



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# PLANNINGahead

Spring 2022 - Issue 02

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# VIRTUAL VIEW FROM HQ

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

*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](http://www.corpsplanning.us).*

### PLANNING ahead

Winter 2022 - Issue 01



**I have been working for HQ for more than a year now**, but people still often ask me how I like working here. I usually say “I like it” or “it’s fine” because I’m caught a little off-guard by the question. But given a moment to reflect, the one word I would say (and will in the future) is “grateful.” I am so grateful to be part of our Civil Works team, which strives every day to improve the economic well-being of our nation and to protect and preserve environmental resources upon which every person depends.

I am grateful for district planners (all flavors – economists; formulators; environmental planners; cultural resources specialists; Tribal liaisons) who do the hard work

of developing measures and plans, evaluating and comparing alternatives, communicating with stakeholders, and preparing reports and supporting analyses.

I am grateful for our regional MSC Planning offices for their quality assurance, program oversight, and policy review roles, in addition to supporting planning teams with technical resources through our Planning Centers of Expertise. And of course, I am grateful too for our HQ Civil Works team including our functional and support offices and the Regional Integration Teams for their stewardship of our agency decision-making process.

And I would be remiss in not mentioning the excellent collaborative and supportive relationship we have with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (OASA(CW)); they are leading us forward in ways we could not have imagined! And finally, I am grateful for the leaders we serve: Mr. Connor and Mr. Pinkham; LTG Spellmon; MG Graham; and Mr. Lee.

I can attest from my own experiences and interactions with each of them that they are all sincerely committed to those “common good” ideals mentioned above.

This is really the thing I like best about working at HQ; I get to see and experience first-hand the talent, innovative spirit, and commitment of our entire community of Civil Works Planning practitioners. I will just mention a couple of specific examples here from our recently announced FY21 USACE Planning Awards.

The Coastal Texas team formulated a comprehensive hurricane and storm risk reduction and ecosystem restoration plan for the entire coast of Texas from Orange to Port Isabel. This effort was led by the Galveston District, but it was a true enterprise effort involving team members from across the nation! One of many innovations they successfully deployed is a GIS viewer (check it out at: <https://coastal-texas-hub-usace-swg.hub.arcgis.com>) that allows anyone with access to a phone or

SPRING 2022 FRONT COVER — CRANE ON THE HUNT IN WATERWAY OF THE OUTER BANKS.



a computer to see specific plan details and understand how the proposed features may affect them. This innovative tool led to amazing consensus on the recommended plan (largest ever at \$29B!), which is now awaiting authorization by Congress.

I also want to single out Alaska District's Elim Harbor Team for the first-ever Chief's Report for a Tribal Partnership Project.

Look at a map of Elim (very remote!) and then think about the challenges this team faced obtaining basic technical information and collaborating and communicating with our partners (during the pandemic!). Also, think about how important a reliable harbor will be for the community served by that project! The Elim Harbor project is also in the queue for WRDA 22.

Looking ahead, in addition to anticipating WRDA 22 later this year, we are moving forward with "Modernizing Civil Works," following the lead of the OASA(CW) to formalize and implement long-anticipated updates to our Tribal Consultation Policy; better serving economically disadvantaged communities and improving Environmental Justice outcomes; and implementation of the 2014

Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines for water resource projects through development of updated Agency Specific Procedures, which will become a future update to our Planning Guidance Notebook.

It continues to be a great honor to serve our nation with each and every one of you. *"Nous pouvons le faire!"*

# MEETING PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENTS

## ASA(CW) FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE REGARDING THE MODERNIZATION OF CIVIL WORKS POLICY PRIORITIES

On 3 June, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) released a Federal Register Notice which announces several policy initiatives intended to modernize USACE through the identification of ways to better serve the needs of Tribal Nations and other disadvantaged communities. The ASA(CW) is requesting public input on the following areas:

- Proposed improvements to the USACE Tribal Consultation Policy and updated comprehensive implementation guidance for the Tribal Partnership Program.
- Revisions to the March 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies to address advancements in economic and analytic techniques; public safety; low-income communities; nonstructural solutions; and integrated, adaptive, and watershed approaches.



- Interim Guidance on the Implementation of Environmental Justice and the Justice40 Initiative and whether additions or changes should be made before the guidance is finalized.
- An interim definition for "economically disadvantaged communities."

The OASA(CW) will be hosting a virtual overview of the policy initiatives and both public and tribal virtual listening sessions on 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, and 27 July. USACE personnel should not register due to limitations on available lines. USACE personnel can listen in via a simulcast WebEx; contact your Planning Chief for more information and WebEx details. Please encourage your stakeholders and partners to participate!

All written recommendations must be received on or before 2 August 2022. For more information, please see the **Federal Register Notice**.



# PCoP NEWS FLASHES

## PLANNING COMMUNITY UPDATES

### USACE Welcomes the New Interim Chief of OWPR

The USACE Planning & Policy Division is excited to welcome Amy Guise to the position of interim Chief for of the Office of Water Project Review (OWPR)! Amy has over 25 years of experience with USACE and is currently the Chief of Planning in the Baltimore District, where she leads a team of over 55 planners across the District’s Planning organization. Amy will serve in this role for a 120-day detail while Wes Coleman takes on the role of Acting Programs Integration Division Chief.

### PCoP Virtual Summer Series

Starting on 14 July, the Planning Workforce Development Committee will be hosting the “PCoP Virtual Summer Series” to replace the 2022 in-person PCoP Workshop, which has been postponed due to participation limitations and travel constraints. A wide spectrum of topics with content revolving around our priorities concentrated on people, partnership, readiness, and innovation will be covered. Session titles and dates include:

- What’s new on the planning horizon? on 14 July

- Engaging Disadvantage Communities in the Age of Smart Planning: Environmental Justice on 21 July

- Revolutionizing Our Project Delivery through Innovation on 28 July

- Workforce Development: People are our greatest asset! on 4 August

- Better Project Delivery Through Partnering and Tribal Engagement on 11 August

- Strengthen our Connections with Each Other on 18 August

“Save the date” Outlook invites have been sent out. If you did not receive the meeting invite, please email [hqplanning@usace.army.mil](mailto:hqplanning@usace.army.mil).

### Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)

Now available for use by USACE is the beta version of the CEJST. Mr. Connor has directed USACE personnel to begin using the tool on USACE projects and programs. Planners can access the new tool on the [CEJST website](#). Planners who want to learn more about the tool and the development methodology can read the [White House Press Release](#) or [CEJST’s Frequently Asked Questions](#).

### WRRDA Section 7001 Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development

The proposal period for non-federal proposals for consideration in the 2023 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) 7001 Annual Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development (7001 Report) is now open! The intent of this proposal process is to allow for the identification of proposed feasibility studies submitted by non-federal interests.

During the proposal period, USACE Headquarters will be focusing on outreach and education by posting information about the 7001 process and deadlines, hosting two public information sessions, and responding to questions received in the [7001 inbox](#). More information about the public information sessions will be available soon. More information can be found on the [Federal Register Notice](#). Proposals should be submitted through the [USACE WRRDA 7001 Proposals website](#). Proposal suspense is 29 August.

### Recent Guidance

There are several pieces of recently released Planning

guidance now available for planner use. The ASA(CW) released a [Memorandum on the Implementation of Environmental Justice and the Justice40 Initiative](#) in March. The Chief of Staff recently released [Engineer Regulation \(ER\) 1105-2-102, Watershed Studies](#) to establish accountability for conducting watershed studies. Recent Guidance related to Planning can often be found on the Planning Community Toolbox in the [Planner’s Library](#).



### 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](mailto:hqplanning@usace.army.mil).



# PLANNING CHIEFS MEETING 2022

## SHARING BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED TO EXECUTE A DYNAMIC CIVIL WORKS MISSION

District and MSC Planning Chiefs gathered in the Chicago District offices 17 to 19 May to share best practices and lessons learned in delivering a dynamic – and growing – Civil Works mission. A local tour of ecosystem restoration project sites on the Chicago Waterfront kicked off the meeting. Over the course of the following three days, the Planning Chiefs discussed and shared experiences, best practices, and explored opportunities to strengthen internal and external partnerships and to consider the breadth of benefits of Civil Works projects and



MSC AND DISTRICT PLANNING CHIEFS IN CHICAGO ON 18 MAY.

the impacts or benefits to communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. The Chiefs also learned from one another’s experiences

across the enterprise about setting multi-disciplinary planning teams up for success in delivering an unprecedented number of new start feasibility studies complemented

by Continuing Authority Program studies and other planning technical assistance programs like Planning Assistance to States and Floodplain Management Services.

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### > 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:

- **Chief’s Reports**, including the recent addition of the **Rio Grande de Manati Flood Risk Management, Ciales, Puerto Rico**; **Three Forks of Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Restoration, Louisville, Kentucky**; and **Port of Long Beach Deep Draft**

**Navigation Supplemental Chief’s Report, Los Angeles County, California** reports.

- The updated Plan Formulation Career Roadmap and KSAs are now available in the updated **Planner Workforce Development Guide**. The Economics, Environmental, and Cultural Resources Career Roadmaps and KSAs will be available in the Planner Workforce Development Guide before the end of 2022. Please

note, the Planner Workforce Development Guide date will not be updated to reflect these changes.

- New Policy Guidance is available for immediate use including **Engineer Regulation (ER) 1102-5-102, Watershed Studies**, the ASA(CW)’s **Implementation of Environmental Justice and the Justice40 Initiative Memorandum**, and Implementation Guidance for Sections **130, 155**, and

**350** of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 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 <https://planning.erdc.dren.mil/toolbox/index.cfm>





# PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

## SOUTH ATLANTIC COASTAL STUDY (SACS)

### LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES FOR WATERSHED PLANNING TO ADVANCE COASTAL RESILIENCE

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*The Planning Ahead Team recently met with Ashleigh Fountain and Matt Schrader, members of the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS) team, to discuss their experiences and lessons learned from the study, along with best practices that can be implemented by other teams. SACS – which is closely modeled after the landmark North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study (NACCS) – is a comprehensive study that applies watershed planning concepts to identify actions for advancing coastal resilience along the 65,000 miles of tidally influenced shoreline across North Carolina, South*

*Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The SACS team conducted regional analyses of existing and future coastal storm risk and identified initial measures and costs that can address vulnerabilities throughout the study area, with a particular emphasis on regional sediment management (RSM) as an actionable strategy to sustainably maintain or enhance current levels of coastal storm risk management. More information about SACS and the draft report can be found on the [study website](#).*

**Q** *How did SACS use best practices or lessons learned from NACCS, and are there any particular concepts that may be helpful to other teams working on similar comprehensive coastal studies?*

**A** SACS, from the very beginning, sought to follow and leverage lessons learned from the same coastal storm risk management (CSRSM) framework that NACCS utilized. Specifically, SACS sought to apply the concept of a shared responsibility approach to planning for, and implementing, CSRSM that was

emphasized in NACCS, which allowed the SACS team to jump start communication about the study and coordination with partner agencies and stakeholders. The collaborative nature of this approach helps both USACE and communities in the study area assess, communicate, and address coastal storm risk and acknowledge and develop awareness around residual risk. Shared responsibility of managing coastal storm risk is a concept that is key to SACS, and future studies would benefit from incorporating this approach.



SACS also adopted and advanced regional tools and products pioneered by NACCS, including a tool to calculate rough order magnitude costs to help screen measures, as well as web mapping applications to facilitate communicating and explaining risk and vulnerability. In order to improve on these tools and spark ideas for new ones, the SACS team sat down with the NACCS team early on in the study process to discuss elements that NACCS team members would have approached differently or improved upon. Out of these discussions, the SACS team was able to “level up” the tools and products they developed, which led to better communication and coordination with stakeholders (e.g., developing interactive geospatial maps vs. static maps).

In an effort to further knowledge sharing across the enterprise, the SACS team is currently working with



the **Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study** to continue the sharing of CRSM best practices and lessons learned.

**Q** *What are the important lessons learned and best practices the SACS team has taken away related to incorporating coastal resiliency into CSRSM projects?*

**A** One of the biggest lessons learned from SACS is that study teams should engage stakeholders from the very beginning of the process by making a concerted effort to identify and connect with the community, taking time to research what stakeholders have already accomplished, and meeting with the community in-person to develop working

relationships. Teams should also leverage community relationships already established by relevant stakeholder groups as much as possible. Stakeholders are valuable resources who often have a clear understanding of regional challenges and problem drivers. Often, the SACS team found that local or regional expert stakeholders could enhance the team’s understanding of risk related to storm surge inundation in back bay areas. This perspective – including looking beyond just erosion – was invaluable to the team.

The SACS team also suggests that other study teams take a day at the beginning of the process to gather and review existing data, tools, mapping information, and products. By doing so, the SACS team was able to save a significant amount of time and resources, which is important in the 3x3x3 environment – even when instinct says to rush into planning new tools or data collection efforts. In

addition, stakeholders may have already gathered data or developed products that can be used as foundational information for a study without having to reinvent the wheel.

Finally, the SACS team found that it is critical to have a good understanding of the authority or authorities and guidance under which the study is operating, as there is often misunderstanding regarding what USACE is and is not authorized to study. Planners and study teams should be open minded – and not just automatically assume that a certain area cannot be studied.

**Q** *How is SACS taking climate change into consideration, and how is the team communicating uncertainty related to climate change to the public?*

**A** SACS utilized three feet of sea level rise for its study-wide risk assessment. This level was initially selected because it was used in NACCS, and the team wanted its analysis to be as consistent with NACCS as possible. However, the team also looked at relevant gauges and determined that the three-foot level made sense for the initial screening-level assessment across the SACS study area according to USACE and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 50-to-100-year sea level rise estimates.

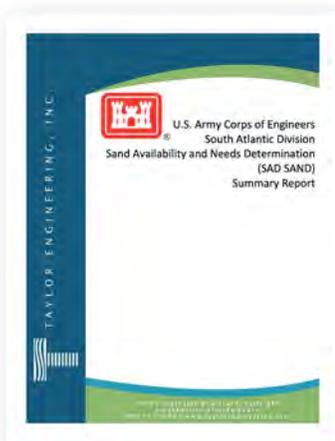




The SACS team leveraged a best practice from NACCS – which is to be up front and transparent with stakeholders about what is and is not included in the scope of the study (e.g., will a study provide detailed information about flooding risk at the individual household level, or is it focused on regional-level coastal storm risk, as SACS is?) In public engagement meetings, the SACS team also acknowledged a variety of climate change-related hazards for regional coastal storm risk needing future analysis, like increased precipitation and compound flooding, but communicated that SACS focuses on sea level rise as a primary risk factor – in line with the guidance issued for the study. In addition, the study team communicated that more specific regional data will be needed for use in future studies focused on the follow-on actions recommended by SACS.



consideration of beneficial use of dredged material to support NNBFs resulted in the development of the **2020 RSM Optimization Update**, providing information on progress and opportunities to implement RSM throughout the region. Two additional products focused on NNBFs, nonstructural, and structural measures were developed to support the feasibility phases of future studies: a **Sand Availability and Needs Determination (SAND) Report** and the **Measures and Cost Library**.



The SAND report helps match suitable sand sources with beach nourishment project needs– both federal and

non-federal – within the South Atlantic Division’s geographic area of responsibility. The Measures and Costs Library is a detailed list of CRSM measures and their costs developed to a screening level which can assist USACE study teams and stakeholders when considering structural, nonstructural, and NNBF measures.

All SACS products are intended to help USACE study teams and stakeholders take actions to address risk, develop actionable recommendations, and formulate plans. Overall, the study led to 200 recommended actions throughout the study area.

**Q** *In what ways has SACS utilized USACE research and development (R&D) resources? What advice would you give other CSRMs studies – both in the South Atlantic/Gulf Coast area and across the country – about engaging with R&D during planning?*

**A** The SACS study team collaborated with the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) to develop Coastal Hazard System (CHS) data for three separate basins within the study area, which will help follow on study teams and stakeholders as they look at probabilistic water levels in the future. ERDC is also working to further assist understanding of how NNBFs

can best be leveraged in future studies. For example, ERDC’s current work on mangroves will be very useful for follow on SACS studies in certain areas in Florida. In addition, ERDC’s research on compound flooding will be critical for future CSRMs studies – both under the SACS umbrella and otherwise.

Based on the SACS team’s experience, future studies should prioritize coordinating with ERDC as early as possible in the study to highlight the need for tools, data, resources, and research – particularly when there may be opportunities for quantifying monetary, and non-monetary, benefits. Study teams may also want to consider working with ERDC to develop mock-ups and other materials for visual demonstrations of recommended plans and features.

**Q** *How is SACS taking environmental justice (EJ) and potential impacts or benefits to disadvantaged communities into consideration?*

**A** The SACS team used innovative communication and outreach tools to reach audiences across a large geographic study area. To identify appropriate communities for outreach, the study team relied on “umbrella” stakeholders (i.e., established large stakeholder groups), and particularly those already





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## EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool



### Launch the EJScreen Tool

Explore EPA's environmental justice screening and mapping tool

In order to better meet the Agency's responsibilities related to the protection of public health and the environment, EPA has developed a new environmental justice (EJ) mapping and screening tool called EJScreen. It is based on nationally consistent data and an approach that combines environmental and demographic indicators in maps and reports. [Learn more about Environmental Justice at EPA.](#)

#### What is EJScreen?



#### Learn to Use EJScreen



#### Launch the Tool



working with vulnerable communities. SACS maintains an up-to-date stakeholder database to continue communication and outreach with entities that are

responsible for taking actions to address coastal storm risk on a local level (e.g., local and regional planning councils, state agencies, federal agencies). This database will

be important for future offshoot studies, which will require more interaction with the public.

Additionally, the SACS team followed the lead of NACCS by using a tiered framework via its regional risk assessment methodology. Social vulnerability was included as part of the study's Tier 1 risk assessment. The tiering framework pulled in data, or proxy data in areas where sufficient data was unavailable, to identify particularly at-risk areas. The SACS team anticipates that EPA's EJScreen will be a critical tool during follow on studies to help teams delve deeper and further identify communities needing the next level of social vulnerability analysis. The team also included several recommendations within the draft report regarding the need for additional detailed EJ and social vulnerability data, particularly in places where data is hard to come by such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



## ▶ 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](http://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](mailto:hqplanning@usace.army.mil).

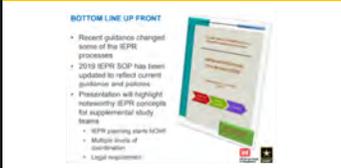
**PCX-CSR Update and Best Practices from Recent Studies (24 FEBRUARY)**



**INTEREST-BASED NEGOTIATIONS (24 MARCH)**



**INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW (IEPR) - UPDATED STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (21 APRIL)**



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





# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT COASTAL WORKING GROUP (CWG)



JOHN WINKELMAN (CWG CHAIR) RECENTLY PROVIDED PLANNING AHEAD WITH CWG PROVIDES TO THE USACE ENTERPRISE.

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The Coastal Working Group (CWG) was formed in 2005 – near the time USACE moved to a Community of Practice (CoP) based organizational approach – through a boots-on-the-ground level effort led by District experts and ERDC Coastal Hydraulics Lab members. The CWG’s official designation is as a “National Technical Working Group” – and it is incorporated under the Hydrology, Hydraulics and Coastal Community of Practice (HH&C CoP), where it is often viewed as a “sub community of practice.” As such, it operates within an engineering-focused area of the organization – however, the CWG and its membership encompasses a diverse array of disciplines beyond engineers.



CWG ANNUAL MEETING DINNER – ERDC HQ, VICKSBURG, MS DECEMBER 2018

The intent of the CWG is to provide support and guidance so that project delivery teams (PDTs) can work efficiently and successfully on the full range of coastal-oriented efforts, including CSRM studies, navigation studies, Operations and Maintenance, environmental restoration, and research and development. A key function of the CWG is to help ensure the needed

technical expertise, the right tools, and supporting information are available and discoverable to anyone working on coastal projects, including coastal planners. The CWG does this by championing the development and maintenance of coastal guidance, training, research and development, tools, and technical/policy support. More specifically, some of the CWG’s key focus areas include:

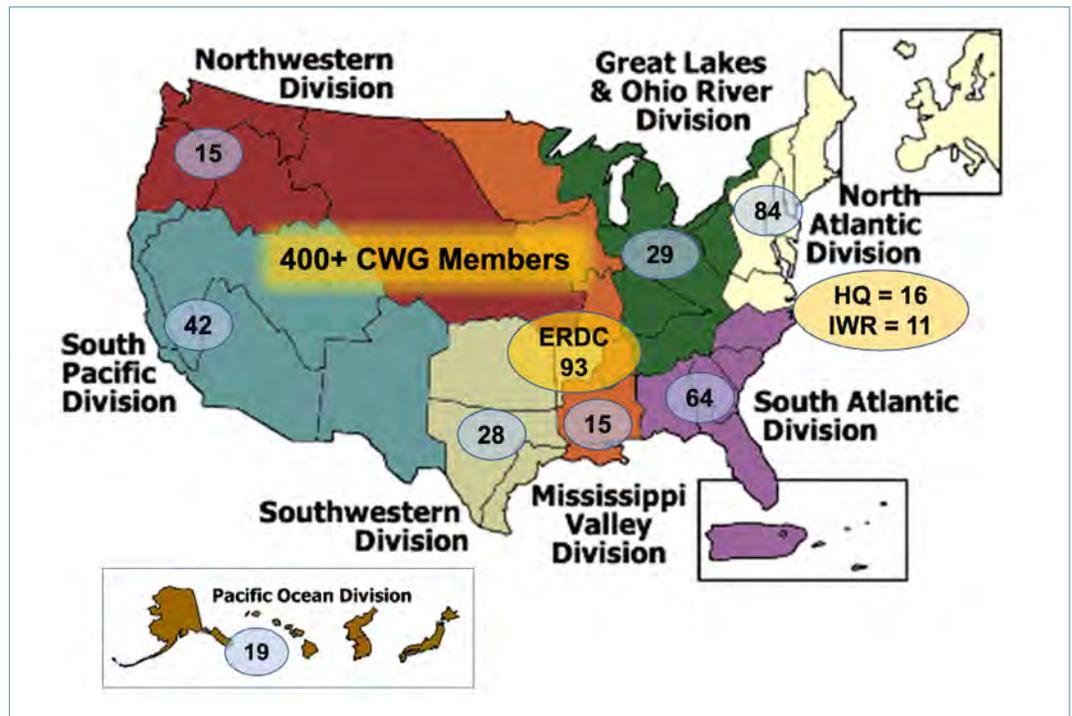
- The advancement of the state of coastal engineering, coastal planning, and coastal science
- Fostering and promoting the growth and development of:
  - Needed technology
  - Guidance
  - Training
- The development and maintenance of core competencies



- Providing access to subject matter experts (SMEs)
- Providing outreach to practitioners within and outside of USACE
- Establishing relationships and operating holistically across the spectrum of coastal interests within USACE

There is no formal process – or necessarily a “best time” – to engage the CWG since study and project needs, as well as CWG membership and local expertise, vary from District to District. The best time to contact the CWG is as soon as a team realizes they are facing a coastal-related challenge they are unfamiliar with and are uncertain how to handle.

There is no reason for a team or individual to try to figure out a coastal issue on their own and struggle – or worse, make less than ideal decisions that may impact a product’s quality and schedule. When study teams reach out for help, the CWG does its best to answer any questions, help to find an additional PDT member or SME to join the team, locate an Agency Technical Review (ATR) team member, identify a researcher, etc. In addition to reaching out directly, working with the appropriate National Planning Center of Expertise (PCX) is also an effective way to find help directly or to connect to the CWG, since the CWG is fully



CWG 2022 MEMBERSHIP MAP

engaged with the various PCXs, and a number of CWG members are staff members of the PCXs.

The CWG is a unique group within USACE, since most CoPs and other organizational elements are much more discipline and topic focused than the CWG. CWG membership includes over 400 members from various disciplines of engineers (coastal, hydrology and hydraulic, geotechnical, general civil, structural, cost, etc.), planners, project managers, economists, researchers and scientists, operations staff, and regulatory specialists. CWG members have interests and focus areas across all three of the major business areas (Navigation, Flood Risk Management, and Ecosystem Restoration).

CWG membership is drawn mostly from Districts due to the number of District personnel working on coastal studies, but there is important and significant membership from HQUSACE, the Divisions, and relevant centers such as ERDC and the Institute of Water Resources (IWR). Membership is open to anyone in USACE, with most members directly working on coastal oriented projects/ studies or serving in some type of supervisory role of those that are working on coastal projects. Joining the CWG is as easy as contacting CWG Lead John Winkelman, WG Communications Lead Heather Schlosser, or HH&C CoP Lead Sean Smith.

Perhaps the most fundamental benefit of the

CWG is its ability to provide efficient communication horizontally and vertically. Communication within the CWG is intended to be open and collaborative, and is accomplished through a range of methods and technologies which are continually evaluated. Presently, email is a fundamental communication component along with the regularly scheduled monthly CWG calls which are held on the second Thursday of each month at 1300 Eastern, quarterly CWG Advisory Board calls, the CWG annual meeting, and various ad hoc, topic-focused meetings. There is also a **CWG SharePoint Site**, MS Teams Site, and a newsletter available to keep CWG members and those interested in coastal topics up to date.





**NOEL CLAY  
PLANNING  
CHAMPION**  
*FY 2019 Award  
Winners*

**KIM OTTO**  
*Mobile District*

Kim Otto is recognized for her distinguished career as a planner in the Mobile District. She has experience in every USACE Civil Works business line and has served in numerous PDT roles, including economist, planning technical lead, and project manager. Kim has been with the Deep Draft Navigation Planning Center of Expertise



(DDNPCX) since 2011 and has served as the center's review manager since 2014.

With an annual deep draft navigation and small boat harbor portfolio of over 40 studies, Kim reviews and endorses study review plans, facilitates ATR and Independent External Peer Reviews (IEPR), and assists

PDTs with complex policy related issues. She has also taken on temporary assignments as a South Atlantic Division Senior Economist and Acting DDNPCX Technical Director, while also maintaining her responsibilities as Review Manager. Some of her accomplishments include the development of numerous standard operating procedures, tools, and templates for review plans, ATR leads, IEPR program management, and economic resources assignment tracking. Further, she is nationally recognized for her expertise in navigation

and dredged material management policy. Kim has served as a Planning Associates (PA) course owner since 2008, represents the DDNPCX on the PCX Guild, and regularly mentors junior planners. Kim has been described as a "national asset to Corps Planning" and superiors have noted that "her numerous efforts and her unwavering devotion have left an indelible mark on the [PCoP] community, and she is a key reason for USACE's continuous ability to deliver quality navigation projects that advance commerce for our Nation."



**JIM HUTCHISON**  
*Los Angeles District*

Jim Hutchison, a lead Planner and Regional Watershed Technical Specialist, is recognized for his significant contributions to the Los Angeles District Planning program over the past 30 years. In particular, Jim is lauded for his work on two high visibility efforts in FY2019: the Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration study and the Santa Paula Creek Flood Risk Management (FRM) project. Both efforts faced significant technical, policy, scheduling, and funding related challenges, which the PDTs overcame thanks to Jim’s leadership and support.

Jim’s preparation and coordination of a waiver request for the deferral of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation to the pre-construction engineering and design phase for the Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration study, his ability to gain vertical team alignment and support for the strategy, and his leadership in helping the PDT prepare the waiver

request package led to the waiver’s endorsement by the the ASA(CW), and ultimately to a signed Chief’s Report.

The Santa Paula Creek project also benefited from Jim’s proactive and effective leadership in guiding the team’s strategic internal and external communication to resolve ESA consultation issues with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on project Operations, Maintenance, Repair, Replacement and Rehabilitation (OMRR&R). Jim has also provided support to the PCoP as a member of the Outreach and Coordination Team and played a lead role in developing the IWR **Partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Guide for Communities, Local Governments, States, Tribes, and Non-Governmental Organizations** document (formerly the Project Partnership Guide).

Beyond these projects, Jim provides mentorship to junior staff, advocates for the evolution of the USACE Planning culture, and serves as a “valued” resource to others within the Los Angeles District and across the enterprise. Jim’s contributions have led both peers and superiors to recognize him as an “extremely effective team member and project leader.”

**NOEL CLAY  
PLANNING  
CHAMPION**  
*FY 2020 Award  
Winners*

**SCOTT MINER**  
*Sacramento District*

Scott Miner is recognized for his considerable ability to assist planners and study teams in achieving Civil Works mission goals over the course of his 42 years serving USACE and the public. During his time at USACE, Scott wore many hats: leader,

advisor, mentor, trainer, and project supporter. Scott’s efforts benefited the Planning community immensely throughout his career, with his exceptional work in FY2020 including facilitating group collaboration and enabling teams to overcome obstacles through an expert application of the USACE planning process during ATR. Scott served on or acted as lead for over 30 ATR teams; with certifications in both FRM and ecosystem restoration, he provided extensive technical knowledge and facilitated collaborative solution finding among team members.

One of the more impressive examples of Scott’s work includes his time as a reviewer for the Clear Creek, CA Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study under the Tribal Partnership Program (TPP). Scott was able to help the team complete the study in under \$600,000 by streamlining the project process, identifying opportunities to eliminate





unnecessary analysis, and providing unprecedented vertical team supported approaches to resolve dilemmas. This is just one of many projects on which Scott's role as a regional technical specialist played an integral role in advancing high-profile pre- and post-authorization studies as well as Civil Works design and construction for Sacramento District and the region. In particular, Scott excelled at sharing his technical expertise with junior planners and providing outstanding mentorship support.

Scott has been described by leadership at Sacramento District as a "consistently valuable asset to the organization" and as a person with "courage, empathy, and respect for team members." Join us in congratulating Scott on his recent retirement!



**MELISSA NASUTI**  
*Jacksonville District*

Melissa Nasuti, the South Florida Everglades Ecosystem Restoration Program National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/ESA Team Lead, is recognized for her leadership, encouragement, and support of Jacksonville District study teams.

Melissa's major accomplishments in FY2020 included leading the Combined Operational Plan Project Delivery Team (COP-PDT), which completed a multi-year effort to update a complicated water control plan that directs water operations for the entirety of South Florida and Everglades restoration. Concurrently, Melissa led the development and completion of an environmental assessment to address harmful algal blooms on Lake Okeechobee. She also led evaluation efforts for implementation of the critical Central Everglades Planning Project South, which supports Everglades restoration.

Melissa's exceptional qualities include her talent for organizing complex environmental studies and analysis clearly and effectively and her leadership in helping others clarify multi-faceted water management issues. Melissa is known for her effective communication of complex information to USACE personnel and external stakeholders, and her ability to bring those groups together to form effective teams. Melissa has been described as the "inspiration and driver of team members."

In addition to her critical work in South Florida, Melissa has made significant contributions to the wider PCoP organization. She led the development of an adaptive management plan including two innovative strategies that could lead to changes in USACE's operating criteria for water quality and water volume movement during the dry season. Melissa has made major impacts across the enterprise, specifically in ecosystem restoration and FRM, through her leadership, innovation, and communication abilities.



**ALICIA KIRCHNER**  
*South Pacific Division*

Alicia Kirchner is recognized for her outstanding service during her 32-year career at USACE and her exceptional contributions to the PCoP. Since 2010, Alicia has served as the Planning Chief of the Sacramento District, the

largest Planning organization within the South Pacific Division. In this role, she has managed a portfolio of General Investigation (GI) studies leading to approximately \$7.1 billion in recommended projects to Congress, many of which are currently under construction. Alicia has also worked to grow a robust and diverse FRM program in the Sacramento District by leveraging authorities including Floodplain Management Services (FPMS), Planning Assistance to States (PAS), TPP, and Silver Jackets.

Other highlights throughout Alicia's long career include serving as the Acting Chief of the Office of Water Project Review (OWPR) in 2013, becoming a Water Resources Certified Planner (WRCP) during the program's rollout in 2016, and serving on the tiger teams that drafted the implementation guidance for the Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA) of 2007 and 2014. A PA alum, Alicia has also served as a PA Program and PROSPECT course instructor, and she extensively mentors planners in the Sacramento District and beyond.

Alicia has been described by Sacramento District leadership as "exemplifying a spirit of teamwork, dedication, unflagging perseverance, and a genuine giving back to the community." Major General Kim Colloton, while Commanding



General of the South Pacific Division, said Alicia “represents the best and brightest of our Department of the Army Civilian workforce and truly embodies the Army values of selfless service, integrity, and personal courage.”

**JEFF GEBERT**  
*Philadelphia District*

Jeffery Gebert is recognized for his 43 years of dedicated service to the PCoP. Over the course of his career, Jeff worked as a Coastal Planning Expert at the Philadelphia District, beginning his career in 1978 as a study manager and eventually taking on the role of Planning Division Coastal Section Chief. Of his many accomplishments, Jeff’s leadership and expertise was especially notable during the post Hurricane Katrina USACE technical reviews as well as in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy when he managed the majority of resulting Emergency Supplemental program planning efforts for the Philadelphia District.

In addition to Jeff’s outstanding leadership, he made major technical contributions to USACE through his work with the Planning Center of Expertise for Coast Risk Management (PCX-CSR). Most notably, Jeff completed over 30 Project Information Reports analyzing the impacts of coastal storms, created an extensive database of historical records, and was the District’s expert for dredged material placement and disposal facility capacity. During his tenure at USACE, Jeff was also a PA course developer and instructor, mentored team members, and was “instrumental in improving planning capability and maintaining a capable workforce.” Philadelphia District leadership has described him as “set[ing] the highest standards of excellence and professionalism.” Join us in congratulating Jeff on his recent retirement!



**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN USACE PLANNING**  
*FY 2020 Award Winner*

**SUE HUGHES**  
*Southwestern Division*

Sue Hughes is recognized for her exceptional service to USACE and the PCoP over her 33-year career. While at USACE, Sue served as a civil engineer, the PCoP Deputy, and the Southwestern Division Chief of Planning and Policy. Of her many significant achievements in these positions, Sue is celebrated for leading the development and implementation of SMART Planning via her role as the “main architect” for the Planning Modernization initiative. Sue successfully unified planners across the entire enterprise and helped them understand not only the importance of the planning

modernization effort, but how important their work was to the Nation.

In addition to her excellent leadership capabilities, Sue is recognized for her technical expertise. She notably utilized her expertise while serving as a team member on the then newly developed South Atlantic & Mississippi Valley Division Regional Integration Team in her first role at HQUSACE. Sue has been described as a “pacesetter” and colleagues noted that she “established an unprecedented standard of excellence for the USACE Planning Community of Practice.” Throughout her career, Sue mentored planners, rebuilt trust in the Planning institution, and fostered culture change that will have a long-lasting positive impact in USACE for years to come. In the most impressive description her illustrious career, Sue has been dubbed a “PCoP legend.” Join us in congratulating Sue on her recent retirement!





# PCoP Q+A



## How is the Planning Community of Practice implementing ASA(CW) Connor’s guidance on the implementation of environmental justice and the Administration’s Justice40 initiative? What do I need to know in the field?

The ASA(CW) has called for a fundamental change in the outreach to and engagement of communities at all levels and across the entire USACE organization – listening to our partners and stakeholders to understand their needs and problems, identifying opportunities to partner to address those challenges – which may or may not be a USACE project/program, and committing to identify and remove barriers to partnership with communities.

Districts should be improving outreach to local communities and access to USACE Civil Works information and resources. For many communities, that begins with Planning. This can take many forms, but the first step is identifying disadvantaged and underserved communities using tools like CEQ’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and EPA’s EJScreen tool. Identification must be followed up with understanding and providing opportunities for – and encouraging – participation in USACE activities and programs.

USACE national program managers – and their regional and District counterparts – are leaning forward to improve access to USACE Civil Works technical service

programs, including PAS, FPMS, and TPP, to maximize the reach of Civil Works programs and projects to benefit disadvantaged communities.

To improve outreach and access, USACE Districts can leverage – and request – appropriate coordination funding for community and partner outreach and engagement. Outreach funding from District overhead, FPMS, PAS, Special Investigations, the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP), etc. is available for specific uses. Overarching District coordination, communication, and planning is essential.

For more information about the USACE effort to modernize the Civil Works program, including how USACE engages with communities, see the recently published **Federal Register Notice**, which announces a series of public and Tribal virtual meetings, as well as a public docket, to gather public comments to inform future decision-making related to environmental justice, including soliciting input on the definition of “economically disadvantaged community.”

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS, ANXIETIES — IF YOUR QUESTION CAN HELP FELLOW PLANNERS, EMAIL US AT [HqPLANNING@USACE.ARMY.MIL](mailto:HqPLANNING@USACE.ARMY.MIL) AND MAYBE YOU’LL SEE IT HERE.