



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

PLANNING ahead

Fall 2022 - Issue 03

VIRTUAL VIEW FROM HQ

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: COASTAL TEXAS PROJECT

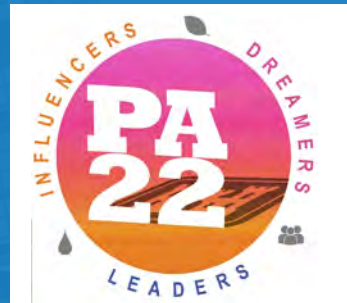
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VIRTUAL VIEW FROM HQ

NOTE FROM THE PCoP DEPUTY — SUSAN LAYTON

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

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



Greetings and Happy Thanksgiving! As we look towards the end of the calendar year, and the holiday season, it is a good time to reflect on our accomplishments as well as consider areas where we hope to focus in the future. I hope you will all take some time over this holiday season to pause, enjoy friends and family, and reflect on the amazing things that you have achieved over the past year.

As a Planning Community, we have so many reasons to be proud. We have consistently completed dozens of Chief's/Director's Reports for the past few years, we have a huge portfolio of studies that we are actively working, and we continue to innovate, respond to changing processes and policies, and find new and better ways to accomplish our goals – all while adjusting to always-evolving priorities and requirements, supporting our partners, and providing

significant value to the nation. I couldn't be prouder of our community and each of you for your commitment to our mission!

In addition to taking time to appreciate all that we have accomplished, this time of year is also an opportunity to consider our goals for the future. Some focus areas for our Planning Community include improvements and innovations in the way we calculate benefits as well as our incorporation of environmental justice principles into our project lifecycle. It has been almost two years since we first received the Directive from the ASACW regarding Comprehensive Benefits. We have made some positive strides in considering all potential benefits into our projects, but we have a long way to go! We still primarily rely on NED benefits for most project recommendations – I expect to see more alternate types of benefit calculations utilized in our formulation and recommendations moving forward. Because we have utilized NED almost exclusively for so long, this is a huge culture shift, but it is the direction of the future!

We will also see additional information and guidance on Environmental Justice (EJ) provided to the districts. EJ is not just an add-on to our current process; it is a foundational principle which our projects must be built upon. Environmental justice considerations are relevant in communication, formulation, benefits, impacts and plan selection. As we continue to roll out guidance that will inform these new paradigms, I have great confidence in the ability of our Districts to implement new techniques and innovate, resulting in more holistic and equitable recommendations for our Nation's water resource problems.

Finally, this is a time of year to be thankful. I am thankful for each of you, for the opportunity that we all have to serve our Nation, providing infrastructure and solutions to some of the most wicked water problems around. The projects we build help to support our families, friends and loved ones. Thank you for all that you do for USACE and the Nation. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Holiday Season.

Essayons – Susan



FALL 2022 FRONT COVER — MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BEACH EROSION CONTROL AND HURRICANE PROTECTION PROJECT, JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT, AT INDIAN BEACH PARK, JULY 22, 2022. (PHOTO BY MARK RANKIN)



PCoP NEWS FLASHES

PLANNING COMMUNITY UPDATES

Engineering and Research Development Center (ERDC) Statements of Need (SON)

The **ERDC** annual SON submission period is currently open. The SONs are meant to be a bridge between the experiences of field practitioners, the strategic vision and priorities of Headquarters, and the research programs that provide support to the field through the USACE research facilities and their many collaborators. All district and division practitioners having first-hand knowledge of the specific problems and limitations encountered in the execution of the diverse activities encompassed

by the USACE mission are encouraged to submit a SON. Submission suspense is 2 December 2022. Please visit the **Civil Works R&D SON website** or contact Dr. Jen Seiter-Moser for more information.

Vertical Team Alignment Memorandum (VTAM) Guidance

Major General Graham's recently released **VTAM Guidance Memorandum** reaffirms the steps for project teams preparing the VTAM for MSC Commander endorsement. Planners should review to refresh themselves on the VTAM applicability and requirements.

Congratulations to the new Water Resources Certified Planners (WRCP)

The PCoP would like to congratulate the newest **USACE WRCPs**. Twelve planners are newly certified, and seventeen planners from the 2017 inaugural class have been recertified. Certification must be renewed every five years. USACE WRCPs lead and serve on Project Delivery Teams (PDT); support planning development by mentoring individuals; conduct technical and quality reviews; and much more. To find a certified planner near you check out the Planner Database.



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.

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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:

- New feasibility study products, including [Study Issue Checklists](#), [Feasibility Study Vertical Team Coordination: Key HQ and MSC Tasks](#), [Chief's and Director's Report Templates](#), and a [Review Manager Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\)](#) are now available on the [Templates](#)

and [Checklists](#) page to promote more effective project delivery. Please reference the September [Feasibility Study Templates, Checklists & SOPs PCoP webinar](#) for more information or contact Jeff Lin with the Office of Water Project Review (OWPR) Plan Formulation Team.

- New Policy Guidance is available for immediate use including the [VTAM Guidance](#), the [Army Civil Works Supporting Drought Resilience in America's Communities Memorandum](#), and [Economic Guidance](#)

[Memorandum, 22-04, Tribal Ability to Pay](#).

- Those who missed part or all of the "PCoP Summer Series" or are interested in reviewing the material presented can find all of the recordings and presentations from each of the six sessions under the [Training Tab](#) along with other Planning Community Webinars.

- New [Chief's Reports](#) have been added, including the recent [Miami-Dade County, Florida, Main Segment](#), [Coastal Storm Risk](#)

[Management; Upper Barataria Basin, Louisiana, Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction](#); and [South Central Coast, Louisiana Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Chief's Reports](#).

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.



HAILS AND FAREWELLS

PLANNING ESSENTIALS INSTRUCTOR UPDATES



4 In 2012, the PCoP reviewed and revamped its training course offerings, creating **three planning core curriculum (PCC) courses** to meet the needs of the PCoP. Planning Essentials was created to be the first fully virtual PCC course at a time when virtual learning for USACE was still an innovative idea. **Sierra Keenan, Craig Evans, and Kendall Zaborowski** have served as Planning Essentials instructors since the pilot course was launched in 2014. The Planning Essentials team would like to thank these instructors for their seven years of service as they depart. Without their leadership, this course could not have become what it is today.



Sierra Keenan, a plan formulator for the St. Paul District, was a leader in Planning Essentials since the beginning as she was part of the team that initially developed the course ten years ago. Sierra continued throughout her time as an instructor to bring innovation to the course. She has an incredible talent for virtual communication and served as the course champion by

introducing new methods to enhance course delivery. Sierra, who has given a generous amount of time and energy to Planning Essentials, is heavily credited for its success.



Craig Evans, Chief of the Plan Formulation Section for the St. Paul District, joined the Planning Essentials team for the pilot course in 2014, bringing with him 35 years of expertise. Craig has been integral to ensuring the course material is current with USACE planning and policy procedures. His skills in communication and ability to share best practices kept Planning Essentials engaging and relevant. Craig's expertise and consistency in encouraging students to think critically was an inspiration to his students.



Kendall Zaborowski, a senior plan formulator with the OWPR, joined the Planning Essentials team for the pilot course in 2014. Kendall became the Lead Instructor for Planning Essentials in 2018, at which time he led the team of instructors through a major course update to incorporate the most current policy guidance. He also led improvements that considerably upgraded the overall course delivery by working collaboratively with all those involved. Kendall's positive leadership style continues to inspire the course team and his positive engagement with students in each course has contributed to building the expertise of the next generation of USACE Planners.



Jami Buchanan



Sean Mickal



Aubree Hershörin



Joshua Unghire

In addition to thanking our outgoing instructors, the current Planning Essentials team (Nick Applegate, OWPR; Nate Richards, HQUSACE; Mariah Brumbaugh, Sacramento District; Patrick O'Donnell, OWPR, Daniel Hughes, HQUSACE; Jeremy LaDart, Mobile District; Evan Stewart, St. Louis District; and Samantha Borer, South Atlantic Division) is excited to welcome four new instructors: Jami Buchanan (Planning Team Lead for the Dam Safety Modification Mandatory Center of Expertise); Sean Mickal (Chief/Senior Environmental Planner of the Mississippi Valley Division); Aubree Hershörin (Plan Formulation Navigation Lead in the Jacksonville District); and Joshua Unghire (Ecologist and Planner at the Buffalo District).





PROJECT HIGHLIGHT COASTAL TEXAS PROJECT RECOGNIZED FOR INNOVATIVE COASTAL RESILIENCE

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The Coastal Texas team was recognized with the 2021 Outstanding Planning Achievement Award (Enterprise). The Planning Ahead Team sat down with Brian Harper, Southwestern Division's (SWD) Regional Planning & Environmental Center's Planning Chief to discuss the strategies the study team used to incorporate coastal resilience and get to a successful Chief's Report.

Q Will you set the stage for the Coastal Texas study for our readers?

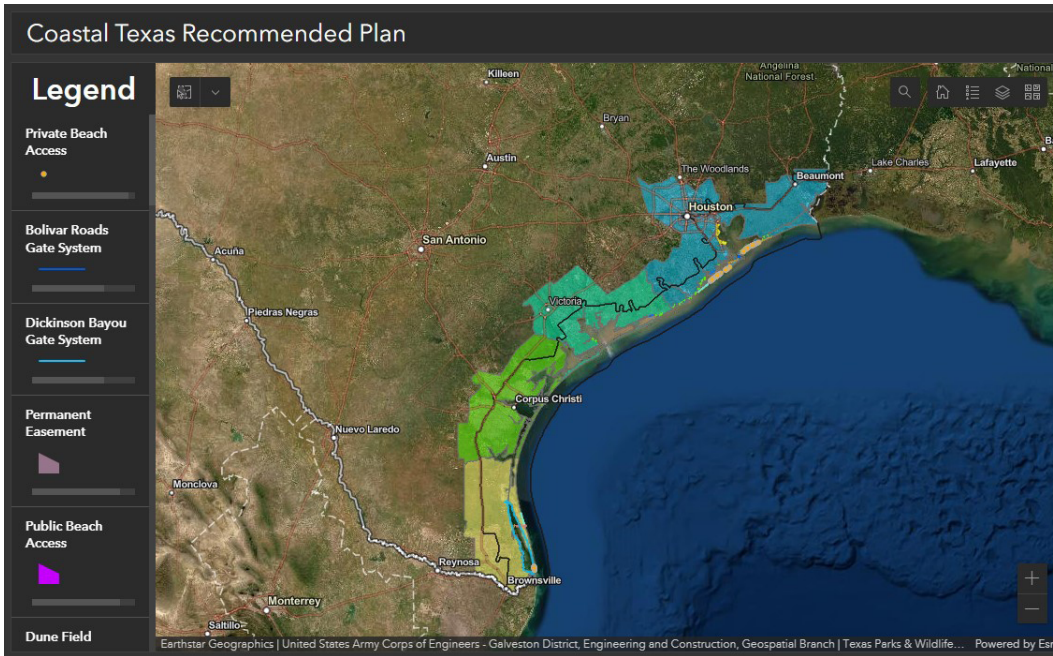
A The **Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Study** (Coastal Texas) Chief's Report, signed last September, marked the completion of a 6-year, \$20M feasibility study that builds on almost 50 years of investigations to reduce coastal storm risks along the Texas coast. The study covers all nineteen of Texas's coastal counties, and features diverse landscapes that are home to millions of residents, billions of dollars in economic activity,

important coastal ecosystems, and critical industrial facilities that support national trade, energy, and defense activities. The State of Texas General Land Office was the non-federal partner for the study.

Despite the magnitude of the effort, the study followed typical USACE project development processes for a project with coastal storm risk management (CSRM) and ecosystem restoration objectives. The premise of the Coastal Texas project, which is grounded in the study's authorizing language, is that a comprehensive approach

is required to restore and protect healthy coastal ecosystems and reduce the risks of storm damage to people, homes, critical infrastructure, and businesses. Coastal erosion and storm surge are the primary hazards that drive the need for action across Texas's 19 coastal counties, and those hazards are exacerbated by increasing sea levels.

The study included familiar plan formulation and evaluation procedures common to most coastal ecosystem restoration and storm risk management



COASTAL TEXAS RECOMMENDED PLAN INTERACTIVE MAP

studies. The familiar core elements were augmented with several strategic considerations during the formulation and evaluation of alternatives. Resiliency was the primary theme that guided these considerations.



Q *The recommended plan is framed in terms of providing “multiple lines of defense” to reduce impacts from a wide array of coastal hazards. This and other resilience principles are front-and-center in the Coastal Texas Study. How was the team able to apply*

concepts like “resiliency” that aren’t typically central to evaluation metrics?

A The Coastal Texas study was initiated in late 2015, about the same time the USACE Resiliency Initiative was launched. In Executive Order 13653, resilience is defined as “the ability to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand and recover from disruptions.” USACE has applied this definition to a stepwise framework for its own resiliency practices: prepare, withstand, recover, adapt. Traditionally, USACE studies have focused on the first two parts: preparing for and withstanding the hazards. A key part of incorporating and evaluating resilience is considering the last two parts: how does the alternative plan assist in recovery efforts so that communities and industry can return to normal, or adapt,

to achieve a pre-storm level of activity?

The Texas Coastal team wove resiliency into its study by focusing on redundancy and robustness of measures within the plan, which created an adaptable – or resilient – project recommendation.

Redundancy requires consideration of what happens when a system is exceeded or a critical component fails. Redundancy is reflected in the “multiple lines of defense” approach that was taken for formulation of the recommended plan in the Coastal Texas study. The study team considered exceedance scenarios for the CSRMs alternatives and evaluated the residual risks of alternatives with a single line of defense versus multiple lines of defense.

Robustness is a measure of performance under a wide range of uncertain

conditions. It is the converse of optimizing a system on one set of assumptions. Under standard National Economic Development (NED) optimization practices, analytical results are based on expected values that result from the range of input variables that describe plausible storms. However, that optimal outcome only holds true if the input assumptions are reflective of the storms that arrive in the period of analysis. Robustness considers the full range of outcomes under various possible scenarios and the value of the comprehensive system under those scenarios. The multiple lines of defense approach also offers a robust system under the plausible range of storm conditions, tracks, sea level, and forecast accuracy.

Focused on redundancy and robustness, the proposed plan, with its combination of ecosystem restoration and CSRMs measures, is also adaptable to future conditions such as sea level change and changing frequency and severity of coastal storms.

Q *How did the consideration of resiliency – the project’s robustness, redundancy, and adaptability – impact plan selection and recommendation?*

A The resilience framework offers an opportunity to consider how the effects of the alternative plans would support or hinder resilience in the study



“The final plan delivers an integrated water resources solution that balances engineering performance, costs, and economic return on investment with societal concerns, while avoiding and minimizing environmental impacts to the extent practicable.”

– Col. Timothy R. Vail, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Galveston District Commander, Chief’s Report Submission,
September 2021

area, while still making use of many of the familiar NED and National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) metrics produced in USACE studies to evaluate and compare plans. The Recommended Plan includes a combination of ecosystem restoration and CSR features that function

as a system to reduce coastal storm damages to natural and manmade infrastructure and to restore degraded coastal ecosystems. “Line of defense” measures in the plan work together to support redundancy and system robustness.

The study team worked closely with the vertical team, in not only Planning but also Engineering, to consider the scale, location, phasing, and dependencies of plan measures to with an eye on redundancy and robustness. For example, in plan selection, resilience criteria were able to differentiate between two plans that when compared based on NED and NER criteria alone were not significantly different. Certain measures, for example, supported community resiliency by better protecting or preserving evacuation routes – which are important before an event for evacuation as well as after a storm for restoring services to the community.

The resiliency assessments in Coastal Texas were relatively simple. There are opportunities to continue enhancing these assessments, in combination with comprehensive benefits, to support the objectives for equity, environmental justice, and support to low-income and rural communities (Note: Our colleagues in the Alaska District provide an interesting example with their study for Barrow, Alaska).

The Coastal Texas study team was also able to apply resilience principles when evaluating of alternatives through the lenses of the Principles and Guidelines formulation and evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, and completeness.

■ **Effectiveness** is the extent to which the alternative plans achieve the planning objectives of the study. Evaluating for resilience implies that the effectiveness of a plan persists over time, but additional measures may be required to be effective under widely variable conditions, or future adaptation maybe required.

■ **Efficiency** is the extent to which an alternative is cost-effective while meeting the planning objectives. Efficiency should not come at the expense of flexibility, however. Resilience requires the flexibility to incorporate future adaptations in complex risk situations.

■ **Completeness** is the extent to which the alternative plans include all necessary actions and costs to achieve the planning objectives and the benefits that are claimed for each plan. Resilience adds a future aspect to the consideration of completeness. What future adaptations may be required to sustain the expected benefits?

OTHER STUDY SUCCESS ENABLERS



Strong Study Team.

Collaboration was critical to study success. More than 130 personnel contributed to completion of the study, from the sponsor, ten USACE Districts, SWD, Headquarters, multiple USACE Communities of Practice (Coastal Storm Risk Management, National Ecosystem Restoration Planning, Climate Resilience, and Civil Works Cost Engineering), and three USACE laboratories (ERDC Coastal Hydraulics Laboratory, the ERDC Environmental Laboratory, and the Hydrologic Engineering Center).



Tiered Project Governance.

The Coastal Texas study piloted the USACE “mega-study” protocols to seamlessly address complex planning, engineering, economic, and environmental policy issues and ensure issue resolution at all levels of the agency and with our study partner.

COASTAL TEXAS COSTS & BENEFITS BY THE NUMBERS...

~\$2.31 Billion
EQUIVALENT ANNUAL BENEFITS

1.91 BCR

FOR THE COMBINED CSR MEASURES

IN A 1% AEP SURGE EVENT:
~77% REDUCTION IN DAMAGED STRUCTURES
~64% REDUCTION IN FLOODED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE POINTS

21,010

AAHUS ECOLOGICAL LIFT

6,610

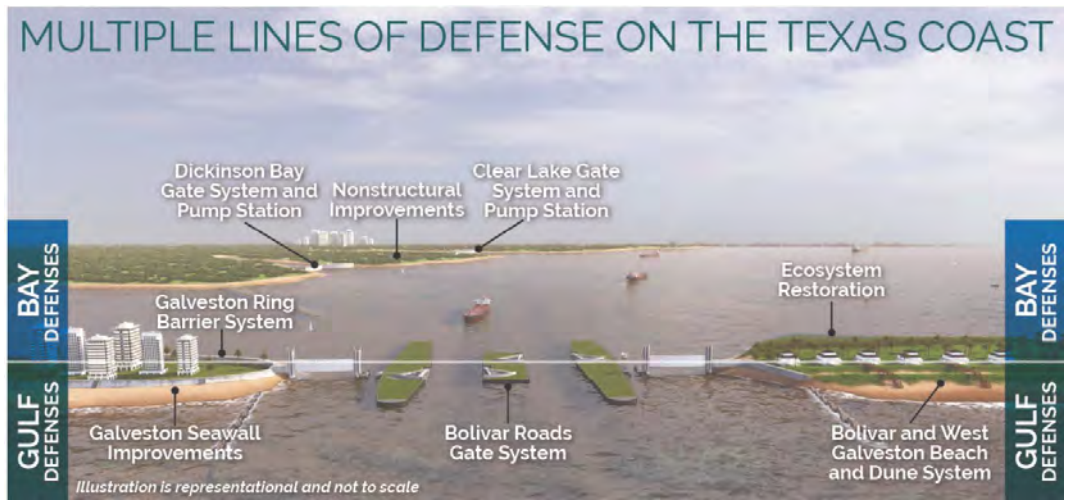
ACRES HABITAT IMPROVED

~\$28.87 Billion
TOTAL RECOMMENDED PLAN PROJECT FIRST COST (CSR & ER)



Monthly, quarterly, and biannual governance meetings were conducted to ensure all levels of the agency, the study partner, and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) were fully engaged in the decision-making process. The early, frequent, and continual engagement of the vertical team allowed for more effective resolution of complex challenges.

Innovative Public Outreach. The study team conducted monthly interagency coordination workshops with the local, state, and federal natural resource agencies to assure full transparency and engage subject matter experts in critical decision points as the study progressed. Active coordination and outreach ensured that the interests of the sponsor, resource agencies, and the public were taken into consideration to the greatest extent possible, while ensuring compliance with USACE policy and guidance. At the height of the Covid pandemic in 2020, the team shifted to a 100% virtual platform. **ARCGIS StoryMaps** provided an opportunity for the study team to explain planning decisions and processes in an immersive, hands-on environment from a virtual launch pad. Using the StoryMap technology, the team was able to walk the public through multiple facets



of the plan, allowing them to engage virtually, and gaining a better understanding of the tradeoffs made to balance engineering performance with economic return on investment while minimizing environmental effects and considering social concerns.

Advancing Particle Track Modeling. The surge barrier being considered could potentially alter flows and interrupt sediment transport into and out of Galveston Bay. Potential impact to marine species' larval transport in the Bay was also an important consideration. USACE, with input from natural resource agencies, applied a 3D Adaptive Hydraulics model overlaid on the USACE ERDC Advanced Circulation Model (ADCIRC) grid to simulate water flow and bay circulation to estimate the range of impacts to salinity and velocity anticipated with the construction and operation of the proposed Bolivar Roads Gate System.

In one application, potential impacts to larval movement were then evaluated. Notably, the results indicated no significant impact to marine species' larval transport as a result of the surge barrier design.

Natural and Nature-based Features. Beach nourishment, living shorelines, and restored marshes constitute a substantial portion of the recommended plan. These features provide multiple benefit streams and afford the flexibility to adapt to changing future conditions, for both habitat restoration and for coastal erosion and protection of valued assets.

Tiered NEPA. Given the plan's level of complexity, the team determined that environmental compliance for the majority of the ecosystem restoration measures could be achieved in time for the final report. However more than two years before the

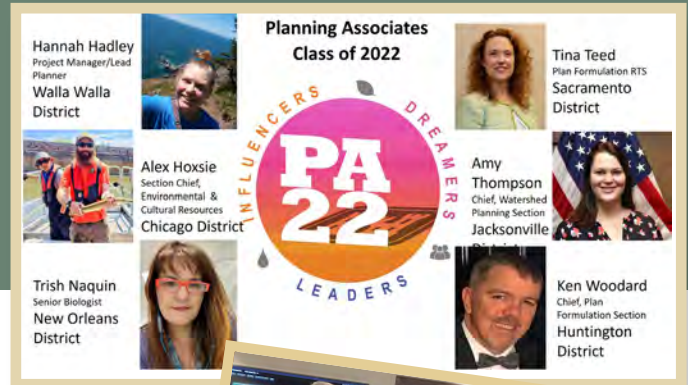
Chief's Report was signed, the team recognized that sufficient design details would not be available to complete environmental compliance activities prior to initiating preconstruction, engineering and design (PED) activities for the storm surge gates, ring barrier, the South Padre Island coastal storm risk management measure, two of the eight ecosystem restoration measures, and the CSRSM beach and dune features on Bolivar Peninsula and Galveston Island. The study team requested and were granted a policy exception by the ASA(CW) in June 2020 to allow the publication of a **final feasibility report** and a first tier **Environmental Impact Statement**, with continuing environmental compliance to be completed during PED in advance of project construction.





PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT PLANNING ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

CONGRATULATIONS TO PLANNING ASSOCIATES CLASS OF 2022



The **Planning Associates (PA) Class of 2022** graduated on 24 August after two years of dedication to the program, which was held almost entirely virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The six graduates were Hannah Hadley of Walla Walla District, Alex Hoxsie of Chicago District, Patricia Naquin of New Orleans District, Tina Teed of Portland District, Amy Thompson of Jacksonville District, and Ken Woodard of Huntington District. The PCoP looks forward to watching these graduates utilize their skills and talents to be great assets across the enterprise.

The **PA Program** is comprised of a series of advanced training courses in water resources challenges and is an excellent career development opportunity for USACE planners. The goals of the PA Program are to provide journey-

level planners with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will help them grow into expert planners, and to develop future planning leaders. The cornerstones of the PA Program include team building exercises, leadership training, water resources laws and policy instruction, and experiential training in USACE Civil Works business line programs.

The PA program has undergone several significant changes in the past three years. Changing from a one-year travel-intensive program to a two-year program is intended to reduce impacts to district-level workload and the personal lives of PA program participants.

The addition of “Applied Learning Assignments” in the second year of the program provides PAs with hands-on experience working on a team or



special project to advance the state of Civil Works Planning.

Additional upgrades to the program include adjustments to the program framework to include both in-person and virtual coursework that is designed to reduce TDY.

The PA Program recently announced the PA Class of 2024. After their initial orientation meeting, the

Class of 2024 will join the Class of 2023 for the “DC Experience” and the Flood Risk Management (FRM) and CSRSM business line sessions.

Interested in finding out more about the Planning Associates Program? Talk to a recent graduate or Lisa Rabbe, the PA Program Manager, for more information.



GETTING TO KNOW HQ

NEW FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT CoP



LUCKY PEAK DAM, IDAHO (WALLA WALLA DISTRICT)

Planners are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the newly created Flood Risk Management Community of Practice (FRM CoP), which will focus on increasing individual and organizational capabilities and technical competence to improve and advance USACE FRM programs, projects, and activities and contribute to the preparedness and resilience of USACE partners and stakeholders. The FRM CoP is championed by senior leader [Mr. Stephen Hill](#), Director of Contingency Operations and Chief, Office of Homeland Security. Ms. [Christy Jones](#), Deputy Chief, Office of Homeland Security is serving as the FRM CoP Chief Knowledge Officer, and [Lisa Kiefel](#), USACE FRM Business Line Manager, is serving as the FRM CoP Leader.

FRM is a vital core USACE mission, with activities seeking to reduce the threat to life and property from riverine and coastal storm flooding through the development and communication of advanced knowledge, technology, and solutions. The FRM CoP was established this fall to fill the need for a formal community for practitioners and to ensure that the FRM business line continues to advance and excel in pursuing USACE FRM priorities in a manner that optimizes benefits to the nation.

The FRM CoP aims to improve enterprise FRM execution by developing USACE personnel in ways that help them better identify problems, develop solutions, and reduce the

threat of flooding risks. The FRM CoP seeks to do this by:

- Sharing knowledge and information
- Supporting the development of effective and efficient best practices, tools, and resources
- Cultivating a collaborative environment
- Providing awareness of educational opportunities to members

Any USACE personnel who has interest, expertise, or involvement in the FRM mission is encouraged to join the FRM CoP. The FRM CoP will closely coordinate with FRM-related Centers of Expertise and other CoPs associated with FRM. The existing FRM Coordination Group serves as the advisory board to the FRM CoP and will now be known as the FRM Community of Practice Advisory Board (FRM CAB). The FRM CoP will be organized by eight sub-CoPs representing the USACE Divisions' different geographic areas of responsibility.

For more information on the FRM CoP and how to join the FRM CoP listserv, visit the [FRM CoP page](#) on the FRM Portal. More details about the USACE FRM mission can be found on the new public-facing [USACE FRM webpage on the USACE Headquarters website](#).



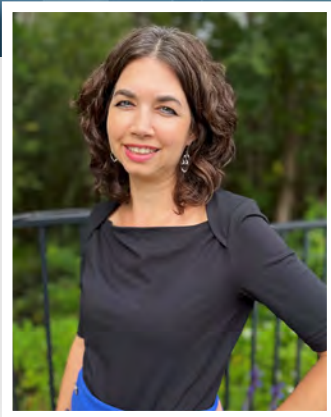
USACE FRM SHAREPOINT HOMEPAGE





PLANNER PERSPECTIVE: FY21 PLANNER OF THE YEAR

Among many reasons, FY21 Enterprise “Planner of the Year” Stacey Roth was recognized for leading the Jacksonville District team to a Chief’s Report for the San Juan (Puerto Rico) Metro feasibility study. We invited Stacey to share her thoughts with the Planning community on leadership, working with a diverse team, and where Planning is heading.



I am a Civil Engineer, and I started at USACE after college as a hydraulic modeling contractor. After 1.5 years I joined the intern program, an invaluable experience, where I interacted with many aspects of our USACE processes. After the intern program, I accepted a permanent position in Value Engineering. After several years of participating on study teams and learning more about Planning, I knew that’s where I belonged.

Working on a project team is such an amazing journey – and I call it a journey because it is full of ups and downs, excitement and frustration, incredible successes, and sometimes defeat. We are in the business of solving problems, and that is both rewarding and challenging. With a focus on a recent study I have been privileged to work on, I want to share a few things I have

learned, what I am excited about, and some challenges I see for our future.

The **San Juan Metro CSRM study** was funded by the Budget Bipartisan Act of 2018. I want to highlight a few aspects that made it unique and challenging, but also led to a successful **Chief’s Report** signing. First, the study was rescoped shortly before the Alternatives Milestone Meeting to address coastal flooding from the back bay. It concluded in September 2021 with a signed Chief’s Report – this was challenging, but the team was able to adapt by communicating often and learning from other USACE coastal flooding studies.

Second, having a study site for such a large study very far away was unique and was at times difficult, but we were fortunate to have colleagues in Puerto Rico who shared advice and local knowledge, and great teamwork among a diverse team of experts and mentors within the Jacksonville District, all the way up the vertical chain to our Division and Headquarters, as well as the **CSRM Planning Center of Expertise**. Third, having sufficient coastal flooding benefits for the study area, minimal environmental impacts, and a community and sponsor that was generally supportive of the plan, was an important part of being able to accomplish the study



San Juan Metro Back Bay Project Delivery Team Jacksonville District



Sheila Hint



Kevin Hodgens



Stacey Roth



Edgardo Bermudez



Collin Ries



Alexis Alejandro



Kelly Keefe



Ewan Jonson



Glorimar Torres-Pagan



Paul DeMarco



Barbara Nist



Alberto Alvarado



Jim LaGrone



Colin Rawls



Amanda Bredesen

within the scoped timeframe of 3 years and \$3 million.

What I really appreciate about the San Juan Metro Area team are the team members who stepped into the gray areas between disciplines to ask the hard questions or to offer assistance. For example, we have archaeologists who weighed in on graphics, economists asking questions to better understand engineering aspects, and environmental leads, real estate specialists, and engineering team members communicating frequently during the plan formulation and feasibility design to understand all perspectives and to avoid or minimize impacts. In my opinion, that is really the key to a great team – good communication, a willingness to step outside of traditional roles, and working

together to understand the big picture.

New guidance and paradigm shifts at USACE are allowing Planning teams to lean forward even more.

I am excited about the new VTAM scoping guidance. I believe it will allow us to truly scope time and budget to achieve the objectives that the sponsor and communities want and that our experts recommend.

The comprehensive benefits assessment directed by the ASA(CW) in January 2021 is going to be key for long-term engineering acceptability in communities. This is challenging without a clear roadmap or tools, particularly given our fast-paced study timelines. The **Puerto Rico CSRM study** team, a sister

study to the San Juan Metro Area CSRM study, in my opinion, is one of many teams helping to pave the way for the enterprise for this new effort by teasing out other benefit categories and finding ways to quantify them for a full analysis of comprehensive benefits.

We also continue to face challenges addressing sea level rise adaptability and resilience. Carefully thinking through when and how a feature could be adapted is what we need to do, but it also takes time and can create complications in how we view and count our benefits and costs.

Finally, I can't say enough about graphics. We are fortunate to have a wonderful graphics team in Jacksonville District. As our studies

become more challenging, and new and radical solutions are being proposed, graphics allow us to convey our vision to communities for better understanding.

If I have learned anything, it is that the work we have will always be challenging, but the way we interact with each other and communicate with the communities we are serving is paramount. Two phrases I live by are “be kind” and “the other person always has a point.” No matter what study you are working on and no matter what mission area, please remember you have a great network at USACE! Let's continue to support one another as we work towards reducing existing problems in communities, and as we help communities prepare for the challenges of the future.





PCoP Q+A

In the Planning Hot Topics newsletter I saw a reference to the recently certified WRCPs. What is the WRCP program and how can WRCPs help with ongoing studies?

WRCPs set a standard of excellence for the USACE planning profession. The program was established in 2016, and requires a mix of training, experience, knowledge, and demonstrated leadership for certification. Recognizing – and leveraging – the technical competencies of certified planners contributes to strengthening the quality of USACE products and the enhancement of USACE’s national planning capacity.

WRCPs are called upon to help with studies addressing the Nation’s most complex water resource challenges. Their role will vary; they may be the lead plan formulator, economist, or environmental planner, a review team member, or a study team mentor. Certified planners can lead PDTs, provide subject matter expertise, and ensure product quality through comprehensive reviews.

Over the last five years, certified planners have supported the Planning Community as trainers, facilitators, workshop organizers, and PCoP Webinar presenters. With their depth and breadth of water resources planning experience, they have participated in

enterprise working groups and PDTs. WRCPs help pioneer innovative solutions, foster meaningful relationships, advance project delivery, and provide mentorship for other USACE planners.

Many WRCPs are also active Planning Mentors, working directly with study teams, typically during the early stages of a project, e.g., facilitating planning charettes and guiding the team through the first iteration of the planning process or working with the team to clearly communicate their foundational planning decisions. Are you on a study that can use a mentor? Limited funding is available from Headquarters for Planning Mentor assistance. Contact Susan Layton for more information.

More information about the WRCP program, including information about the self-nomination process, can be found on the [Planning Community Toolbox People tab](#).

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.

> Planning Community Webinars

The [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 including the ones seen 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.

If there is a webinar topic you believe the PCoP would benefit from, please email your ideas to hqplanning@usace.army.mil.

DEVELOPING AND APPLYING A LOGICAL AGGREGATION METHODOLOGY IN THE FIRST 90 DAYS OF A STUDY (22 SEPTEMBER)



UPDATE ON PLANNING POLICY & THE PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTEBOOK (6 OCTOBER)



LIFE SAFETY RISK INDICATOR (20 OCTOBER)



FIND MORE WEBINARS AT:

<https://planning.ercd.dren.mil/toolbox/resources.cfm?Id=0&Option=Planning%20Webinars>

