain environmental infrastructure projects are considered.

2 Does the proposal require specific congressional authorization?

The answer to this question must be yes. That is, after all, the purpose of the Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development.

3 Has the study or project already been congressionally authorized?

The answer to this question must be no.





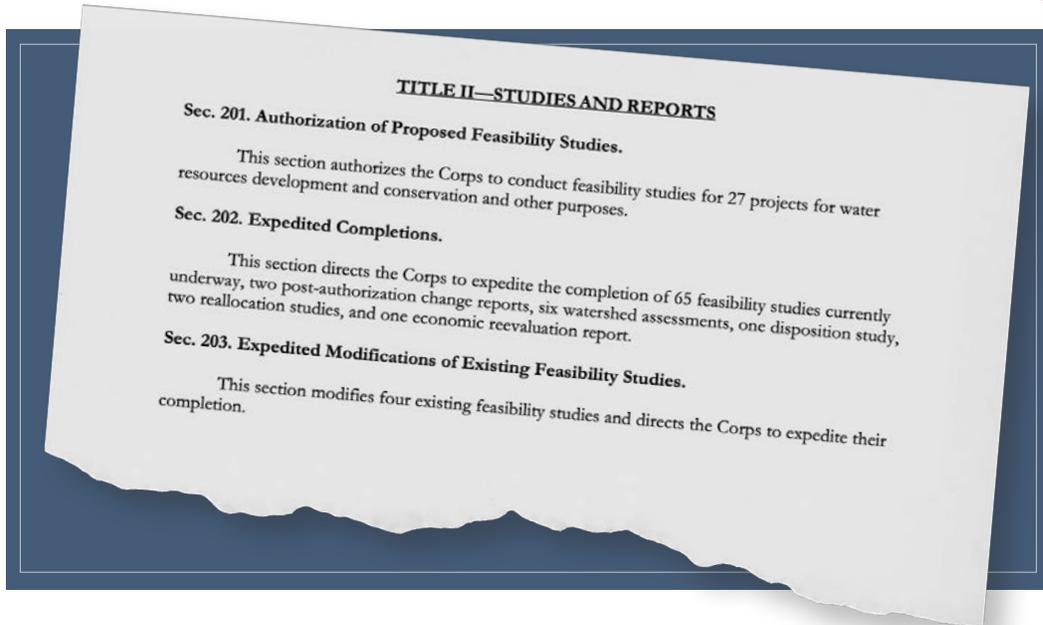
4 Has the proposal been included in a previous Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development?

The answer to this question must be no.

5 If the study or project is authorized, could it be carried out by USACE?

The answer to this question must be yes.

Congress has used the annual report to provide new study and project authorities and modifications to existing authorities. Of course, up to date decision documents, such as a Chief’s Report, and appropriations are also required before those studies or projects can begin.



Proposals that do not meet all five criteria are placed in an appendix to the Report to Congress. Engaging with the non-federal parties that submitted proposals placed in the appendix is very important. Because the submission of a proposal is an indication of interest in solving a water resources problem, Districts are strongly encouraged to reach out to the non-federal interests that submitted proposals to

continue the dialogue – aiming to understand the problem they are trying to solve and identify potential USACE technical services or existing study or project authorities that could be used to meet the needs of this potential partner. For example, many proposals are placed in the appendix because there is already sufficient authority either under Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970, which authorizes USACE to

reexamine an existing project, or one of the Continuing Authority Programs.

Understanding local water resources priorities and problems will support a strong Civil Works Planning Program into the future. The Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development is one piece of that puzzle.

> 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 presentation topics including: the Planning Center of Expertise for Inland Navigation and Risk-Informed Economics Division (PCXIN-RED); an introduction to

Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR); an overview of the Regional Economic System (RECONS) model; lessons learned from the Delaware Beneficial Use of Dredged Material for the Delaware River Feasibility Study; the Planning Mentor Handbook; overviews of the benefits of engaging and partnering with Real Estate and Operations personnel during the feasibility phase of a study; several webinars on the revised Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations; and a Headquarters Planning & Policy Leadership Panel.

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 of the toolbox: 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.

FIND MORE WEBINARS AT:

<http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/resources.cfm?id=0&Option=Planning%20Webinars>





PCoP
Q+A

What does the new guidance on considering a comprehensive suite of benefits during plan formulation mean for current and future feasibility studies?

On 5 January, ASA (CW) James signed the Comprehensive Documentation of Benefits in Decision Document policy directive. This memorandum instructs USACE to consider the total benefits of water resources development project alternatives, including equal consideration of economic, environmental, and social categories. The directive applies to pre- and post-authorization decision documents, as well as other decision documents approved under delegated authorities.

The intent of the ASA(CW) is that the comprehensive benefits directive be implemented immediately, with study teams recognizing and documenting all benefits available to a project. The PCoP hopes that study teams will see this policy directive as an opportunity to more completely and transparently paint the picture of USACE water resources projects.

It is expected that study teams will begin incorporating the concepts and principles set forth in the memorandum into their work now – including work on active studies. Headquarters Planning & Policy looks forward to the Districts and MSCs sharing their experiences and lessons learned in applying this directive. *Further, if study teams are unsure how to progress, questions may be elevated through your District and MSC Planning Chiefs to request direct consultation services from the Headquarters Planning & Policy team, at no cost to your project.*

Study teams not yet to the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) milestone are expected to fully consider all benefit categories. Study teams working on studies that have passed the TSP milestone are only expected to fully consider all benefit categories on the recommended plan.

Study teams can start following the intent in the memo in several ways:

- Brainstorm which project effects are not currently evaluated as a part of the national economic development or national ecosystem restoration benefit analysis.
- Identify methods and procedures to account for economic, social, and environmental project effects, including qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- When appropriate, utilize available tools and models to evaluate project effects across all benefit categories. When current certified models are not available or a good fit for a study, coordinate with the vertical team and relevant Planning Centers of Expertise for review and approval of novel tools or models.
- Leverage the knowledge and experience of subject matter experts across the agency, including those at the MSCs, Headquarters, the Planning Centers, Engineer Research and Development Center, and Institute for Water Resources. These experts are available to assist study teams analyze and characterize effects in a comprehensive manner.

Finally, study teams should start considering how they will introduce this guidance to partners, sponsors, and stakeholders and begin conversations about how they can collaborate with USACE on implementation.

Planners can access the memorandum on the Planning Community Toolbox on the Planner’s Library – Guidance Memos page.

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.