



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# PLANNINGahead

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# VIEW FROM THE TOP

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



**Hello, Civil Works Planning Community!** Let me start by stating the obvious: we have a lot of smart, talented, and dedicated folks working in the Planning Community and we have a lot of exciting work going on. One of the things I like most about my job is that I get to peek into the work you all are doing and be involved in studies underway across our Nation. I also am reminded daily how important the work we do is for our partners and stakeholders. I am particularly excited about the comprehensive studies recently kicked off for the lower Missouri River, the lower Mississippi River, and the Great Lakes as these are generational opportunities to provide water resources solutions for the people in those huge basins for decades to come.

Going by the numbers, we have more Planning work than ever before. In addition to our unprecedented

workload already authorized and funded, the 2022 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) enacted last December authorized 94 (!) studies and the fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriation funded 17 studies. All this certainly suggests we will have important work to do for many years to come.

On the subject of WRDA 2022, we have begun the formal process of finalizing Implementation Guidance. As you know, we are now required by law to provide a 60-day public comment period and during that period we are hosting public listening sessions to take input regarding those provisions in WRDA 2022 needing (or perhaps not needing, depending on perspective) formal implementation guidance approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)), Mr. Michael Connor. The guidance team has already identified several provisions they think require guidance, and we also solicited input from each MSC. Now we will hear from Tribes, stakeholders, and the public, and at the end of the public comment period Mr. Connor

will make a final decision about which provisions require formal guidance. I suggest keeping an eye on our [WRDA Implementation Guidance webpage](#) to stay current as the guidance is developed.

Here I will also say if you need assistance with a provision of any WRDA, whether there is formal implementation guidance or not, please raise your questions through your MSC's regional Planning office to engage experts at Headquarters (HQUSACE) and the Office of the ASA(CW). Our mission is to help district Planners to execute your studies!

Shifting gears a bit, one of this Administration's and Congress's areas of emphasis is better serving underserved communities through our water resources programs and projects, with a focus on achieving more equitable environmental justice (EJ) outcomes. To better deliver on those expectations, we have created a new EJ Program Manager position in the HQUSACE Planning office, and I am proud to announce that Ms. Jerica Richardson, most recently with SPL, was

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



WINTER 2023 FRONT COVER — DURING A TOUR OF ALASKA DISTRICT PROJECTS, A HIGH-LEVEL ARMY CORPS DELEGATION VISITED THE EXISTING HARBOR IN ELIM. SOURCE, USACE.



selected and is now on board. Jerica has great knowledge and experience evaluating EJ issues relevant to our Civil Works program and projects. Although this is a brand-new position for Civil Works, we certainly have been evaluating EJ issues in our studies for decades. One of Jerica's roles will be to enable local and regional implementation of Mr. Connor's policies regarding EJ, particularly outreach, communication, and incorporating voices from rural and underserved communities into plan formulation and decision making. To achieve that, Jerica will support the recently announced cadre of District EJ Coordinators who are responsible for vertical coordination on EJ considerations with their division and HQUSACE; you



can visit the [PCoP Knowledge Management Portal for the full list of EJ Coordinators](#).

The same is true for our Tribal programs. Most Native American Indian Tribes and Corporations are economically disadvantaged or underserved communities. Here I wish to highlight a success in the making, supporting the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona. Under the leadership of District Commander Colonel

Julie Balten, the Los Angeles District is assisting the Gila River Indian Community with a solar panels-over-water system that will provide renewable energy and efficient use of their irrigation canals. This is a truly innovative application of our Tribal Partnership Program (TTP)! To serve their needs, Colonel Balten and the SPL team had to adjust their approach and their business processes. I think their lessons learned while undertaking

an innovative project should apply to everything we do in Civil Works:

- Rely on leader intent;
- Trust our partners;
- Minimize reviews;
- Be prepared to accept non-traditional sources of information and analyses; and
- Recognize and respect differing decision processes.

Colonel Balten and the Los Angeles District are truly leading the way in modernizing how we support Tribal partners! I'm excited to see how their success may be replicated across all of Indian Country through our Tribal Partnership and other Civil Works Programs!

*"Nous pouvons le faire!"*

## > 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 tools that can support planners and planning decision making. Recent additions of interest include:

- New EJustice resources that support the field in implementing the ASA(CW)'s March 2022 [Implementation of Environmental Justice and the Justice20 Initiative](#) memorandum and the HQUSACE December 2022 Implementation of the [Interim Environmental Justice Strategic Plan](#) memorandum, including the [Interim Environmental Justice Guidance for Civil Works Planning](#)

[Studies memorandum](#) and the [Guide for Preparing District Environmental Justice Strategic Plan](#).

- An updated [Review Plan Template](#) and the [Review Plan Checklist](#) are now available. The Review Plan Template contains all required elements of a Review Plan and can be used during any phase of a project. It was recently updated to meet [Engineer Regulation 1165-2-217, Civil Works Review Policy](#) requirements and include information on district quality review requirements. Use of the Review Plan Template is not mandatory, but teams may need

to update their Review Plan to be compliant with ER 1165-2-217. The Review Plan Checklist contains new elements to ensure study teams have met all ER 1165-2-217 requirements.

- Planners can now access the new [e-Risk Register](#) tool and resources. The tool incorporates existing Assistance for Project Teams Tool (APT) modules including existing project Planning risk registers. A recent [PCoP Webinar](#) provides an overview of the tool and its functionality.
- All [Chief's Reports](#) since 1990 and all [Director's Reports](#) since 2019 are available in

the Planner's Library. If your District has a recently (or not so recently) signed a Chief's Report or Director's Report that is not available on the Planning Community Toolbox, please coordinate with your RIT Planner and the PCoP Deputy to get the file posted.

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





# GETTING TO KNOW HQ

## HQ WELCOMES NEW ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM MANAGER

*Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income regarding the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, with no group bearing a disproportionate burden of environmental harms and risks.*

of needs, studies, planning development, and project implementation. As part of this commitment, Headquarters has hired its first Environmental Justice Program Manager within our Planning and Policy Division, **Ms. Jerica Richardson.**

A career Archaeologist and Senior Planner, Ms. Richardson has spent much of her 25 years of federal service working to preserve, reconnect, and enhance Tribal and social-economically vulnerable populations' access to the natural environment and improve engagement through Civil Works programs, policies, and project management.

Ms. Richardson will be the Headquarters lead in advancing the agency's environmental justice initiatives with a focus on policy changes, program budget inquiries, and ensuring that environmental justice considerations are inculcated in our culture and decision-making processes wherever there is potential for impact of identified communities.

Leading the Environmental Justice Program, Ms. Richardson will work closely with our agency Tribal Leads, Civil Works Programs,



THE JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT HOSTED A CEREMONIAL SIGNING FOR THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (PPA) AND MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA) TO START CONSTRUCTION OF THE CAÑO MARTÍN PEÑA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT IN SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO. (SOURCE: JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT PAO).

Regulatory, and Military Program as we lean forward as an agency to address potential opportunities to address environmental justice where appropriate.

In addition, USACE will report annually to the Administration on the implementation of the Justice40 Initiative within the agency: the Administration's objective for ensuring 40 percent of the benefits of designated programs, such as the TTP and Floodplain Management Services Program (FPMS), are accruing to economically disadvantaged and historically underserved communities. Another role for the Environmental Justice Program is partnering with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) – Environmental Justice Division, to ensure that District and Division Environmental Justice Coordinators understand the use of approved tools such as CEQ's [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) to

account for socio-economic influences in our budgeting request.

Ms. Richardson is prioritizing training and workforce engagement to ensure all team members have a baseline understanding of environmental justice and are maximizing best practices. To assess and address these opportunities, Ms. Richardson is working with District and Division Environmental Justice Coordinators on drafting District Environmental Justice Communication Strategies to meet Major General (MG) William Graham's 3 March submittal deadline. Once District Environmental Justice Communication Strategies are endorsed by their Division Commander, each district will employ those strategies in developing project and program-specific communication plans as part of the project management plan. For more information, visit the new [Headquarters website Environmental Justice page.](#)



MS. JERICA RICHARDSON

**F**or USACE, environmental justice and disproportionate impacts to disadvantaged communities are considered throughout the agency's Civil Works programs and in all phases of project planning and decision-making.

As an agency, USACE is committed to working to accommodate and encourage participation of all communities as partners in the assessment



# PCoP NEWS FLASHES

## PLANNING COMMUNITY UPDATES

### Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Command Philosophy Notice

Lieutenant General Spellmon recently released a [Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Command Philosophy Notice](#), which outlines the vision for expanding the USACE beneficial use of dredged material program. USACE has historically used 30-40% of the sediments derived from the Navigation mission for beneficial purposes. This notice establishes a new USACE goal to advance the practice of beneficial use of dredged material to 70% by the year 2030.



### WRDA 2022

[WRDA 2022](#) was signed into law on 23 December 2022 by President Biden. Planners should be on the lookout for future implementation guidance based on WRDA22 provisions.



### Relaunched Planner Database

The Planner Database was relaunched in January on a new website and is now CAC-enabled. Please access the Planner Database through its new URL: <https://sme.sec.usace.army.mil/>



### New Coastal Storm Damages Prevented (CSDP) Tool

USACE recently launched a CSDP tool, which allows USACE project managers, planners, coastal engineers, and economists the capability to develop regional and national assessments of damages reduced by USACE coastal projects. For more information, visit the [CSDP Lecture Series YouTube page](#).



### Congratulations to the latest Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) Risk Management Certificate Graduates

The PCoP would like to congratulate the most recent NDMU Risk Management Certificate Program Graduates. The 14 graduates – Brad Burrows (SWG), Clare Cholwea (DSMMCX), Joshua Copeland (SWF), Grace Costello (LRB), Dylan Grissom (LRN), Tobie Marie LaRoy (NWS), Andrew Moore (MVN), Stephanie Owen (LRN), Rachel Perrine (MVR), Jennifer Purcell (SWF), Matthew Radar (MVN), Jarrett Schuster (NWW), Paul Szempruch (SWF), and Eric Witten (MVS) - who graduated in August 2022 join a growing cadre of 128 total graduates, including 49 planners, who have completed the program. The NDMU Risk Management Certificate Program, which was created in 2015, is year-long graduate level training program that prepares participants to provide thoughtful, evidence-based approaches to reduce vulnerability; minimize risk

to achieve organizational goals; and to acquire the knowledge and skills most in demand for careers in this growing field. NDMU also offers a Master's degree in Risk Management, which only requires an additional four courses. To learn more about the program you can view the [2 June 2022 NDMU Risk Management Certificate PCoP Webinar](#). Please contact Karen Miller with questions.



### 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).





# PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

## ELIM SUBSISTENCE HARBOR FEASIBILITY STUDY RECOGNIZED FOR SUCCESSFUL TRIBAL PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



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*The Elim Subsistence Harbor Feasibility Study team was recognized with the FY21 Outstanding Planning Achievement Award (Programmatic). The Elim Study team recently spoke with Planning Ahead to share the strategies and best practices it employed to successfully engage with the Native Village of Elim.*

**W**hen considering the long-term viability of a community and the effects of a Civil Works water resource project, an inclusive, comprehensive approach is necessary. When a community sponsor is a federally recognized Tribe, which operates in a mixed cash-subsistence economy, the project delivery team (PDT) will need to work closely with community members to understand the complex cultural landscape in the context of the project

and its deliverables. The Elim Subsistence Harbor Feasibility Study (Elim Study) – with its Chief’s Report signed on 12 March 2021 (the first to be signed under the TPP) – demonstrates the importance of such a multifaceted, flexible approach. The Elim Study also showcases the use of a unique authority, Section 2006 of WRDA 2007, which was created to address remote and subsistence harbors. This authority allows USACE to evaluate and recommend a project based on benefit

categories beyond National Economic Development (NED) benefits. The Elim Study evaluated Other Social Effects (OSE) categories, including public health and safety, access to natural resources for subsistence, and social and cultural value of natural resources to the community. For a project to be eligible for Section 2006 of WRDA 2007, it must meet three requirements: (1) the community must be at least 70 miles from the nearest



commercial port and have no rail or highway access to another community with a port, or be located in Alaska, Hawai'i, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or American Samoa; (2) more than 80% of goods transported through the proposed harbor must be consumed within the region; and (3) the long-term viability of the community is threatened without it.

The community of Elim is located off the road system on the coast of Norton Sound, Alaska. According to the 2020 census, about 98 percent of residents are Inupiaq; most community members belong to the Native Village of Elim, a federally recognized Tribe. Today, Elim residents continue to practice a traditional subsistence lifestyle, which is of critical cultural importance, as well as essential for food security. Seals, beluga, caribou, birds, eggs, fishes, berries, and wild greens are all primary food sources. In addition to food, subsistence also provides the furs and other natural materials that are important for traditional arts. The cultural identity of Indigenous peoples across Alaska is tied to subsistence activities associated with specific locations; these activities express a deep historical knowledge of the land and seasons. The Elim Study PDT conducted analyses that incorporated these local intricacies while balancing

## ***The Elim Subsistence Harbor Study was the first Tribal Partnership Program feasibility study with a signed Chief's Report. The recommended project was congressionally authorized in WRDA 2022.***

respect for cultural practices and the sovereignty of the Native Village of Elim, all within the time constraints of the study requirements.

PDT members from Hydraulics & Hydrology (H&H) worked with Economics on the development of the Cost Effectiveness and Incremental Cost Analysis (CE/ICA) metric of "Opportunity Days" in order to identify the number of safe access days for the vessel class identified by the Elim community as essential to their needs. H&H developed the metric using both wave and water level analyses. The interdisciplinary OSE analysis expanded on social factors supported by the project, including the importance of continued subsistence knowledge and practice to cultural identity and the long-term viability of the Native Village of Elim.

When working with an Indigenous community, engagements must be conducted respectfully, both in terms of method (e.g., oral interviews) and timing (e.g., considering subsistence seasons and traditional holidays). The Elim Study PDT conducted public engagements in the form of a charette, in-person meetings,

and focus groups, all of which occurred in the community during multi-day trips. Dialogue with the community members and vessel operators in the region was crucial to the study; however, it took extensive planning to meet project milestones while still maintaining respectful engagement practices. Travel to Elim also required PDT members to be flexible; flights via small, single-engine airplanes were often delayed or canceled due to weather, winter visits required cold weather preparedness, and sleeping bags were brought for sleeping on the floor of the school gymnasium or the back room of the Tribal offices.

Community engagements in Elim provided assurance to the community that the study team was truly interested in what they were saying, which resulted in the sharing of information critical to the success of the Elim Study. Anecdotal insights from community members were captured organically, and the study team's awareness of local cultural and historical data was improved.

Internal to the PDT, collaboration among Economics, Cultural Resources, and the Tribal

Liaison proved essential to accurately capture community information and concerns and translate them in a meaningful way into the Civil Works process. Another crucial community visit was conducted by MG Graham, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, who, with Colonel Damon Delarosa, Alaska District Commander, visited Elim in the middle of winter with permission of the Tribal Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. This visit allowed MG Graham to verify the reality of the proposed project prior to the Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Scott Spellmon signing the Chief's Report, which identified a \$76,801,000 (FY22) recommended plan.

Through the effort of the Native Village of Elim, community members, and the PDT, the Integrated Feasibility Report & Environmental Assessment for the Elim Subsistence Harbor Project was completed on schedule. Congress provided funding for project design in both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 for a combined total of \$5.335 million and included the project in authorizations provided in WRDA 2022. The Elim Study highlights the importance of a flexible, interdisciplinary team working with the local community and a respectful and appropriate manner.





SACRAMENTO RIVER  
FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT  
DECEMBER 1955

LEGEND

- PROJECT LEVEES COMPLETED TO PROJECT STANDARDS
- - - PROJECT LEVEES NOT COMPLETED TO PROJECT STANDARDS

# PLANNER PERSPECTIVE: FY21 PLANNERS OF THE YEAR

*USACE historians Susannah Lemke and Tatum Clinton-Selin (pictured left) were jointly recognized with the FY21 National Planning Award for Planner of Year in the Programmatic Category. The Planner of the Year National Planning Award recognizes selected outstanding USACE Planners for their contributions to advance the state of the practice of Civil Works Planning and their work to achieve the principles of the Civil Works Strategic Plan. We invited Susannah to share the successes she and Tatum achieved collaborating to research and design an evaluation framework for the Sacramento River Flood Control project to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act.*



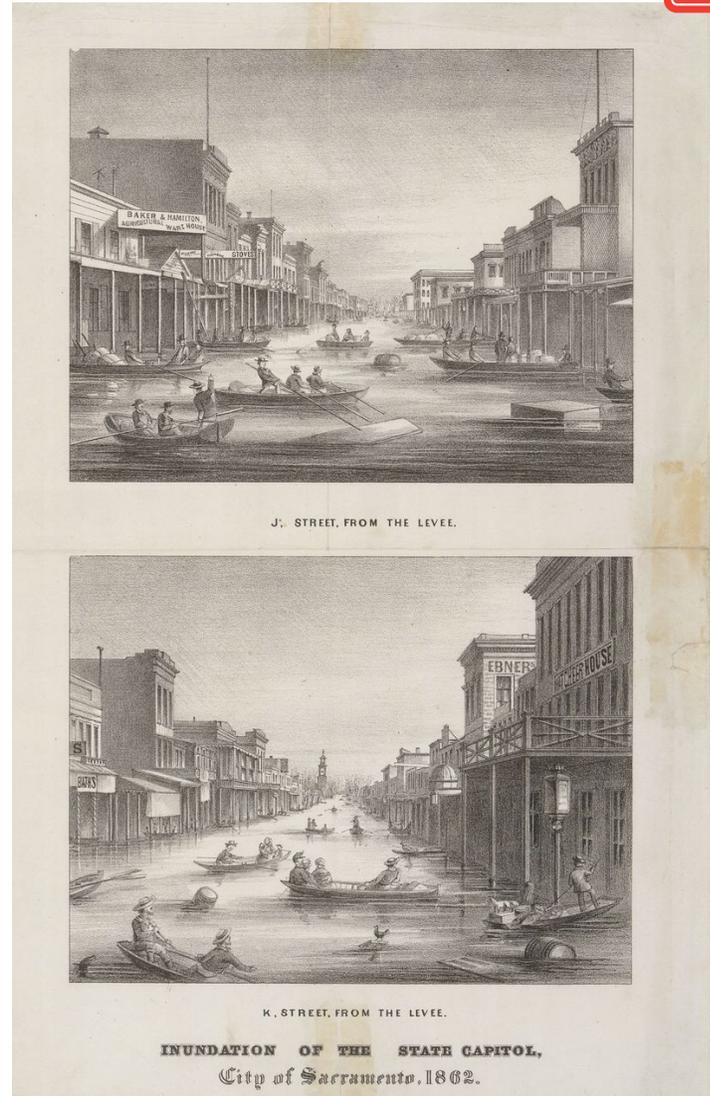


Tatum Clinton-Selin and I started at the USACE Sacramento District within weeks of each other. As two rare USACE historians, just two of fifteen across USACE, we quickly became close colleagues and collaborators. Within the first few weeks we were swapping opinions about mid-century buildings and revising each other's reports. More broadly, we found that we had landed in a stellar team of planners. We continue to be the beneficiaries of the knowledge, experience, support (and sense of humor) of our colleagues. Our first mentor, a Senior USACE Archaeologist, continues to cheer us on with the rallying cry: "GO TEAM HISTORY."

Given the dedicated group of planners in our district and across the nation, we were honored and humbled to receive the FY21 Planner of the Year Award in the Programmatic Category. The subject of our award was the report: [Levee Evaluation for the American River Common Features Project in Sacramento, Sutter and Yolo Counties \(October 2021\)](#). The American River Common Features Project is a cooperative effort between the USACE Sacramento District, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board designed to reduce flood risk to the Sacramento metropolitan area.

As part of the planning process, USACE must comply with the National Historic Preservation Act. Under the legislation, federal projects, such as the American River Common Features Project, must balance infrastructure improvements with measures to avoid or reduce adverse project effects to historic properties. Within the project area – the Sacramento River Flood Control Project, a vast system of historic levees, channels, weirs, and bypasses built between 1911 and 1961 – had to be evaluated under the National Historic Preservation Act. Parts of the historic flood control infrastructure had been evaluated during smaller USACE projects, but the broader system had not been addressed in a holistic way. For years, this analysis seemed impossibly complex. At the same time, lack of it impeded meaningful consultation on National Historic Preservation Act compliance for Civil Works projects.

To that end, Tatum and I researched, wrote, and designed an evaluation framework for the Sacramento River Flood Control Project. Our evaluation focused on levees, but the multiple property listing may be adapted to additional types of flood control infrastructure (e.g., weirs, bypasses, channels) within the Sacramento River Flood Control Project. In the



INUNDATION OF THE STATE CAPITOL, CITY OF SACRAMENTO, 1862 (SOURCE: CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY PICTURE COLLECTION).

near term, the document fulfilled our obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act for the upcoming project. In the long term, we recognize that USACE-built levees, channels, weirs, and dams are ubiquitous around the nation and hope that the document may serve as a starting point to streamline compliance processes and foster collaboration with USACE colleagues.

The bulk of our collaboration was accomplished over

months of biweekly meetings, where we talked through our research methods and analyses, posing hard questions and finding answers. Workload and project timelines rarely allow same-subject-matter experts to tackle a large project like this at USACE in our discipline. We feel lucky to have been in the right place at the right time. A Microsoft Teams message, an email with questions, or a brainstorming session is always welcome – feel free to contact Susannah or Tatum.

