

# The RAPID Feasibility Study Decision Framework

*A Guide for Study Teams and Partners*

JULY 2026



U.S. ARMY



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®



» Water release at Lake Mendocino, San Francisco District, the pilot reservoir for the Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations effort

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# WHY USACE IS EMBRACING THE RAPID FEASIBILITY STUDY DECISION FRAMEWORK

### **THE RAPID (RISK-INFORMED, ALIGNED, PROPORTIONAL, ITERATIVE, AND DECISIVE) FRAMEWORK**

is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' direct response to the call to deliver high-quality and implementable solutions to the nation's pressing water resources challenges to Congress in a timely manner.

**THE RAPID FRAMEWORK IS A STREAMLINED AND SCALABLE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS** designed to increase our responsiveness to the nation's water resource challenges by empowering teams to make risk-informed and decisive choices.

**THE RAPID FRAMEWORK IS DESIGNED TO ACCELERATE DECISION-MAKING WHILE MAINTAINING RIGOR AND ACCOUNTABILITY.** It guides teams to develop and evaluate an appropriate set of alternatives with a level of detail proportional to the decision at hand.

**THE RAPID FRAMEWORK IS OUTCOME-FOCUSED.** The framework drives teams to answer key questions at each phase of the study process, ensuring every investment decision appropriately considers risk and uncertainty proportionate to the action being considered. The goal is to make the most informed, decisive choice possible with the information available.

**THIS RAPID APPROACH IS INTENDED TO ENSURE** the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and non-federal sponsors can rapidly converge on effective solutions that align with key Administration priorities.

USACE is applying the RAPID framework to its feasibility study process. Often referred to as the first step toward construction of a USACE civil works water resources development project, the feasibility study is the disciplined process under which USACE teams work with non-federal study sponsors and multi-disciplinary study teams to identify water resources problems, formulate and evaluate solutions, resolve conflicting interests, and prepare recommendations.

A feasibility study is used to establish the federal interest, engineering feasibility, economic justification, and environmental acceptability of a recommended water resources project. A feasibility study determines if Congressional authorization and USACE implementation of a specific civil works project are warranted. Feasibility studies are generally cost-shared equally between USACE and a non-federal sponsor and reflect the shared responsibility for management and protection of the Nation's water resources. The non-federal share may be in the form of 100 percent work-in-kind in lieu of a partial or complete cash contribution.

Under the RAPID framework, the feasibility study process remains rooted in the "six-step planning process" that has guided USACE feasibility studies for more than fifty years; and feasibility studies must continue to meet legal and policy requirements established by Congress and the

### **THE USACE SIX-STEP PLANNING PROCESS**

*Any planning process is a structured approach to problem solving. A six-step planning process is commonly used in water resource development studies conducted by federal agencies, including USACE:*

**Step 1** Identifying problems and opportunities.

**Step 2** Inventorying and forecasting conditions.

**Step 3** Formulating alternative plans.

**Step 4** Evaluating alternative plans.

**Step 5** Comparing alternative plans.

**Step 6** Selecting a plan.

*For more information, see the USACE Planning Primer (1997).*





» *Machines working on the beach as part of a shore protection project, Jacksonville, FL*

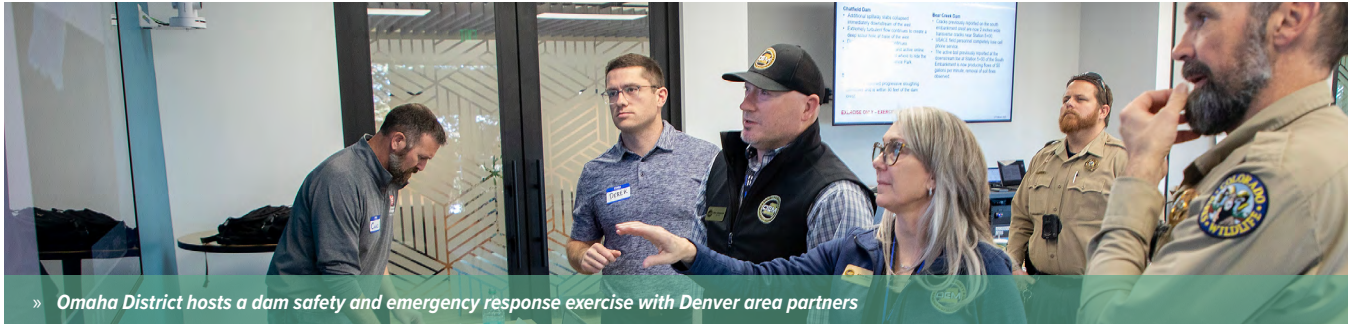
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works – but with a deliberate intent to reduce paperwork and thus the time and cost of studies.

The feasibility phase concludes with either the finding of no federal interest or the recommendation for the authorization of a specific water resources project. The analyses that support the recommendation are documented in a decision document. The final feasibility report will include documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws and guidance. The recommended project and the technical and engineering appendices in the decision document will lay the groundwork for the preconstruction, engineering and design (PED) phase of the project. The recommendation to Congress for authorization of a water resources project will be made by the Chief of Engineers

in the form of a “Chief’s Report.” After the Chief’s Report is signed, the ASA(CW) will officially transmit the Chief’s Report to Congress along with the views of the Administration.

The RAPID framework for USACE feasibility studies enables USACE project delivery teams and non-federal sponsors to meet the Chief of Engineers’ directive for a 35% level of design to accompany the Class 3 cost estimate of the early actionable project elements being recommended for authorization in a Chief’s Report. The RAPID framework is also aligned with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works’s Build Infrastructure, Not Paperwork initiative, propelling overall project delivery timelines, including early delivery for project authorization cycles.





» Omaha District hosts a dam safety and emergency response exercise with Denver area partners

## UNDERSTANDING RAPID

USACE leaders, feasibility study project delivery teams, and study non-federal partners are called upon to embrace the RAPID approach.

# R

### **RISK-INFORMED** *Making decisions with minimum required data, not waiting for perfect information.*

Be judicious on what to analyze. Focus on what matters most. Identify the specific uncertainties that pose the greatest threat to project success. Actively weigh the risk of study investment against the potential return, the cost of project delay against the benefits of early action, and the risk of a flawed decision against the cost of perfect information. Focus analytical effort only on the data needed to manage the most critical risks.

# A

### **ALIGNED** *Ensuring teams are integrated and communicating from day one.*

Seek involvement, input, and joint awareness. Ensure vertical and horizontal integration across the project delivery team, District leadership, and the “vertical team” from day one. Active and continuous engagement ensures technical and policy issues are addressed quickly, reducing the likelihood of later changes and empowering the team to run. Aligned is about process, communication, and shared understanding—not about demanding 100% consensus on every technical detail.

# P

### **PROPORTIONAL** *The level of analysis will match the cost and scope of the project.*

Be prudent in how much is analyzed. The level of detail in the analysis should be proportional to the decision at hand. The RAPID approach emphasizes focusing on the most viable alternatives and developing only the information needed to select a sound plan, while reserving detailed refinement for feasibility-level design of the recommended plan. This avoids “over-analyzing” or “over-engineering” if not commensurate with the risk or scale of the potential project.

# I

### **ITERATIVE** *Treating planning as a flexible cycle that adapts to new information.*

Embrace feedback loops. Planning is not linear; it is a cycle of analyzing, learning, and refining. Expect to revisit and adjust assumptions as you gain new information. Use each cycle to systematically screen out non-viable options and converge on a sound, defensible plan.

# D

### **DECISIVE** *Committing to a path forward once sufficient data is available.*

Commit to a path forward once a decision is reached. All are called on to avoid the familiar traps of requests for greater detail or more information if the request is not critical to a decision. Acknowledge that while more data could be gathered, the current evidence supports a defensible decision. A streamlined path to the decision maker is essential to ensure decisions are made promptly and the study remains on track.



## THE RAPID FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### FEASIBILITY STUDY PHASES

The figure above denotes the sub-phases of the feasibility phase of Civil Works project development: Study Initiation, Scoping, Alternative Assessment and Evaluation, Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design, and finalizing the project recommendation for Congressional authorization in the Chief's Report.

### KEY EVENTS

The figure highlights when specific key events, such as documentation, review, or decision milestones are anticipated to occur with respect to the overall process. Three key events, the Scoping Charrette, the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop, and the Design Scoping Charrette, serve as process drivers.

### OVERVIEW OF THE RAPID FEASIBILITY STUDY DECISION FRAMEWORK GUIDE

This guide was developed to support teams and decision makers in the adoption of the RAPID framework for Civil Works feasibility study execution.

The guide is a complement to USACE feasibility study guidance and policy. A selection of key resources and guidance for feasibility study project delivery teams is included as an appendix.

Each phase of the Civil Works feasibility study process is described in additional detail, with a focus on the key questions to be addressed by the project delivery team,

typical evaluation and analysis activities, and the decisions to be made by USACE leaders, as well as interdisciplinary project delivery teams and the feasibility study's non-federal partners, during that phase of a feasibility study.

Each section of the guide also provides a high-level recap of the key roles and responsibilities for a Civil Works feasibility study.

There is no one-size-fits-all for USACE feasibility studies or project development. Communication and coordination throughout the feasibility study to ensure continual alignment on the study's scope is critical.

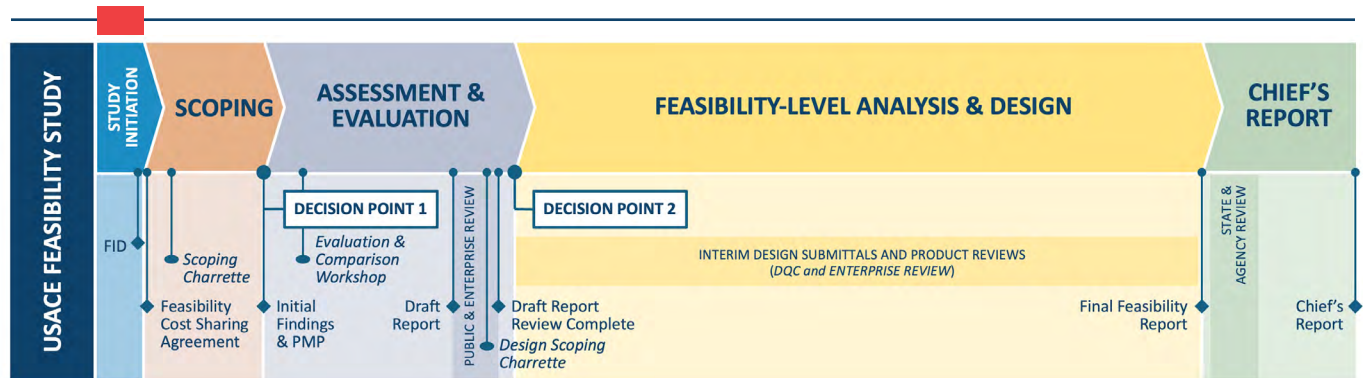
### ACRONYMS

|                 |                                                               |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ASA(CW)</b>  | Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works               |
| <b>CW</b>       | Civil Works                                                   |
| <b>DCG-CEO</b>  | Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations  |
| <b>H&amp;H</b>  | Hydrology and Hydraulics                                      |
| <b>MFR</b>      | Memorandum for Record                                         |
| <b>NEPA</b>     | National Environmental Policy Act                             |
| <b>OASA(CW)</b> | Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works |
| <b>RAPID</b>    | Risk-Informed, Aligned, Proportional, Iterative, and Decisive |
| <b>USACE</b>    | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers                                  |





## Study Initiation and Federal Interest Determination



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

The Study Initiation Phase is a hyper-focused feasibility study viability assessment.

This is a time-boxed, resource-limited, fully-federally funded sprint. The team must aggressively apply the RAPID principles, with emphasis on Proportionality, leveraging existing data to exclusively answer one overarching question: “Is there sufficient federal interest to justify a full feasibility study?”

The goal is not to solve the water resource problem, but to determine if USACE is the right entity to try to solve it, consistent with current Administration policies and priorities.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

A concise and defensible Federal Interest Determination recommendation, developed with the non-federal project sponsor. Synchronized concurrence on the Federal Interest Determination from USACE Headquarters and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (OASA(CW)), results in a clear and Decisive “go/no-go” decision. Initial study scoping, captured in the Federal Interest Determination, informs a negotiated Feasibility Cost Share Agreement that is ready for immediate execution upon receiving a positive Federal Interest Determination concurrence.

*In May 2026, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works provided interim guidance to USACE regarding the Federal Interest Determination and preliminary study scoping efforts. In working with OASA(CW), the Federal Interest Determination processes will be tested, refined, and revised as required.*

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER IN THE STUDY INITIATION PHASE AND DOCUMENT IN THE FEDERAL INTEREST DETERMINATION (MEMORANDUM)

The intent of the Federal Interest Determination memorandum is to succinctly – and often qualitatively – describe basic information about the study, the federal interest, and address key concerns related to study and project execution. This list of key questions to address in the Federal Interest Determination memorandum reflects the May 2026, OASA(CW) interim guidance regarding the Federal Interest Determination and preliminary study scoping efforts.



### Feasibility Study Information

This section of the Federal Interest Determination memorandum sets the stage: What is the study and what is its context?

- ▶ **Study Authority:** What is the specific congressional authority for the study?
- ▶ **Prior Studies and Reports:** What is the concise history of relevant prior studies, reports, and existing projects in the area?
- ▶ **Type of Study:** Is this a pre- or post-authorization study (e.g., General Investigation, General Reevaluation)?
- ▶ **Problems, Needs, and Objectives:** What is the clear description of the water resource problems, needs, opportunities, and constraints?
- ▶ **Future Without Project Condition:** What is the description of the future without project condition?

### Sponsor Viability, Potential Stakeholder Challenges, and Tribal Interest

This section of the memorandum assesses the capability, legal authority, and commitment of the non-federal sponsor and identifies potential interagency challenges.

- ▶ **Sponsor Interest:** Has the non-federal sponsor expressed clear interest in participating in and supporting the potential solutions?
- ▶ **Sponsor Experience:** Has the sponsor partnered with USACE in an authorized construction project or previous feasibility study?
- ▶ **Sponsor Capability:** Does the non-federal sponsor have the legal authority and financial capability to meet all study sponsor and implementation requirements, including the provision of required real property interests and the performance of utility/facility relocations, cost sharing, and performing operations, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and replacement for so long as the project is authorized?
- ▶ **Tribal Interest:** Are there areas of known interest to Tribes in study area for which more formal

consultation may be required?

- ▶ **Interagency Challenges:** Are there any known or likely challenges with other federal, state, or local agencies?

### Decision and Implementation Risk Assessment

This section of the memorandum evaluates the key technical, policy, and executional risks that could impact the success of the study and the ability to deliver a recommendation for Congressional authorization with 35% design maturity within 3 years and \$3M total study costs.

- ▶ **Viability:** Can the study likely identify an actionable element that can reach 35% design maturity within 3 years and \$3 million total study cost?
- ▶ **Study Execution Mechanisms:** What is the plan for executing the study? For example, in-house USACE labor, contract all or portions of the study, sponsored?
- ▶ **Modeling, Tools and Data:** What is the availability of necessary models and data?
- ▶ **Technical and Policy Risk:** What are the primary areas of technical or policy concern for the study going forward?
- ▶ **National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Factors:** What is the anticipated level of documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement? Are there any significant environmental factors that could pose a decision or implementation risk?
- ▶ **Policy Exceptions:** Are any policy exceptions anticipated to be needed to complete the study or recommend a project?
- ▶ **Implementation Challenges:** Are there known legal, fiscal, or geographic challenges to implementing a potential project?
- ▶ **Real Estate Challenges:** What are the high-level real estate risks (for example, anticipated significant





non-federal sponsor acquisitions; relocations; takings; ownership constraints; sponsor governance; sponsor readiness; etc.)?

### Federal Interest and Core Mission Alignment

This section of the memorandum answers the fundamental question: Why should the federal government, and specifically USACE, be involved?

- ▶ **Core Mission Alignment:** Does the problem and potential solution align with a core USACE mission: Flood Risk Management; Navigation; or Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration)?
- ▶ **Potential Solutions:** Is there at least one potential solution that can address the identified problems?
- ▶ **Preliminary Evaluation:** Is there a reasonable likelihood that a solution's benefits will exceed its costs, and are the environmental impacts manageable?

### The Determination

The memorandum should conclude with the determination as to whether a study or project is or is not in the federal interest. The OASA(CW) will confirm (concur), reject, or modify the determination before the study's Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement can be signed between USACE and the non-federal sponsor.

### STUDY TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE STUDY INITIATION PHASE

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** The non-federal sponsor will document their consent for conducting a Federal Interest Determination (via email is sufficient) and provide a local perspective of the problems and opportunities associated with the water resource concern. This should include an initial identification of a potential solution to the identified problems and confirmation of the desire and capability to support the execution of the study. Their active engagement is critical for negotiating the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement in parallel and ensuring any cost-sharing requirements are met as soon as possible after execution of the agreement.

**CORE USACE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM:** The project manager, lead planner, engineering technical lead, and non-federal sponsor will be critical to delivering determinations which best characterize the need for the study. This small, empowered team is responsible for conducting the Federal Interest Determination assessment within tight constraints. They must work collaboratively to gather enough information to answer the key questions and develop the Federal Interest Determination recommendation. The project manager must also ensure that sufficient funding – and time – is reserved to conduct initial study scoping and negotiate the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement with the initial \$100,000 of study funding available.

**ADDITIONAL KEY DISCIPLINES:** Given the limited time and funding for the Study Initiation phase, project delivery teams will need to be judicious on how they engage other resources. The Core Team should ensure input from other project delivery team members is appropriately considered and included. Additional critical functional input is anticipated to come from the Office of Counsel, the environmental lead, lead economist, cultural resources team member, District Tribal Liaison, cost engineer, real estate specialist, and more.

**SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS:** Subject matter experts from outside the project delivery may be leveraged in various ways to support the analysis and Federal Interest Determination. The Core Team can look to the USACE Planning Centers of Expertise, the Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise, and other relevant Centers of Expertise to provide or help identify subject matter experts to support or supplement the project delivery team. Project funding may be required for more extensive engagement of subject matter experts.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** Key members of the vertical team in the Study Initiation phase include the Division Planning Chief, the USACE Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager, and the OASA(CW) staff. The Division Planning team will support the district-based project delivery team in developing the Federal Interest Determination and recommendation for the path forward, as well as coordinate engagements with Headquarters and the



OASA(CW) team. The Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager will be key in managing and monitoring the budgeting and notification processes. The Headquarters and OASA(CW) team will participate in a mandatory vertical team meeting to provide early input, typically within the first 30 days of the Study Initiation phase. The OASA(CW) team will be responsible for evaluating and confirming, adjusting, or rejecting the Federal Interest Determination.

**DECISION MAKER(S):** The District Commander determines the initiation and completion of the Federal Interest Determination. Concurrence from OASA(CW), which may include further policy direction, is required on the Federal Interest Determination and the study's scope, schedule, and budget prior to executing the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement.

### PROCESS FLOW AND KEY PRODUCTS

The Study Initiation Phase begins when the first federal dollar is available to the study team and goes until study initiation (Federal Interest Determination concurrence and Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement execution). The following process flow is generally sequential, though coordination activities begin immediately and continue throughout the phase. Teams should adjust timing based on study complexity, the availability of existing data and prior studies, and the feedback from the OASA(CW) during this phase.

#### Pre-Coordination

Under current guidance from the ASA(CW), all new start feasibility studies, including General Reevaluation Studies, will conduct a Federal Interest Determination prior to executing a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement. New start watershed studies and comprehensive studies must coordinate closely with the Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager to clarify the timing of the Federal Interest Determination and processes prior to initiating work on these efforts. Under current guidance from the ASA(CW), this phase is limited to no more than 45 days and \$100,000 (fully federally funded but initiated with appropriated study funds).

Appropriations are provided to USACE to initiate the Federal Interest Determination phase in accordance with the law and additional guidance provided by the ASA(CW) and OASA(CW) (see For More Information resources at the end of this document).

The District Planning and Programs teams must work with their respective Division and the Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager to ensure alignment of the applicability of the Federal Interest Determination authority; timing on funds being available; and other resource alignment considerations (non-federal sponsor consent, non-federal sponsor and core study project delivery team availability, subject matter expert support, if the study area meets the definition of an economically disadvantaged community, etc.).

Once funds are available at Headquarters and a request for Federal Interest Determination initiation is made (including non-federal sponsor consent), the initial \$100,000 will be made available to the District.

#### Federal Interest Determination Initiation

Upon District receipt of funds and as soon as practicable, the District Commander will sign a Federal Interest Determination Initiation memorandum, documenting the non-federal sponsor's agreement to conduct the Federal Interest Determination and formally starting the 45-day clock. The project manager actualizes "CW 111 (FID Start)" in PROMIS, the USACE enterprise project management information system, upon signature of Federal Interest Determination Initiation memorandum.

The core members of the project delivery team immediately meet with the sponsor to confirm objectives and align regarding the required information.

The District Commander and study team (inclusive of the non-federal sponsor) should be as prepared as possible to execute as soon as the effort is initiated.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Federal Interest Determination Initiation memorandum signed by the District Commander.



CW111 (FID Start) is actualized in P2 upon signature of the Federal Interest Determination Initiation MFR.

### Proportional Data Gathering

The core members of the project delivery team rapidly gathers and synthesizes existing data to address the key questions of this phase.

The Study Initiation phase will be focused on minimally identifying federal interest considering the economic, social, and environmental benefits; confirming initial expectations and study requirements with the non-federal sponsor; and ensuring alignment with the OASA(CW) to formally initiate the study. The core team should leverage appropriate project delivery team disciplines and subject matter experts to assist in a proportional scoping effort to inform potential pathways for the study and the associated confidence level, in addition to affirming federal interest.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Internal working documents, such as fact sheets, project risk register, Federal Interest Determination documentation, initial project management plan, draft feasibility cost sharing agreement, etc.

### Vertical Team Engagement

No later than 30 days after initiation, the study team holds a vertical team meeting with the Division, Headquarters, and OASA(CW) to provide an update and receive early feedback prior to finalizing the Federal Interest Determination. This meeting can range from an initial progress review format to a scoping charrette. Wherever possible, the format of this meeting should be focused on supporting study progress, rather than a formal stand-alone briefing.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Internal working documents, such as draft Federal Interest Determination memorandum

### Complete Federal Interest Determination

Within 45 days of initiation, the team synthesizes its findings in a Federal Interest Determination memorandum.

The District Commander signs the Federal Interest Determination memorandum and submits the package to the Division who immediately forwards it simultaneously to Headquarters and the OASA(CW) for their synchronized review and concurrence. The project manager actualizes “CW129 (FID Completion)” in PROMIS upon signature of the Federal Interest Determination memorandum.

Project delivery teams should reserve a portion of the initial \$100k for preliminary scoping and Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement negotiation with the non-federal sponsor while awaiting concurrence.

It is critical that any negative finding of federal interest is coordinated with the non-federal sponsor (prior to the end of the 45 days) to see if a revision may yield a different determination. If no such determination is viable, the non-federal sponsor will be notified of available technical assistance authorities, as appropriate.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Federal Interest Determination memorandum signed by the District Commander. CW129 (FID Completion) is actualized in PROMIS upon signature of the Federal Interest Determination memorandum.

### Negotiate and Finalize the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement

Throughout the study initiation phase and while awaiting concurrence on the Federal Interest Determination from OASA(CW), the project delivery team should be engaging with the non-federal sponsor to negotiate and finalize the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement and to continue the development of related activities such as advancing the study’s project management plan, refining the scope, etc.

To ensure streamlined delivery, a negotiated Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement should be ready for execution as soon as concurrence is received from OASA(CW). It is critical that the non-federal sponsor is prepared to provide matching funds and/or work-in-kind in accordance with the execution schedule, so the study ‘clock’ initiated by the OASA(CW)’s concurrence with the Federal Interest Determination does not start before the team is





» USACE staff meeting with officials to address public safety concerns in a harbor

prepared to continue work. Under current guidance from the ASA(CW), the study clock begins upon OASA(CW) concurrence with the Federal Interest Determination.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement ready for signature by the District Commander and non-federal sponsor
- ▶ Coordination of non-federal sponsor fund transfer, as needed

### OASA(CW) Concurrence

The period for OASA(CW) consideration follows the submission of the Federal Interest Determination memorandum and is separate from the 45-day limit. If the OASA(CW) concurs with a positive federal interest, the study may proceed. The project manager actualizes “CW 140 (Initiation of Study)” in PROMIS upon notice of OASA(CW) concurrence. For planning purposes, the

project delivery team should assume the 3-year, \$3M study clock starts on the date of concurrence.

If OASA(CW) does not concur, or if the Federal Interest Determination was negative, the team follows the direction provided by OASA(CW) and informs the non-federal sponsor of potential next steps, such as USACE’s technical assistance authorities.

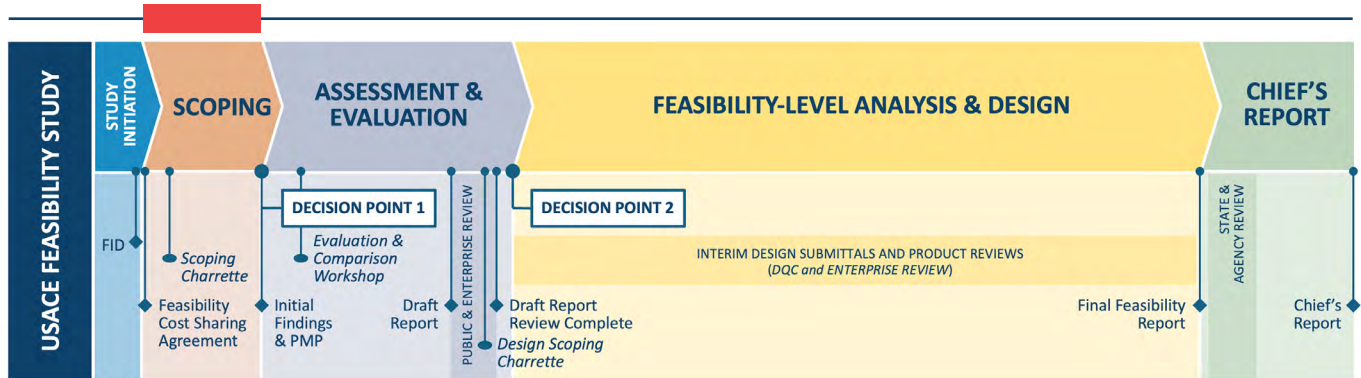
The Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement should be executed immediately following OASA(CW) concurrence. The project manager actualizes “CW 130 (Agreement Execution)” in PROMIS with the date of the co-signed Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement. The study then advances into the Scoping Phase.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Documentation of OASA(CW) concurrence
- ▶ Executed Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement



## Scoping Phase



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

During the Scoping Phase, study teams (including the sponsor and vertical team) are encouraged to maintain a bias for action and RAPID decision-making. The team must be prepared to “sprint and decide” to quickly establish study viability and direction.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

An aligned team and sponsor who have a shared understanding of the problems, opportunities, objectives, constraints; initial alternatives; initial criteria and metrics; and a clearly defined and attainable path forward for the study (scope, schedule, and budget documented in a project management plan with a detailed focus on advancing to Decision Point 2).

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER IN THE SCOPING PHASE

The primary goal of the Scoping Phase is to transition from the initial determination of federal interest to a detailed, actionable plan for the feasibility study. The focus is on validating and adding necessary detail to the assumptions made before signing the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement.

The project delivery team’s starting point dictates the approach:

- ▶ If a Federal Interest Determination was completed, the project delivery team will validate the findings from the Study Initiation phase, deepen the analysis, and refine the initial assumptions with more information (for example, quantitative data, qualitative reasoning and examples) to prepare for Decision Point 1.
- ▶ If a Federal Interest Determination was not completed prior to executing the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement, the project delivery team will answer the foundational questions from the Study Initiation phase and complete the scoping activities below to prepare for Decision Point 1.

The following questions guide the team in developing or advancing the specific scope, schedule, and budget required to advance the study through completion.

**FROM PROBLEMS TO FOCUSED OBJECTIVES:** How will the project delivery team refine the broad Problems and Opportunities identified in the Federal Interest Determination into specific, measurable Study Objectives and Constraints that will drive alternative screening? Why is this study needed now?

**FROM STUDY AREA TO IMPACT AREA:** How will the project delivery team transition from the general Study Area to defining the specific geographic focus where problems and potential solutions are most concentrated? Why is this area the most critical?



**FROM FEDERAL INTEREST TO A VIABLE PATH:** How will the project delivery team confirm that the federal interest is not just present, but strong enough to support a viable path forward within the constraints of a 3-year and \$3M feasibility study? What is that path? Why should USACE be involved and to what potential extent?

**FROM A “SOLUTION” TO SCREENING CRITERIA:** Based on the initial potential solution identified in the Federal Interest Determination, what are the specific screening criteria and metrics (to assess key economic, social, environmental impacts) we will use to efficiently evaluate a broader array of alternatives?

**FROM ASSUMPTIONS TO ANALYSIS:** What proportional technical analyses (e.g., initial hydrology and hydrologic analyses, initial cost estimates, initial benefit estimates) are required to move beyond the initial assumptions of the Study Initiation phase and begin more clearly and confidently differentiating between alternatives?

**FROM A CONCEPT TO AN INITIAL ARRAY:** What is the documented initial array of alternatives that will be carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Alternative Assessment and Evaluation phase?

**FROM AN INITIAL ARRAY TO A FOCUSED ARRAY:** How do we apply the screening criteria to iteratively and defensibly eliminate measures and narrow the initial broad array of alternatives down to a focused set of the most promising options?

**FROM VIABILITY TO ACTIONABILITY:** Within that focused array, have we identified any potential early-actionable increments that could deliver benefits sooner and align with Administration priorities?

**FROM IDENTIFIED RISKS TO MANAGED RISKS:** What are the key risks and uncertainties associated with the focused array, and what is our detailed mitigation plan (including data acquisition and modeling tasks) to address them before Decision Point 2?

**FROM A CONCEPT TO AN EXECUTABLE PLAN:** Is the project management plan fully resourced and actionable? Have we confirmed the availability of the required

technical staff (project delivery team, subject matter expert support, contracting in part or whole), modeling tools, and contracting mechanisms to deliver the study on schedule and within budget?

**FROM A RECOMMENDATION TO A DECISION:** Based on the refined analysis of fatal flaws, risks, and opportunities, what is the explicit recommendation for the path forward to be presented at Decision Point 1?

### STUDY TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE STUDY INITIATION AND SCOPING PHASE

The non-federal sponsor, project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead (“core team”) continue to lead the study. This group drives daily decision-making and will meet regularly to:

- ▶ Continually engage with the other disciplines to establish the foundational Problems, Opportunities, Objectives, and Constraints (POOCs) and develop the initial array of alternatives.
- ▶ Assess progress against project management plan targets.
- ▶ Identify emerging risks and mitigation strategies.
- ▶ Prepare for vertical team engagements and key events.
- ▶ Ensure the feasibility report narrative stays current.

The core team’s alignment is the foundation for broader project delivery team and vertical team alignment. The following roles and responsibilities are provided within the context of this phase of the study.

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** The non-federal sponsor will provide a current letter of intent (if one is not already on file), remain actively engaged throughout the study process, and provide a local perspective of the problems and opportunities associated with the water resource concern. This should include an initial identification of a potential solution to the identified problems and any work-in-kind that may be contributed throughout the study.





**PLANNING LEAD:** The study's planning lead will serve as the study process lead, ensure the planning functions maintain a common technical understanding, and coordinate closely with the engineering technical lead, project manager, and non-federal sponsor on the delivery of the study.

**ENGINEERING TECHNICAL LEAD:** The engineering technical lead will serve as the lead for all engineering activities, ensure the team maintains a common technical understanding, and coordinate closely with the planning lead, project manager, and non-federal sponsor on delivery of the study.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** The project manager will serve as a key integrator with all other involved disciplines, ensure clarity in scope, schedule, and budget, ensure USACE Project Delivery Business Process compliance, and coordinate closely with the planning lead, engineering technical lead, and non-federal sponsor on the delivery of the study.

**ENVIRONMENTAL LEAD:** The project delivery team's environmental lead will coordinate the compliance schedule and strategy with the project manager. They will coordinate closely with the planning lead, cultural resources team member, and Tribal Liaison on the development of an adequate range of alternatives and quickly assess options that may be viable or not to inform the way ahead. The environmental lead will serve as the compliance lead, integrating the work of other environmental functions and ensuring coordination with other state and federal agencies.

**TRIBAL LIAISON:** A District Tribal Liaison serves as the principal advisor and main point of contact for all Tribal relations within their area of responsibility. Within a planning study, they facilitate pre-decisional Government-to-Government consultation. To meet our federal trust responsibilities, the Tribal Liaison supports the project delivery team by ensuring adequate coordination and consultation that respects Tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, and the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES LEAD:** The cultural resources team member will initiate consultation and the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process in accordance with Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), sections 800.3 and 800.4, identifying and initiating consulting parties, consideration of public involvement, and gather existing information to inform screening of alternatives.

**LEAD ECONOMIST:** The lead economist serves as the lead for the identification of relevant and evaluation of social effects and economics of the existing and future conditions, with and without alternatives in place, the incorporation of environmental effects in the decision framework, and the tradeoffs between the economic, social, and environmental benefit categories and costs.

**REALTY SPECIALIST:** The Realty Specialist identifies real estate considerations that impact plan selection. They work closely with the full project delivery team, including the non-federal sponsor, in communicating and managing real estate risks. The Realty Specialist is responsible for providing rough order of magnitude real estate costs for each of the alternatives to inform the trade-off analysis.

**COST ENGINEER:** The cost engineer will be the primary source for providing accurate project costs, leading the development of cost estimates that are essential during the initial phase for iterative trade-off analyses conducted by the project development team. To improve the accuracy of early estimates, the cost engineer will leverage enterprise-wide experiences, utilizing resources such as the Cost Engineering Mandatory Center of Expertise and Headquarters Programs Integration Division. These resources will ensure that early cost estimates reflect uncertainties, implementation considerations, and the impact of acquisition strategies. In addition, tools like historical pricing, bid data, and industry standards will be integral to informing these early rough order of magnitude estimates, thereby supporting the project delivery team's early decision-making.



**OTHER PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM MEMBERS:** The list above is not meant to be exhaustive, but capture some of the typically critical functions to aid in early scoping, risk identification and management, and study production. The needs and roles for each study will be specific to that study and will be one of the key outputs of the requirements identified during the development of the project management plan.

**SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS:** Subject matter experts may work directly with the project delivery team to scale technical analyses, engage in problem solving, and assess risk associated with decisions. Utilization of the USACE Planning Centers of Expertise, the Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise, and other relevant Centers of Expertise to provide or help identify subject matter experts to support or supplement the project delivery team is highly recommended.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** The vertical team continues their engagement from the Study Initiation phase. Their role is to participate actively in the Scoping Charrette and New Study Orientation (or other scoping charrettes or workshops as needed), providing early policy and strategic guidance to ensure the team's initial direction is sound and to prevent avoidable rework later. This early engagement and alignment is non-negotiable. The vertical team can assist in the identification and assignment of subject matter experts to aid in the delivery of the study.

### REVIEW MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION AND

**ENTERPRISE REVIEW TEAM:** The Division will serve as the Review Management Organization, ensuring the enterprise review team is tailored to the needs of the study and study team. The Review Management Organization will be responsible for approving the reviewer assignments and lead issue resolution as needed. The enterprise review team will ensure technical quality and policy compliance in the analyses and associated documentation supporting decision-making. The USACE Centers of Expertise continue to provide valuable knowledge and experience and may be relied upon to organize, lead, and/or support the review activities. The executing District remains responsible for quality control.

**DECISION MAKER(S):** The decision maker for executing the study is the District Commander. For confirming alignment at Decision Point 1, the Division Commander serves as the decision-maker. Decision makers should empower the team to move fast, trust their expertise, and make a risk-informed recommendation consistent with agency priorities early and throughout the study process. Decision makers must be accessible for quick course corrections but should avoid micromanaging the scoping effort. The decision maker will be decisive based on the information provided and advisement from the project delivery team, subject matter experts, and vertical team in determining the path ahead at Decision Point 1.

## PROCESS FLOW AND KEY PRODUCTS

The Scoping Phase spans between study initiation (Federal Interest Determination concurrence and Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement) and Decision Point 1. The following process flow is generally sequential, though coordination and consultation activities begin immediately and continue throughout the phase. Teams should adjust timing based on study complexity, availability of existing data and prior studies, and the level of preliminary scoping completed during the Study Initiation phase (if applicable), as documented in the initial project management plan.

### Study Initiation and Expectation Setting

The study is initiated upon OASA(CW) concurrence on the Federal Interest Determination (or Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement execution if a Federal Interest Determination was not conducted). The core team, plus additional key project delivery team disciplines, immediately meet to align on the initial scope, schedule, budget, roles, and communication protocols. Subject matter experts are identified and may be assigned to aid in delivery of the study. The project manager will lead development of the initial project management plan. The Scoping Charrette and New Study Orientation (if applicable) will be planned and coordinated through the Division.

Products produced include:

- ▶ Initial project management plan including the review plan



- ▶ Invitation letters to Cooperating and Participating Agencies and Tribes
- ▶ The Scoping Charrette (and New Study Orientation) will be planned and coordinated through the Division with appropriate offices.

### Preliminary Data Review (Baseline Assessment)

A multi-disciplinary baseline assessment gathers existing data, including prior reports, GIS information, interested Tribes and stakeholder lists, and relevant environmental or economic data. The project delivery team develop the initial data management plan and establish (or update) the project's risk register.

The project delivery team will begin populating the draft feasibility report and associated appendices with key information identified from the baseline assessment, including any relevant information provided by the non-federal sponsor, other agencies, Tribes, and key sources.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Risk register (initiated for all disciplines)
- ▶ Updated project management plan, including review plan
- ▶ Agreed upon study schedule posted to the study's publicly available website

### Scoping Charrette and New Study Orientation

A collaborative working and training session to orient the full study team, validate the problems/opportunities, and collaboratively develop an alternative array. This can be accomplished as a traditional scoping charrette, or as an enhanced charrette supported by "New Study Orientation" modules and facilitators.

The new study orientation team can deliver both virtual and in-person training and guidance to assist the project delivery team in developing necessary background details allowing for the identification of the problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints, develop management measures, and formulate an initial array of

alternatives that can be achieved within 3 years and \$3M of study funding.

The new study orientation team, USACE subject matter experts, and relevant vertical team members are available to work with the project delivery team (including the non-federal sponsor) to develop the project scope schedule and budget and draft the project management plan and review plan.

Subject matter experts and relevant vertical team members should participate in the scoping charrette, along with the non-federal sponsor and with agencies and Tribes, to provide guidance to assist with focusing the project delivery team on a deliverable product for Decision Point 1.

After the charrette, the project delivery team will continue to refine the draft feasibility report and continue to update project's risk register.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The risk register
  - » Key risks and uncertainties
  - » Management options/decisions
- ▶ The draft feasibility report
  - » Study-specific Problems, Opportunities, Objectives, and Constraints are documented within the Draft Report
  - » The initial array
  - » Initial plan evaluation criteria and metrics to be used for the trade-off analyses
- ▶ The project management plan, including the review plan
  - » Detailed task list with responsible parties
  - » Scope, schedule, and budget

### Coordination and Consultation

Coordination and consultation begins during the Scoping phase. The required interagency meeting with state





and federal resource agencies and Tribes occurs within the first 90 days of the study to identify and align on environmental compliance requirements and identify any cooperating agencies under NEPA.

Teams should invite Tribal Nations to initiate Government-to-Government consultation and start to gauge level of interest if not already known at this time.

Example activities that would occur in this phase include developing a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act coordination scope of work, identifying threatened and endangered species in the project area, conducting scoping activities required under NEPA, and initiating consultation with State (or Tribal) Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and others to identify an initial area(s) of potential effects and gather existing information on cultural resources and historic properties.

### Synthesize and Document

The team synthesizes findings from the analysis, coordination, and feedback then refines the path forward in preparation for Decision Point 1.

As early as practicable, the study team should assess if the Decision Point 1 decision maker will be elevated from the Division Commander to the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO). If the DCG-CEO will be the decision maker, the study team should request Headquarters' calendaring a decision meeting via the "Civil Works Decision Day" intake form.

To support alignment and advisement of the decision maker, the study's draft working products should be made available five business days prior Decision Point 1.

The study's project management plan should be approved by – or just after – Decision Point 1.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The project management plan and integrated review plan, ready for approval by the District Commander
- ▶ The project risk register
- ▶ The draft feasibility report

- ▶ A project briefing "placemat" or equivalent. For example, this may take the form of a project placemat, ArcGIS StoryMap, fact sheet, or virtual flyover. Teams should strive for minimal duplication of information and use tools that will be developed throughout the study rather than creating one-time-use briefing slides.

### Decision Point 1

Decision Point 1 is a formal feasibility study checkpoint to present the findings and secure alignment on the path forward for the study. The decision made will be to either: (a) terminate the study, (b) continue the full feasibility study, or (c) follow an alternative pathway (off-ramp) to a technical report or other appropriate product.

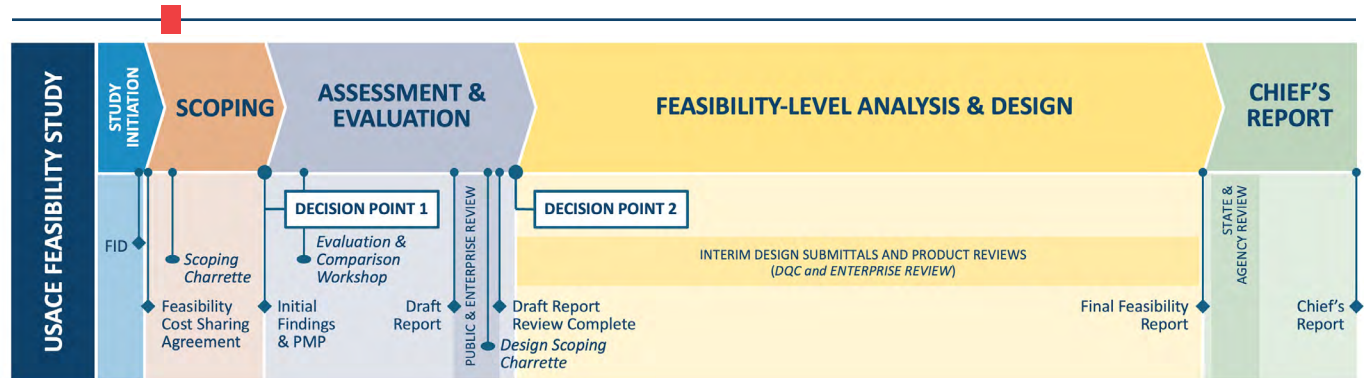
The decision(s) will be documented in a signed Decision Point 1 memorandum for record (MFR) documenting key decisions for the study and its path forward.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Signed MFR
  - » Documents key decisions
  - » Documents approval of work in kind outlined in the project management plan, if required, serving as the Integral Determination Report
  - » Documents the pathway selected for the study
  - » Documents the schedule and budget to be utilized by the Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager for budgetary purposes
  - » Confirmation that Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement should be executed (if not already completed)
- ▶ The Risk Register, including any feedback from the decision maker (referenced in, but not attached to MFR)
- ▶ The Draft Report, including any feedback from the decision maker (referenced in, but not attached to MFR)



## Scoping Phase Key Event: Scoping Charrette and New Study Orientation



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### PURPOSE

The scoping charrette is a critical aspect of the RAPID feasibility study process. It is a mandatory, collaborative working session with a dual purpose: (1) Orientation (as needed) to align the entire project team, including the non-federal sponsor and vertical team, on the study's context and the RAPID framework, and (2) Scoping Charrette (required) to collaboratively develop the initial array of alternatives and the specific plan to reach Decision Point 1.

### MINDSET

Collaborate to build the foundation of the feasibility study and project. This is an intensive, hands-on working session, not a briefing. All participants are expected to contribute their expertise in real-time to build a shared understanding of the study and the unique problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints; potential solutions; criteria and metrics; and other critical decision information.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ANSWER IN PREPARING FOR AND EXECUTING THE SCOPING CHARRETTE AND NEW STUDY ORIENTATION

This is an interactive charrette with the intent on building a common foundation for the project delivery team and vertical team, as well as continuing or building momentum in execution.

### Foundational Knowledge

- Are the right people at the table? Have the specific Subject Matter Experts necessary to address anticipated study risks been identified, assigned, and integrated into the team?
- Would a formal study orientation provide immediate value by rapidly filling knowledge gaps and establishing a shared foundational understanding between the project delivery team, non-federal sponsor, and vertical team?

### Targeted Charrette Execution

- What is the specific focus of this gathering? Looking back at the broader Study Initiation and Scoping Phase criteria, which specific, unresolved questions require focused, face-to-face deliberation to resolve right now?
- Is the agenda decision-driven? Does the team have a clear, actionable plan to maximize the Scoping Charrette as a working session to narrow options, rather than treating it as a passive information-sharing briefing?



### Momentum and Confidence

- ▶ What is the definition of a successful charrette for the project delivery team and non-federal sponsor? What specific alignments, data agreements, or risk characterizations must be achieved by the end of this event so the team can confidently pivot from scoping into the intense Assessment & Evaluation phase?

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

The scoping charrette should produce vertical team alignment and endorsement of the focused array of alternatives and the specific analytical plan required to assess each alternative, compare them, evaluate them, and ultimately select the initial recommendation. The project manager will leave the charrette with a clear path forward to finalize the project management plan documenting the scope, schedule, and budget for the way ahead.

Specific outcomes of the optional new study orientation include orienting and empowering the project delivery team by:

- ▶ Providing interactive modules on current policies, processes, and approaches tailored to the study and team.
- ▶ Providing Mentoring and coaching, as needed, to support and supplement the team's knowledge and experience.

Specific outcomes of the scoping charrette include advances in study scoping and plan development:

- ▶ Development of working relationships with the project sponsor, as well as cooperating and participating agencies and Tribes.
- ▶ Development of problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints .
- ▶ Identification of known cultural resources, historic properties, surveys, etc.
- ▶ Initial / focused array of alternatives.

- ▶ Metrics and plan selection criteria.
- ▶ List of tasks to be completed prior to Decision Point 1.
- ▶ List of policy and legal considerations.
- ▶ Identification of risks and uncertainties (updated in the project's risk register).

### EXAMPLE NEW STUDY ORIENTATION AND SCOPING CHARRETTE AGENDA

#### Virtual Orientation

A series of foundational knowledge-sharing modules delivered virtually before the in-person event. This ensures all team members arrive at the charrette with a common understanding of USACE processes, policies, and the specific study context. Orientation modules can be delivered in a self-paced format, virtual/live sessions, or a combination.

### IN-PERSON SCOPING CHARRETTE

#### Kick-Off and Confirmation of Objectives

- ▶ Leadership kicks off the event, reinforcing the RAPID mandate.
- ▶ The project manager briefly confirms the goals for the charrette, assuming all participants have completed the virtual orientation.
- ▶ The non-federal sponsor presents their vision and confirms their partnership.

#### Collaborative Scoping

- ▶ The lead planner facilitates the development and documentation of the study's problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints, with all participants contributing. This builds the foundational consensus for the study.

#### Alternatives Formulation and Screening

- ▶ Multi-disciplinary groups develop a broad list of measures and assemble an initial array of alternatives.





- ▶ The full team reconvenes to conduct a high-level, risk-informed screening of the initial array to identify and screen out obvious non-starters.

### Define the Path to Decision Point 1

- ▶ The project manager facilitates the development of a detailed action plan to get to Decision Point 1.
- ▶ The project delivery team, including the non-federal sponsor, defines the initial screening criteria, identifies key risks, and develops the coordination and consultation strategy with the environmental

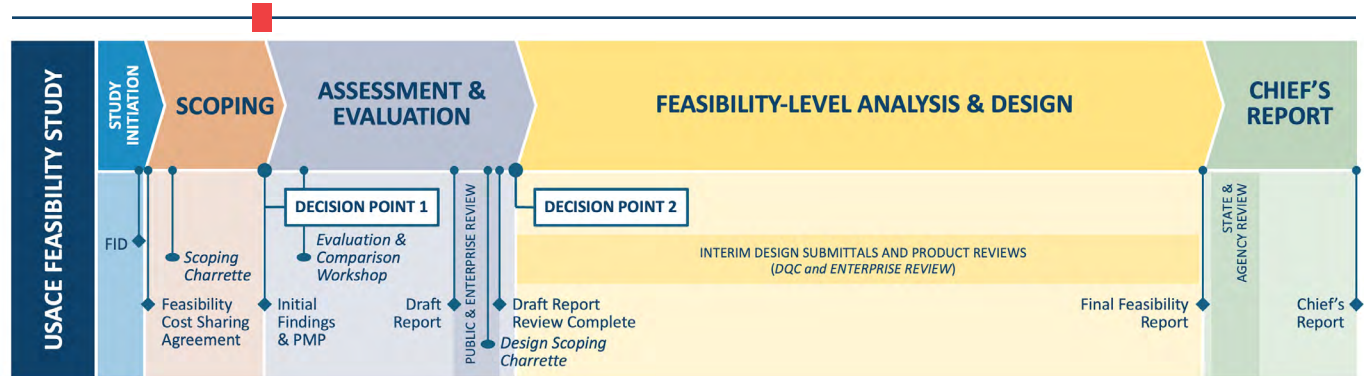
lead, cultural resources lead, Tribal Liaison (if appropriate), and the Office of Counsel.

### Conclude and Confirm Alignment

- ▶ The lead planner or project manager summarizes the key decisions and the documented Initial or focused array of alternatives.
- ▶ The vertical team provides their informal concurrence on the path forward, achieving the alignment that is a prerequisite for a successful Decision Point 1.



## Scoping Phase Key Event: Decision Point 1



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### DESCRIPTION

The first decision point during a feasibility study will document the vertically aligned agreement on the path forward for the project, acknowledging and accepting the identified study and implementation risks and uncertainties and the strategies to manage those risks.

The decision does not require a meeting, unless requested by the decision maker. The decision maker may request a pre-decision briefing and identify the materials or information needed to support the decision.

### DECISION MAKER

The Division Commander is the decision maker for the first Decision Point. The decision may be elevated to the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO) but may not be further delegated.

If the decision is being elevated to the DCG-CEO, the study team should request to be calendared for a Headquarters Civil Works Decision Day.

### DECISION-MAKING MINDSET

The decision maker should strive to be decisive and clear, with the decision driven by risk and uncertainty.

### PREREQUISITE TO DECISION POINT 1

A successful scoping charrette resulting in alignment on the initial alternative array, vertical team concurrence on key findings, and an actionable plan outlined in the project

management plan and review plan.

### SCHEDULING DECISION POINT 1 WHEN ELEVATED TO THE DCG-CEO

If the Division Commander is retaining decision authority, the project delivery team will coordinate through normal Division channels.

To assist in calendaring decision meetings including the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO), Headquarters has established a system to queue up studies for Civil Works Decision Days.

The PDT should complete a Civil Works Decision Day intake form (link available internally on the Planning Community of Practice Knowledge Management Portal) and the Headquarters Civil Works Decision Day coordinator will facilitate scheduling with the appropriate calendars.

### READ-AHEADS AND PRE-SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

A project placemat (or equivalent) is the only stand-alone read-ahead product for Decision Point 1.

Other working products will be made available to the decision maker but are not expected to be specifically prepared for the decision. The current versions of the draft report, risk register, project management plan, and any other official memos related to the study (such as the Federal Interest Determination memorandum and



concurrence/approval) should be made available no later than 5 business days prior to the planned decision date.

It is best practice that subject matter experts and members of the vertical team that may be called upon by the decision maker have an opportunity to digest the available information to ensure critical issues and opportunities are flagged both for the project delivery team and the decision maker. The expectation is that continuous alignment has already been achieved through active participation in events like the Scoping Charrette. A formal, sequential review period prior to DP1 is not required. The Division Planning Chief may request an informal pre-briefing if needed, but this should be the exception, not the rule. The goal of RAPID is to rely on “over-the-shoulder” engagement, empowering the team to advance to the decision point with confidence.

### DECISION

A decision on the way ahead for the feasibility study; concurrence on the federal interest in carrying out the study and a potential project that may be proposed/recommended. Agreement on path forward (pathway to completion).

The project delivery team will document the decision in a Memorandum for Record (MFR). The MFR will be provided to the decision maker.

The MFR will document the decision maker’s (1) confirmation of continued federal interest and (2) the approved path forward for the study, including the commitment to resource and support study delivery in accordance with the approved project management plan.

The pathways under consideration for the decision maker include:

- ▶ Continue with feasibility study toward feasibility report and Chief’s Report (including any early actionable elements).
- ▶ Continue with feasibility study toward a Technical report (but not a Chief’s Report) and terminate the feasibility study once this point is reached.
- ▶ Terminate the study.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO INFORM THE DECISION

Decision Point 1 will be informed by study team activities during the Study Initiation phase to document the Federal Interest Determination, as well as additional activities and engagements during the Scoping phase. The decision maker will consider:

#### Confirmation of Federal Interest and Authority

- ▶ Is there a clear continued federal interest in resolving the identified water resource problem?
- ▶ Is the proposed path forward consistent with current agency priorities?
- ▶ Has the project delivery team confirmed that no other existing federal authority can better address the problem?

#### Problem and Solution Fit

- ▶ Has the project delivery team identified a viable path to address the community and sponsor’s immediate needs?
- ▶ Is the scale of the proposed response proportional to the complexity of the problem?
- ▶ Does the plan effectively address the agreed-upon study problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints?

#### Sponsor Viability

- ▶ Is there a viable non-federal sponsor who has expressed intent to serve as a cost-sharing partner?
- ▶ Does the non-federal sponsor have legal authority, capability, and willingness to provide the lands, easements, rights of way, relocations, and disposal areas required for implementation of potential recommendations?

#### Risk and Uncertainty

- ▶ What are the primary uncertainties driving the analysis, and do we have a clear path to address them in the next phase?





### Execution Readiness and Resourcing

- ▶ Is the level of information in the project management plan and supporting documents sufficient to communicate the clear scope, schedule, and budget to complete the study?
- ▶ Does the project delivery team have a clear plan to resource and execute the study to ensure it is delivered on schedule and within budget?
- ▶ Is there clear alignment on the proposed way ahead? If not, share any dissenting professional opinions with the decision maker.

### Recommended Path Forward

- ▶ Based on all of the above, what is the project delivery team's explicit recommendation: continue, an alternate pathway, or terminate?

## DECISION POINT 1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**DISTRICT COMMANDER:** Responsible for the briefing to the decision maker.

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** Provide concurrence with District Commander recommendation (path forward for the study).

### LEAD PLANNER AND ENGINEERING TECHNICAL

**LEAD:** Support the District Commander and respond to questions regarding initial alternatives, the key findings from the scoping effort, and the rationale for the team's recommendation to continue, an alternative pathway, or terminate.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Provides decision analyses and documentation, runs the meeting, ensuring it stays on schedule and focused on the decision. The project manager states the purpose, facilitates the brief discussion, and is responsible for formally documenting the decision in the Decision Point 1 Memorandum for Record immediately following the meeting.

**ADDITIONAL PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM DISCIPLINES:** The project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead should ensure input from the other project

delivery team members is appropriately considered and included. Additional critical functional input is anticipated to come from the Office of Counsel, environmental lead, lead economist, cultural resources team member, Tribal Liaison, cost engineer, real estate specialist, and more. These team members should be prepared to support the District Commander's preparation for Decision Point 1 as needed.

**REVIEW MANAGER:** The review manager plays a limited but important role in this decision. Their responsibility is to confirm the enterprise review team has been established with the relevant disciplines and expertise and can advise the study team and decision maker.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** The vertical team participating in the decision will include the necessary representatives from the Division, HQUSACE, OASA(CW). Supporting subject matter experts and members of the enterprise review team may also participate. The Vertical Team will advise the study team and Decision Maker to support risk-informed decision making. Alignment does not mean strict adherence to input from the vertical team; the decision maker will be accountable for understanding and incorporating advice. Advisement from the vertical team should clearly differentiate between potential "red-flags" that can impact the decision and opportunities to improve the analyses. This differentiation provides improved context for the study team and decision maker to navigate through uncertainty.

**DECISION MAKER:** The decision maker will be either the Division Commander or the DCG-CEO if elevated by the Division Commander. The decision maker owns the decision. Their role is to listen to the recommendation, confirm alignment from the vertical team and non-federal sponsor, and transparently address any dissenting views that require a decision. Finally, make an explicit, verbal decision.

## EXAMPLE AGENDA (IF MEETING IS REQUIRED BY THE DECISION MAKER)

The Decision Point 1 decision may be made without a meeting. However, if the Division Commander requests a briefing style meeting, this 60-minute agenda will cover



the essential areas for the decision maker. If the decision is elevated to the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO), the Decision Point 1 decision will most likely be via a “Civil Works Decision Day” briefing.

### Call to Order and Confirmation of Purpose

- ▶ 10 minutes, led by project manager or another core team member
- ▶ State the purpose: to make a formal decision on the documented recommendation. Confirm that all required participants are present.

### Confirmation of Key Findings

- ▶ 15 minutes, led by District Commander
- ▶ Briefly present key outcomes from the scoping phase and recommended path forward. This is not a re-brief; it is a rapid confirmation of the consensus reached at the charrette.

### Discussion and Final Call for “Red Flags”

- ▶ 20 minutes, led by Decision Maker
- ▶ State the purpose: The decision maker leads a final discussion, asking the Vertical Team and leadership if any new information or fatal flaws have emerged since the charrette that would prevent the decision.

### The Decision

- ▶ 10 minutes, led by Decision Maker
- ▶ The decision maker explicitly states the decision: “Based on the recommendation and hearing no red flags (or having accepted the risks as identified), I approve the recommendation to continue the study,” (or terminate/alternative pathway).

### Closing

- ▶ 5 minutes, led by project manager or another core team member
- ▶ The lead confirms the decision will be documented in the Decision Point 1 MFR and outlines the immediate next steps (for example, “We will now proceed to initiate the Assessment & Evaluation Phase”).

### MEETING DOCUMENTATION

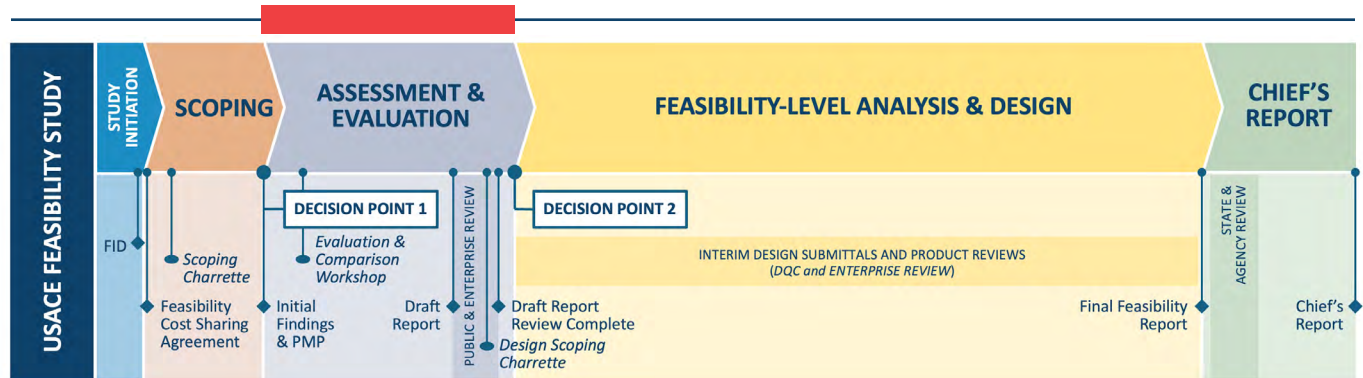
The decision(s) will be documented in a signed Decision Point 1 memorandum for record (MFR) documenting key decisions for the study and its path forward.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Signed MFR
  - » Documents key decisions
  - » Documents approval of work in kind outlined in the project management plan, if required, serving as the Integral Determination Report
  - » Documents the pathway selected for the study
  - » Documents the schedule and budget to be utilized by the Headquarters Planning Portfolio Manager for budgetary purposes
  - » Confirmation that feasibility sharing cost agreement should be executed (if not already completed)
- ▶ The risk register, including any feedback from the decision maker (referenced in, but not attached to MFR)
- ▶ The project management plan
- ▶ The draft report, including any feedback from the decision maker (referenced in, but not attached to MFR)



## Assessment and Evaluation Phase



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

During the Assessment and Evaluation Phase, the project delivery team will analyze, compare, screen, and make an aligned selection among the initial array of alternatives. The focus is on disciplined, iterative analysis to systematically narrow the array of alternatives down to a justifiable recommendation. The project delivery team and decision makers will embrace uncertainty by bounding it with ranges and decision triggers.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

A technically sound and defensible tentatively selected plan that is supported by the team and sponsor, bounded by uncertainty, and documented in the draft report. The project delivery team is prepared to advance to feasibility-level design of the plan agreed upon at Decision Point 2.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER IN THE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PHASE

The primary goal of the Assessment and Evaluation Phase is to move from a focused array of alternatives to a tentatively selected plan documented in the draft feasibility report. While each member of the project delivery team has specific tasks and activities to accomplish, broadly the team should ensure they are aligned and have a common understanding in the following areas.

### From Focused Array to Defensible Tentatively Selected Plan

Is the analysis decision-focused?

- ▶ Are the alternatives clearly differentiable? How will the project delivery team ensure the level of analysis is proportional to the decision at hand?
- ▶ What are the simplest, most effective criteria and metrics that allow for a clear comparison of alternatives? Does the planned analysis clearly lead to the identification of a Tentatively Selected Plan that best meets the study objectives and Administration priorities?
- ▶ How will the project delivery team document the rationale for screening out alternatives to ensure defensibility?

### Managing and Communicating Uncertainty

Are the project delivery team and decision makers effectively setting the bounds of flexibility?

- ▶ What are the primary key uncertainties (technical, economic, environmental) associated with the Tentatively Selected Plan, and have they been bracketed sufficiently to make a confident selection?
- ▶ Has the project delivery team developed a clear narrative, including decision triggers, that explains uncertainty in ranges rather than static numbers?





- ▶ Has the project delivery team identified the specific decision triggers (for example, geotechnical data, funding thresholds, environmental constraints, Tribal input) that will push future design decisions one way or another, and are these clearly communicated in the draft feasibility report (and associated supporting documents such as the risk register, project management plan, etc.)?
- ▶ Is the narrative in the draft feasibility report flexible enough to leave room to operate during the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase, while still providing the public and agencies with enough qualitative risk context to give meaningful feedback?
- ▶ Are environmental compliance activities progressing on schedule such that uncertainty about environmental viability can be managed within the proposed way ahead?

### The Path to 35% Design and Actionable Project Delivery

Are we delivering real risk reduction for the community?

- ▶ Based on the project delivery team's evaluation, is there a clear and viable path to advance the Tentatively Selected Plan to a 35% design level within the remaining time and budget for the study?
- ▶ If the full Tentatively Selected Plan cannot realistically reach 35% design, is there a meaningful, separable elements/ early actionable increments that will deliver meaningful risk reduction and meet the study objectives?
- ▶ What are the critical path items for these increments, and how do they impact the schedule and budget?
- ▶ What level of cost estimate confidence do we have for the Tentatively Selected Plan (or separable elements/ early actionable increments) and what specific data is needed in the next phase to achieve cost certification?
- ▶ What are the real estate and utility relocation requirements for the Tentatively Selected Plan (or separable elements/ early actionable increments) and are they achievable within the remaining constraints?

### Vertical Team and Sponsor Alignment

Are the project delivery team, including the non-federal sponsor, and the vertical team aligned to proceed?

- ▶ How has the project delivery team engaged with the vertical team and non-federal sponsor along the way to ensure they understand the trade-offs and how has their input affected the resulting Tentatively Selected Plan?
- ▶ If the project delivery team recommends a path that requires a policy exception, was this discussed informally, documented as an uncertain outcome in the draft feasibility report, and have any formal policy exception requests been submitted for consideration?
- ▶ Where alignment issues or dissenting technical views exist, has the project delivery team and vertical team transparently documented these perspectives and their associated risks in the study documentation, rather than leaving them unaddressed or silent?

### STUDY TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PHASE

The non-federal sponsor, project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead ("core team") continue to lead the study. This group drives daily decision-making and will meet regularly to:

- ▶ Continually engage with the other disciplines to inform and review screening decisions and maintain alignment.
- ▶ Assess progress against project management plan targets.
- ▶ Identify emerging risks and mitigation strategies.
- ▶ Prepare for vertical team engagements and key events.
- ▶ Ensure the feasibility report narrative stays current.

The core team's alignment is the foundation for broader project delivery team and vertical team alignment. The following roles and responsibilities are provided within the context of this phase of the study.



**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** The non-federal sponsor actively collaborates with the project delivery team to define and concur on the screening criteria used to evaluate alternatives. They provide critical local insights, help validate assumptions, and ensure the alternatives being evaluated continue to meet their core objectives. It is critical that a locally preferred plan be identified, if one exists.

**LEAD PLANNER:** The lead planner is responsible for the plan formulation and evaluation process. They define the screening methodology; facilitate the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop; weave the technical inputs from the engineering technical lead and environmental lead into a clear, policy-compliant narrative that justifies the screening of alternatives and the selection of the Tentatively Selected Plan; and ensure the narrative being developed in the draft report clearly communicates uncertainties and decision triggers throughout. They are typically the primary author of the draft report.

**ENGINEERING TECHNICAL LEAD:** The engineering technical lead manages the technical analysis of the alternatives. They oversee the various engineering disciplines (hydrology and hydraulics (H&H), cost, geotechnical, etc.) to develop the data needed to compare plans and quantify their costs, benefits, and impacts. The engineering technical lead actively assesses the design maturity trajectory and works with the project manager and lead planner to ensure mitigation options and pathways are constantly managed and informed.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** The study project manager manages the intense scope, schedule, and budget of this highly analytical phase. The project manager drives the team to meet analysis deadlines for the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop, the Design Scoping Charrette, and the Decision Point 2 milestone, while actively managing the technical risks that emerge during the evaluation process.

**ENVIRONMENTAL LEAD:** The environmental lead coordinates the environmental evaluation of all alternatives, ensuring that environmental considerations are incorporated into each iteration of alternatives screening and that measures to avoid or minimize adverse

environmental effects are included as part of alternative development at each stage of iterative screening. They identify significant environmental risks (Risk-Informed), manage alignment with resource agencies, and serve as the primary author for all environmental analyses and required documentation within the draft feasibility report. The environmental lead actively communicates these ranges of impacts and potential responses within the documentation and to resource agencies to garner meaningful feedback on the draft feasibility report.

**TRIBAL LIAISON:** The Tribal Liaison ensures there are separate and appropriate venues for engaging Tribal staff and leadership, as the relationship with Tribal Nations is not the same as the public or other federal agencies. This engagement is meant to encourage an exchange of information that informs plan development, evaluation, and selection. Routine engagements also allow for Tribes to decide when to engage in formal Government-to-Government consultation prior to plan selection.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** The Cultural Resources Specialist provides rough order of magnitude costs to move forward with alternatives based on the identification of known resources and historic properties or the level of sensitivity for the identification of historic properties; identifies uncertainties and risks, and identifies additional steps needed to complete the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process and if an agreement document may be executed by the final report.

**COST ENGINEER:** The cost engineer is responsible for ensuring confidence in the rough order of magnitude costs used for the trade-off analyses in this phase. The level of cost estimate developed shall be supported by the appropriate level of design maturity and scope definition. The cost engineering work will focus on producing defensible Class 5 or Class 4 estimates, which are appropriate for comparing the costs of alternatives and to support screening alternatives if cost is the decision driver for the project or alternative. A key function is to actively characterize uncertainty in quantities, implementation schedules, and potential acquisition strategies for each alternative, providing the project delivery team with a clear understanding of the cost risks associated with each option.



The cost engineer will use an abbreviated risk analysis or a cost schedule risk analysis with risk register to identify these risks along with technical and schedule identified by the project delivery team and to quantify them to support screening the alternatives. As the team converges on a Tentatively Selected Plan near Decision Point 2, the cost engineer's role will pivot to a forward-looking one: to identify and document what is specifically required in the next phase to support a high-confidence cost estimate and appropriate level of design maturity.

**LEAD ECONOMIST:** The study's lead economist is responsible for scaling and completing the economic analysis to differentiate between alternatives. The economist works closely with the engineering technical lead and cost engineer to ensure that the benefit streams (whether economic, social, or environmental) justify the Tentatively Selected Plan or early actionable increments. They play a critical role in bracketing economic uncertainties (for example, first floor elevations, tonnage forecasts, forecasted fleet mixes) rather than attempting to predict them perfectly.

**REALTY SPECIALIST:** The Realty Specialist identifies real estate considerations that impact plan selection and actively communicates these constraints to inform iterative screening decisions. They work closely with the project delivery team, including the non-federal sponsor, in identifying and managing real estate risks throughout the evaluation process. The Realty Specialist provides rough order of magnitude real estate costs and assumptions for each of the alternatives to inform the trade-off analysis associated with acquisition and implementation. They identify and document the needed deliverables in the next phase to support a high-confidence real estate cost estimate and schedule for preparing a policy-compliant Real Estate Plan analysis. Coordination with the enterprise review team and Division is critical and should be ongoing if a need for a non-standard estate is identified.

**OFFICE OF COUNSEL:** The District Office of Counsel provides legal advice during the formulation and screening process. Office of Counsel helps the team navigate the flexibility of "bounded" narratives in NEPA documents and advises on the legal risk of potential decision triggers and

management options to support the project delivery team and decision maker.

**OTHER PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM MEMBERS:** The list above is not meant to be exhaustive, but capture some of the typically critical functions to aid in early scoping, risk identification and management, and study production. The needs and roles for each study will be specific to that study and will be one of the key outputs of the requirements identified during the development of the project management plan.

**SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS:** Other USACE subject matter experts may work directly with the project delivery team to scale technical analyses, engage in problem solving, and assess risk associated with decisions. Utilization of the Planning Centers of Expertise, the Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise, and other relevant Centers of Expertise to provide or help identify subject matter experts to support or supplement the PDT is highly recommended.

**REVIEW MANAGER:** The review manager oversees the formal review process for the key product of this phase—the draft feasibility report and associated analyses. They manage the enterprise review team, ensuring that all technical analyses are independently reviewed and that all comments are properly assessed before the report is presented at Decision Point 2. During the Assessment and Evaluation Phase, the enterprise review team is continuing to develop and test opportunities to ensure efficient and effective review activities are performed to advise the project delivery team and decision maker(s) on the way ahead.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** Members of the vertical team serve as critical guides and advisors during the evaluation process. Their role is to provide real-time policy and technical guidance and to actively participate in the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop to build consensus on the defensibility of the resulting final array of alternatives and the Tentatively Selected Plan. This alignment is essential for a successful Decision Point 2.





**DECISION MAKER(S):** The District Commander is the decision-maker for executing the study and should be actively engaged in supporting the team's progress, removing obstacles, and ensuring issues are resolved at the appropriate level. They should be briefed regularly on screening decisions, emerging risks, and vertical team feedback. The Chief of Engineers (or DCG-CEO if delegated) is the decision-maker for confirming alignment and setting direction at Decision Point 2. The Chief's role during this phase is to be kept informed of progress through the vertical team and be ready to act decisively at Decision Point 2. The Chief is the ultimate customer for the product of this phase—the tentatively selected plan recommendation and risk-informed pathways to feasibility study completion—but they are not actively involved in the day-to-day analysis.

### PROCESS FLOW & KEY PRODUCTS

The Assessment and Evaluation Phase spans the period between Decision Point 1 and Decision Point 2. The following process flow is generally sequential, though some activities (for example, coordination and consultation, process iteration) occur continuously throughout the phase. The timing of activities in this phase – and the duration of the phase itself – is driven by project complexity, data availability, and environmental compliance requirements documented in the approved project management plan.

#### Plan Formulation and Screening

The team completes the “desktop study” and defines clear screening criteria (for example, technical, economic, and/or environmental criteria). These criteria are applied iteratively to screen out non-viable alternatives and identify a final array, eventual Tentatively Selected Plan, and alternative pathways for the most promising options.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The alternative screening matrix, documenting why alternatives were screened or retained
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The draft feasibility report

#### Perform Discipline-Specific Decision-Driven Analysis

With the identification of a final array of plans, the team performs a decision-driven analysis tailored to the screening criteria and metrics to improve design maturity, cost estimates, and reduce risk and uncertainty. The outcomes of this analysis will provide the information to evaluate and compare the final array of alternatives during the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop and identify the Tentatively Selected Plan. Sensitivity and stress testing is recommended to understand how plans perform under a range of uncertain future conditions.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The alternative screening matrix including sensitivity/trade-off analysis and supporting information
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The draft feasibility report

#### Coordination and Consultation

Coordination and consultation activities continue. Example activities include engaging with resource agencies under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, developing an Essential Fish Habitat assessment, initiating a Biological Assessment (under the Endangered Species Act), continued Tribal coordination and Government-to-Government consultation (where identified) to inform alternatives development and plan selection, and consideration of potential adverse effects to historic properties based on existing data or risk of adverse effects based on sensitivity for cultural resources and rough order of magnitude costs associated with the alternatives and plan selection, discussion of additional activities needed to complete the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process for the recommended plan.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The feasibility study's compliance and consultation documentation
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The draft feasibility report



### Evaluation and Comparison Workshop

This is a pivotal event within this phase of the study process. It is a collaborative workshop to gain consensus from the project delivery team, non-federal sponsor, and vertical team on the final array of alternatives to be carried forward for detailed comparison, the evaluation criteria and metrics to be applied, and ultimately the identification of a Tentatively Selected Plan. This workshop ensures alignment before committing resources to any further comparison. It is a flexible event that should be tailored to the needs of the project delivery team; it can be deployed as several progressive events across a period of weeks or months to aid in reducing uncertainty for the project delivery team, or a more targeted confirmatory event.

Products produced (or updated) include:

**MEETING MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD:** Formal documentation of the key agreements and decisions reached in an MFR, especially the concurrence on the focused array and selection of, or path to select the Tentatively Selected Plan.

**THE RISK REGISTER:** The risk register is likely the key tool to capture critical decisions and revise the associated risks and risk management options.

**ACTION ITEM LIST:** A list of specific tasks, who is responsible for each, and their deadlines.

**FINALIZED ANALYSIS PLAN:** A clear, documented plan outlining the specific models, metrics, and tasks required to evaluate the final array and identify the initial recommendation (Tentatively Selected Plan).

**READINESS ASSESSMENT:** Utilizing the documentation updates and outcomes of the workshop, the project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead – with the support of the non-federal sponsor – should engage with their leadership and the decision maker to ensure alignment on the path to release the draft feasibility report.

### Site Visit

The project delivery team, through the Command Integration Element (CIE), will arrange a site visit for the

USACE Chief of Engineers or their delegate prior to Decision Point 2. Note: scheduling can take many months – plan early!

### Compare Final Array and Identify Tentatively Selected Plan

The project delivery team develops a detailed comparison of the plans in the final array against one another, applying the evaluation criteria and metrics agreed upon at the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop. This comparison should explicitly address how each alternative performs under uncertain future conditions (sensitivity analysis) and identify the key trade-offs between economic, environmental, and social outcomes. The analysis leads to the identification of a single, justifiable recommendation—the Tentatively Selected Plan—and, if applicable, identification of separable elements that could serve as early actionable elements. This work may be significantly complete prior to or immediately following the conclusion of the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop, depending on the level of analysis completed beforehand.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The alternative screening matrix including sensitivity/trade-off analysis and supporting information
- ▶ Documentation of Tentatively Selected Plan selection rationale
- ▶ Identification of potential early actionable elements (if applicable)
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The draft feasibility report

### Draft Report Development and Release

The Tentatively Selected Plan (including potential early actionable elements) and the entire planning process used to select it (including the screening of all alternatives) are formally documented in the draft feasibility report. The narrative of the draft feasibility report must explicitly communicate uncertainty in ranges rather than static numbers, utilizing decision triggers (for example, geotechnical conditions, funding, environmental impacts) to maintain “room to operate” during feasibility-level analysis design while giving the public, stakeholders,



and federal agencies sufficient context for feedback. This approach allows the report to present a defensible recommendation while acknowledging that some design details will be refined in the next phase based on additional data and analysis. The draft feasibility report will undergo District Quality Control (as documented in the review plan, and a review for legal sufficiency before public release. The division Quality Assurance processes will affirm the District Quality Control. The intent is for prior alignment and coordination during the Scoping and Assessment and Evaluation phases of the feasibility study to provide clear expectations for the project delivery team so that execution can continue without the specific requirement for additional clearance to release the report. The District Commander will decide when to release the report for the necessary internal and external reviews.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Project briefing placemat or equivalent. For example: placemat, ArcGIS StoryMap, fact sheet, or virtual flyover. Teams should strive for minimal duplication of information and reliance on tools that will be developed throughout the study rather than generation of briefing slides, etc.
- ▶ Draft integrated feasibility report/NEPA document
- ▶ The risk register

### Internal Enterprise Review

The draft feasibility report is submitted for formal quality, technical, policy, and legal reviews. Quality control is critical both for the analyses used to produce documentation and for the documentation itself. The agency technical and policy review (enterprise review) will result in comments to be considered and resolved.

The review manager will work with the team to categorize comments by significance level (critical, high, medium, low), helping distinguish between comments that could affect the Decision Point 2 decision (critical/high) and refinements that can be addressed during the next phase (medium/low).

Proposed resolutions to comments, including impacts to the final array of alternatives, initial recommendation (Tentatively Selected Plan, and potential early actionable

increments), and path forward—will be provided to the project delivery team to inform Decision Point 2. The complete resolution or adoption of comments is not required before Decision Point 2, but characterizing these impacts and proposed actions for resolution of comments will be critical for the decision maker's consideration.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Review comment database (typically DrChecks) with significance categorization
- ▶ Proposed comment resolutions and impact assessment
- ▶ Identification of critical comments which may require further coordination ahead of Decision Point 2

### External Review

The draft feasibility report is also released for necessary external reviews based on the direction from the District Commander. This is intended to happen concurrently with the internal enterprise review. The draft feasibility report (and draft NEPA document) is circulated for public review and available for coordination with other federal and state agencies (for example, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, State or Tribal Historic Preservation Office, etc.), Tribes, and other consulting parties. Comments (including impacts to the final array of alternatives, initial recommendation (Tentatively Selected Plan), and path forward) will be provided to inform Decision Point 2.

The complete resolution or adoption of comments is not required, but characterizing these impacts and proposed actions for resolution of comments will be critical for the decision maker's consideration.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Public and agency comment database
- ▶ Assessment of comment themes and significance
- ▶ Proposed responses to critical comments
- ▶ Coordination documentation with resource agencies and Tribes



### Design Scoping Charrette

This is the second pivotal event within the Assessment and Evaluation phase of the feasibility study. With the Tentatively Selected Plan identified, the team holds a charrette focused specifically on scoping the work required for the next phase: Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design. This event is critical for determining what can realistically be advanced to a 35% level of design within the feasibility study's cost and schedule constraints. The team will establish the scope for the basis of design of the Tentatively Selected Plan and assess whether the full Tentatively Selected Plan can reach a 35% level of design, or whether separable elements can be implemented. The charrette refines the cost, schedule, and technical approach for the initial recommendation to be included in the Chief's Report, which may be the full Tentatively Selected Plan or one or more early actionable elements of the plan. While this event occurs prior to Decision Point 2, the timing should be driven by the project delivery team and independent of review activities. It may be most beneficial from a workload perspective for this event to take place after reviews are initiated, allowing the team to consider initial review feedback in scoping the next phase of the feasibility study.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ A Basis of Design Summary is the primary output of the Design Scoping Charrette. It memorializes the key decisions, assumptions, and methodologies the team will use during the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase of the feasibility study. The Basis of Design summary will be captured within the draft feasibility report and associated appendices.
- ▶ The Proposed Technical Review Strategy outlines the schedule of necessary review steps during feasibility-level design to be performed by the enterprise review team.
- ▶ A clear list of tasks, responsible parties, and due dates to address any outstanding issues from the charrette.
- ▶ The project management plan: A significantly more detailed and accurate scope, schedule, and budget for the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase of the feasibility study.

- ▶ The risk register: A comprehensive list of technical risks for the final design phase, complete with mitigation plans.
- ▶ A readiness assessment: Utilizing the documentation updates and outcomes of the workshop, the project manager, engineering technical lead, and lead planner should engage with the non-federal sponsor, their leadership, and the decision maker to ensure alignment on the path to Decision Point 2.

### Decision Point 2

This is the second formal decision point during the feasibility study. The team presents the Tentatively Selected Plan, other potential pathways, the results of the internal and external reviews, and a plan to address comments, seeking approval to proceed with the feasibility-level design of the selected plan. Decision Point 2 occurs following completion and release of the draft feasibility report, concurrent internal and external reviews, and the Design Scoping Charrette. The timing between the draft feasibility report release and Decision Point 2 should allow adequate review period and time for the team to assess and categorize review comments before the decision.

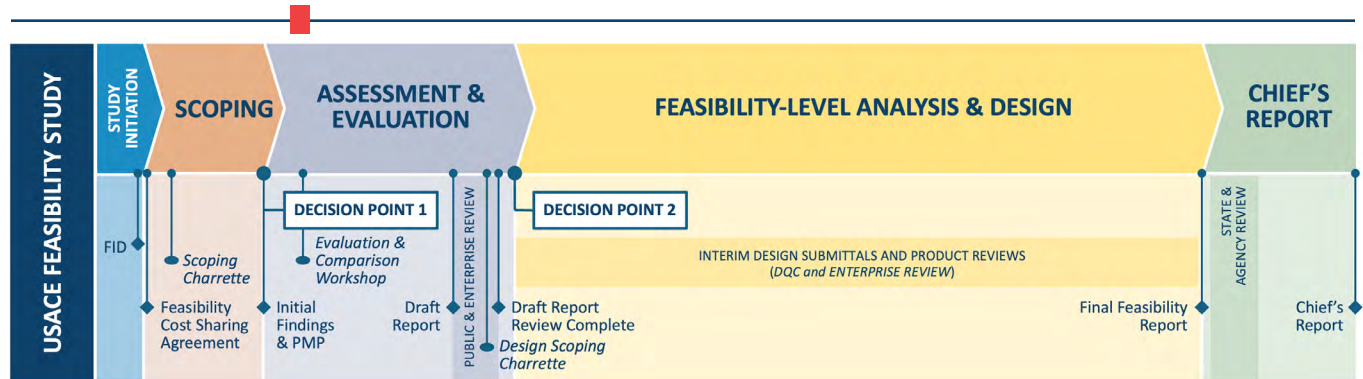
Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Signed MFR documenting the decision made by the decision maker and path forward
- ▶ Milestone actualized in PROMIS (CW254, Recommendation Alignment)
- ▶ Updated project management plan and, if needed, review plan
- ▶ Updated risk register





## Assessment and Evaluation Phase Key Event: Evaluation and Comparison Workshop



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

The project delivery team's mindset for the Evaluation and Comparison Workshop is to assess, defend, align, and decide. This is a hands-on, roll-up-your-sleeves working session, not a formal briefing. The goal is for the entire integrated team (project delivery team, non-federal sponsor, and vertical team) to collaboratively analyze the trade-offs, build consensus on a defensible Tentatively Selected Plan, and commit to a unified path forward. All participants are expected to contribute expertise to solve problems in real-time.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

Vertical team alignment on the final array of alternatives; the specific analytical plan required to compare them, evaluate them, and ultimately select the initial recommendation (the Tentatively Selected Plan or an alternate pathway for the feasibility study). Outcomes also include a shared understanding and acceptance of the key risks and uncertainties for any recommendations; agreement on any potential policy deviations and the process for formal requests; and a clear path to release the draft feasibility report.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER AT THE EVALUATION AND COMPARISON WORKSHOP

During this interactive workshop, the agenda should be developed to advance the feasibility study, in consideration of these key questions.

#### Finalizing Screening

- ▶ Looking at the remaining focused array of alternatives, are there any alternatives, based on the integrated team's professional judgment, we can agree to screen out now to focus the feasibility study's available resources?
- ▶ Does the screening process and documentation have a clear and defensible narrative?

#### The Trade-Off Analysis

- ▶ How does each alternative in the final array of alternatives perform against the most critical decision criteria (for example, cost, benefits, environmental impacts, implementability)?
- ▶ Are the proposed evaluation criteria and metrics sufficient to differentiate between alternatives in the final array? What is the key trade-off we are making if we select Plan A over Plan B? Is the entire team



(project delivery team, non-federal sponsor, and vertical team) willing to own and defend that trade-off? If there is any dissent, are there adjustments to be made or can we accept the dissent?

### For Selecting the Tentatively Selected Plan

- ▶ Based on the trade-offs and screening, is the “final array” of alternatives complete and defensible? Are there any fatal flaws?
- ▶ Is there a clear Tentatively Selected Plan that is defensible and justifiable?
- ▶ If there isn’t a clear Tentatively Selected Plan, what is the critical information the project delivery team would need to identify one? Will acquiring that information negatively impact the completion of the feasibility study within cost and schedule constraints? What are the specific analyses required to move from the final array to the Tentatively Selected Plan, and what is the strategy for completing them?
- ▶ What information is needed to finalize the rough order of magnitude costs, accounting for uncertainty, for implementation and project operations, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and replacement (inclusive of construction, mitigation, real estate acquisition, etc.)?

### Path Forward

- ▶ Looking at the Tentatively Selected Plan, what is the confidence level of achieving a 35% level of design for the entire plan within the remaining time and budget? If confidence is low, what is the most valuable increment we can deliver, and does it provide meaningful risk reduction?
- ▶ Now that the Tentatively Selected Plan has been identified, what are the two or three most important “bounded uncertainty” statements we must include in the draft feasibility report narrative to maintain sufficient flexibility for Decision Point 2 and the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase??

## EXAMPLE EVALUATION AND COMPARISON WORKSHOP AGENDA

### Alignment & Status Update

Establish a common operating picture for all participants and ensure everyone is starting with the same base level of knowledge. The study team provides a comprehensive overview of the study background, data sources, and the current status of plan formulation.

### Review and Align on Formulation

Gain formal agreement that the team has considered a sufficient range of options and has a justifiable basis for the “final array” of alternatives.

Guided by the aligned study problems, opportunities, objectives, and constraints, screening criteria and metrics, and associated documentation/analyses, the project delivery team and non-federal sponsor discusses the screening of measures. They then present the “focused array,” seeking feedback and, ultimately, concurrence from the vertical team.

### Finalize the Evaluation Plan

To agree on exactly how the final alternatives will be compared, the team discusses the proposed criteria for evaluating the final array and selecting the Tentatively Selected Plan. The discussion centers on ensuring the metrics are robust enough to support the identification of the Tentatively Selected Plan.

### Continuing Design

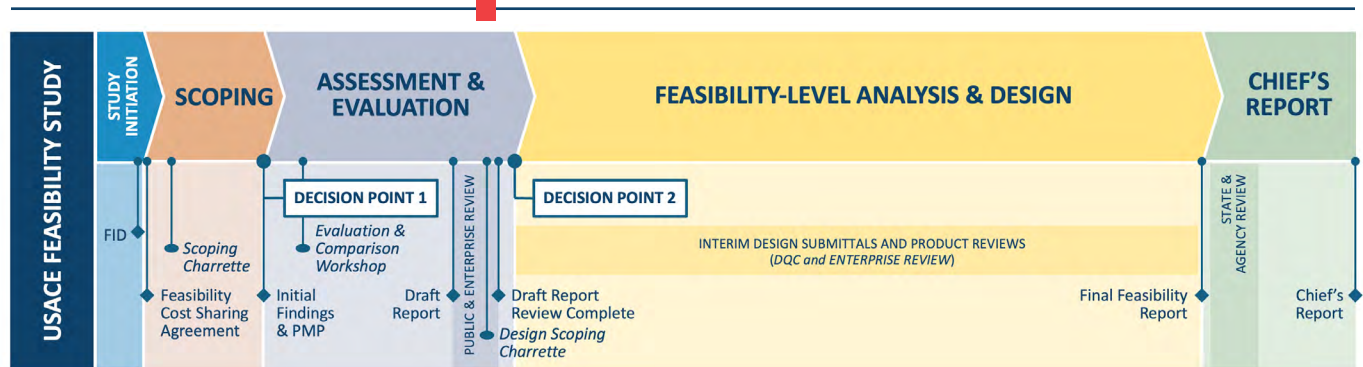
The project delivery team, non-federal sponsor, and vertical team engage in a forward-looking discussion on what data and analyses will be required to advance the eventual Tentatively Selected Plan to a 35% level of design.

### Action Plan and Path Forward

To solidify the workshop’s outcomes into a concrete and actionable plan with clear accountability, the workshop facilitator summarizes key decisions made during the workshop. The feasibility study’s project manager leads the identification of immediate action items (“due outs”), defines the next analytical steps, and schedules any necessary follow-up check-ins.



## Assessment and Evaluation Phase Key Event: Design Scoping Charrette



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

The project delivery team, including the non-federal sponsor, shifts, philosophically, from ‘What’ to ‘How’—with brutal honesty about constraints. The team shifts from identifying and justifying the Tentatively Selected Plan to detailing the precise work required to design it within the remaining schedule and budget. This charrette or workshop not a theoretical exercise—it’s a reality check. The atmosphere is collaborative but highly focused on technical specifics, task definition, and honest risk assessment. The goal is a realistic, executable plan, not an aspirational one. If the full Tentatively Selected Plan cannot reach 35% design within constraints, this is where the team must confront that reality and identify the most appropriate pathway for the study.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

A fully scoped, risk-characterized, and resourced execution plan for the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase. The entire project delivery team should leave with a shared understanding of the tasks, data needs, schedule, and budget required to get to a final feasibility report. This includes a clear and shared understanding of the critical path items and resource dependencies. This event, involving the vertical team, will serve to better characterize confidence in the remaining work and potential alternative pathways to be considered at Decision Point 2.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER AT THE DESIGN SCOPING CHARRETTE

During this interactive workshop, the agenda should be developed to advance the feasibility study, in consideration of these key questions.

#### Scope Definition

- ▶ What is the definitive scope of the design objective: the full tentatively selected plan or specific separable increments?
- ▶ What are the key assumptions and parameters that will inform the foundation of the recommended plan’s basis of design?

#### Critical Path and Data Gaps

- ▶ What are the critical path items (for example, geotechnical borings, H&H modeling, environmental surveys, coordination) that must be completed first, and what are their major dependencies? While much of the work must happen in parallel, understanding when and what is critical to inform other efforts needs to be identified.
- ▶ How does the data collection plan specifically address the decision triggers and “bounded uncertainties” communicated in the draft feasibility report?
- ▶ If there are delays in getting critical path data (for example, permits, weather), what is the mitigation strategy to keep the design moving forward?



### Cost and Real Estate Integration

**FOR THE COST ENGINEER:** What specific level of design maturity, quantity take-offs, and scope definition must each discipline provide to support a highly defensible Class 3 cost estimate and cost schedule risk assessment?

**FOR THE REALTY SPECIALIST:** What are the specific real estate acquisition and utility relocation requirements, and is there a viable, risk-characterized plan to execute them within the schedule constraints?

### Resource Allocation and Commitments

- ▶ What specific technical disciplines and specialized subject matter experts are required to execute these tasks, and does the project manager have commitments for their availability?
- ▶ Does the resulting schedule and resource plan fit within the remaining cost and schedule constraints?

### Decision Support for Decision Point 2

- ▶ Based on this scoping exercise, what is the project delivery team's risk-informed assessment of what can be delivered to 35% design within the remaining constraints? If not the full Tentatively Selected Plan, what early actionable increments?
- ▶ What are the specific risks and uncertainties the decision maker needs to understand and accept at Decision Point 2 to approve moving forward?
- ▶ If review comments from the draft feasibility report suggest changes to the Tentatively Selected Plan, how flexible is the design plan to accommodate those changes without derailing the schedule or budget?

## EXAMPLE DESIGN SCOPING CHARRETTE AGENDA

### Level-Set and Alignment

- ▶ Review the Tentatively Selected Plan and the project objectives.
- ▶ The project manager and engineering technical lead present the goals of the charrette and the expected outcomes.

- ▶ The vertical team provides their key expectations for the final design.

### Deconstruct the Initial Recommendation

- ▶ The team breaks the Tentatively Selected Plan down into its major features (for example, levee segments, pump stations, floodwalls, habitat restoration areas).

### Define the Tasks

- ▶ Discipline-specific groups take their assigned features and develop a detailed list of all design and analysis tasks required to get to a feasibility-level design.
- ▶ The project delivery team identifies the specific data, modeling software, and resources needed to execute the identified tasks and performs a rapid risk assessment for each task, identifying potential technical challenges, schedule delays, or cost overruns.

### Synthesize and Build the Plan

- ▶ The full project delivery team identifies key dependencies between disciplines (for example, "Structural design depends on the geotechnical investigation results; Real estate cost estimates depend on utility compensability and relocation disposition").

### Finalize the Path Forward

- ▶ The engineering technical lead leads a session to finalize the "Basis of Design" and documents key decisions and action items.
- ▶ The project manager or planning lead outlines key remaining tasks for all disciplines and how those results may affect the initial recommendation to be presented at Decision Point 2.
- ▶ The project manager integrates all findings into a refined schedule and budget for the final design phase.
- ▶ Decisions are captured and used to inform updates to the Risk Register, the project management plan (and review plan), and the Decision Point 2 briefing.





## Assessment and Evaluation Phase Key Event: Decision Point 2



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### DESCRIPTION

The second decision point during a feasibility study will document the vertically informed agreement on the path forward for the project, acknowledging and accepting the identified study and implementation risk and uncertainties and the strategies to manage those risks. Decision Point 2 marks the corporate endorsement of the Tentatively Selected Plan and the proposed way forward to complete feasibility-level design.

The decision does not require a meeting, unless requested by the decision maker. The decision maker, the Chief of Engineers (or the DCG-CEO if delegated), may request a pre-decision briefing.

### DECISION MAKER

The USACE Chief of Engineers is the Decision Point 2 decision maker. The decision may be delegated to the DCG-CEO but may not be further delegated.

### DECISION-MAKING MINDSET

The mindset for Decision Point 2 is decisive, clear, and explicitly accounts for uncertainty. The focus of the decision should be on assessing and affirming confidence in the path forward. This is not a technical debate; it is a corporate validation of the Tentatively Selected Plan and its execution strategy. The project delivery team and non-federal sponsor's role is to demonstrate that

the Tentatively Selected Plan is justified, the risks are bounded, and there is a realistic, resource-loaded plan to deliver a recommendation that meets or exceeds 35% level of design within the remaining schedule and budget.

### PREREQUISITE TO DECISION POINT 2

Prior to Decision Point 2, the project delivery team must have successfully completed an Evaluation and Comparison Workshop, the Design Scoping Charrette, produced and released the draft feasibility report, confirmed the non-federal sponsor's support for the Tentatively Selected Plan and recommended path forward, completed required internal and external reviews and assessed and categorized comments, and completed legal sufficiency review of the draft feasibility report. The team must have a clear understanding of review comment themes and proposed resolution strategies, though complete resolution is not required before Decision Point 2.

### READ-AHEADS / PRE-SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

A project placemat (or equivalent) is the only stand-alone read-ahead product. Other working products will be made available to the decision maker but are not expected to be specifically prepared for the decision. The current versions of the draft feasibility report, risk register, project management plan, and any other official memoranda



related to the study (such as the Federal Interest Determination memorandum and concurrence) should be made available no later than 5 business days prior to the planned decision date.

It is best practice that engaged subject matter experts and members of the vertical team have an opportunity to digest the available information to ensure critical issues and opportunities are flagged both for the project delivery team and the decision maker.

### DECISION

A decision on the way ahead for the feasibility study; concurrence on the federal interest in completing the study and a potential project that may be recommended in the final feasibility report and Chief's Report. Agreement on path forward (pathway to completion).

The project delivery team will document the decision in a MFR. The MFR will be provided to the decision maker.

The MFR will document (1) the federal interest in completing the study and (2) the decision on the proposed way forward to complete feasibility-level analysis and design; and (3) (if applicable) the decision or direction on alternative pathways to feasibility report and Chief's Report completion.

Alternative pathways for consideration may include:

- ▶ Continue the feasibility study toward the final feasibility report and Chief's Report. This approach is appropriate when the Tentatively Selected Plan is defensible, the execution plan is realistic, risks are acceptable, and there is a clear path to 35% design within constraints. In this pathway, the project delivery team will move into the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase.
- ▶ Continue the feasibility study toward a technical report, but not a Chief's Report. This approach is appropriate when the study findings are valuable but do not support a federal recommendation for project authorization, or when policy or technical issues preclude a Chief's Report, but information should be documented. In this pathway, the project

delivery team will pivot to producing a technical report, documenting the feasibility study activities and analyses to date.

- ▶ Terminate the study. This approach is appropriate when the federal interest in the feasibility study and potential project is no longer justified, non-federal sponsor support is withdrawn for the study or project, or insurmountable technical or policy barriers exist. In this pathway, the project delivery team will document reasons for termination and initiate internal communication in accordance with current policy

### KEY QUESTIONS TO INFORM THE DECISION

Decision Point 2 will be informed by the public, agency, and enterprise review comments on the draft feasibility report, and the outcomes of the Design Scoping Charrette. The decision maker will consider:

#### Plan Sufficiency

- ▶ Has the Tentatively Selected Plan and its costs, benefits, and impacts been clearly defined? Is the plan technically sound and implementable?

#### Risk Management

- ▶ Has the project delivery team documented the key risks and uncertainties associated with the Tentatively Selected Plan and outlined a clear plan to mitigate them during the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase?

#### Review Comment Assessment

- ▶ Have internal and external review comments been assessed and categorized by significance?
- ▶ Are there any critical comments that fundamentally challenge the Tentatively Selected Plan or require resolution before proceeding?
- ▶ Is there a clear strategy for addressing medium/low priority comments during the next phase?



### Vertical Alignment and Dissent

- ▶ Is the vertical team fully aligned with the Tentatively Selected Plan recommendation?
- ▶ If not, have all significant alignment issues have been transparently documented, and their risks are characterized for the decision maker to consider.
- ▶ Is the Tentatively Selected Plan aligned with OASA(CW) on how the study is meeting Administration priorities?

### Policy and Deviations

- ▶ Are all requested policy deviations (exceptions) and the selection of a locally preferred plan (if applicable) clearly documented and justified?
- ▶ Is the project delivery team currently aligned with OASA(CW) on any deviations from the “total net benefit” plan?

### Execution Readiness

- ▶ Does the project management plan and basis of design for the Tentatively Selected Plan provide a realistic, resource-loaded plan to meet the required design maturity within the remaining schedule and budget?
- ▶ Have the feasibility study’s critical path activities (for example, real estate, cost certification) been adequately addressed?
- ▶ Does the project delivery team have a clear plan for review during the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase, addressing outstanding comments on the draft feasibility report, and completing the final feasibility report and Chief’s Report?

### Non-Federal Sponsor Commitment

- ▶ Has the non-federal sponsor confirmed their support for the recommended plan and their understanding of the associated cost-sharing and implementation responsibilities?

### Decision Point 2 Roles and Responsibilities

**DISTRICT COMMANDER:** The District Commander leads the briefing to the decision maker and should be prepared to articulate the strategic case for the Tentatively Selected Plan, address policy sensitivities and technical sufficiency, and confirm sponsor commitment.

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** The non-federal sponsor should be prepared to verbally confirm their support for the Tentatively Selected Plan, its associated costs, and their role as the cost-sharing partner. They should also be prepared to address any concerns about local support or implementation challenges. Their presence and explicit concurrence are critical for demonstrating local buy-in to the decision maker.

**PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM:** The engineering technical lead, lead planner, and environmental lead may be called upon to present the concise, executive-level case for the TSP. They are not re-presenting the entire report; they are confirming the key findings, justifying the recommendation, and answering the decision maker’s strategic questions about risk and implementation. The team should be prepared to address technical questions about feasibility, environmental compliance status, and the planned design and implementation approaches.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** The project manager manages the availability of decision-support documentation as well as the meeting agenda to ensure the meeting stays on track and focused on the decision. The project manager should be prepared to present the execution plan (scope, schedule, budget) and address questions about resource availability and risk management. Their role in this meeting is to provide documentation, facilitate the discussion, ensure the purpose is clear, and formally document the final decision as soon as it is made.

**REVIEW MANAGER:** The role of the review manager is not to present, but to confirm, if asked, that the decision analyses and documentation have successfully completed all required reviews. The review manager should be prepared to summarize the review process, categorize



» Trinity River Floodway in Fort Worth, Texas

comment significance, and confirm that critical issues have been addressed or have a clear resolution path. Their presence provides the decision maker with direct, independent assurance that the underlying documentation and analyses is sound.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** The vertical team serves as advisors throughout the process, including providing advice to the study team and decision maker to support risk-informed decision making. Participating members of the vertical team should be prepared to provide their assessment of the Tentatively Selected Plan's defensibility, execution plan realism, and alignment with Administration priorities, clearly differentiating between potential "red-flags" that could impact the decision and opportunities to improve the analyses during the next phase. The decision maker will be accountable for understanding and considering advice from the vertical team.

**DECISION MAKER:** The Chief of Engineers, or DCG-CEO should the decision be delegated, listens, assesses alignment, asks strategic questions, and makes the explicit, verbal declaration of the investment decision. The decision maker should be prepared to assess whether (1) the Tentatively Selected Plan is justified and defensible, (2) the risks are acceptable and manageable, (3) the execution plan is realistic, (4) there is sustained non-federal sponsor and vertical team support, and (5) the recommendation aligns with Administration priorities. The decision maker owns the decision and must be willing to

accept the documented risks and uncertainties to move forward or clearly articulate what additional information is needed before deciding.

### EXAMPLE AGENDA (IF MEETING IS REQUIRED BY THE DECISION MAKER)

#### Call to Order and Confirmation of Purpose

- ▶ 10 minutes, led by [project manager or another core team member]
- ▶ State the purpose: to make a formal decision on the documented recommendation. Confirm that all required participants are present.

#### Confirmation of Key Findings: Confirming the Tentatively Selected Plan

- ▶ 15 minutes, led by the District Commander
- ▶ The District Commander presents the concise, executive-level case for the previously identified Tentatively Selected Plan. The focus is on:
  - » A summary of how the Tentatively Selected Plan best meets the study objectives and Administration priorities.
  - » The key trade-offs (economic, environmental, social) that led to their selection over other alternatives.





- » Confirmation of the non-federal sponsor's full support for the Tentatively Selected Plan and its associated costs and responsibilities.
- » A read-out of outcomes related to any coordination and consultation leading up to and through the concurrent review.

### Confirmation of Key Findings: Execution Readiness and the Path to the Chief's Report

- ▶ 60 minutes, led by the project manager and engineering technical lead
- ▶ Presenters provide the outcomes of the analyses and reviews, including the Design Scoping Charrette. The team outlines the basis of design for the Tentatively Selected Plan or early actionable increment(s). The team outlines the proposed scope, schedule, and budget to complete the 35% level of design requirements. The focus is on realism and risk:
  - » High Confidence: What design elements are highly likely to be delivered within the remaining study schedule and budget?
  - » On the Fence/At Risk: What elements face significant implementation, real estate acquisition, or environmental compliance hurdles that could threaten the cost and schedule constraints?
  - » Resource Gaps: What specific elements (if any) will likely require additional enterprise resources, subject matter expert support, or increased cost/schedule to reach the 35% design threshold?

### DISCUSSION AND FINAL CALL FOR "RED FLAGS"

- ▶ 20 minutes, led by the decision maker
- ▶ State the purpose: The decision maker leads a final discussion, focusing both on the plan and the ability to execute it:
  - » Have all significant policy, technical, or legal issues raised during the draft feasibility report review been adequately addressed (or, much more likely, have a clear path to being addressed)?

- » Is the execution plan realistic? Is the vertical team comfortable accepting the remaining schedule and budget risks?
- » Are there any remaining fatal flaws or show-stoppers?

### The Decision

- ▶ 10 minutes, led by the decision maker
- ▶ The decision maker explicitly states the decision: "Based on the recommendation and hearing no red flags (or having accepted the risks as identified), I approve the recommendation to continue through Feasibility Level Design (or terminate/alternative pathway)."

### Closing

- ▶ 5 minutes, led by the project manager
- ▶ The decision will be documented in the Decision Point 2 MFR, formally actualizing the milestone in PROMIS, and outlining immediate next steps for initiating final design activities. The project management plan, risk register, review plan, and draft feasibility report are updated as necessary.

## MEETING DOCUMENTATION

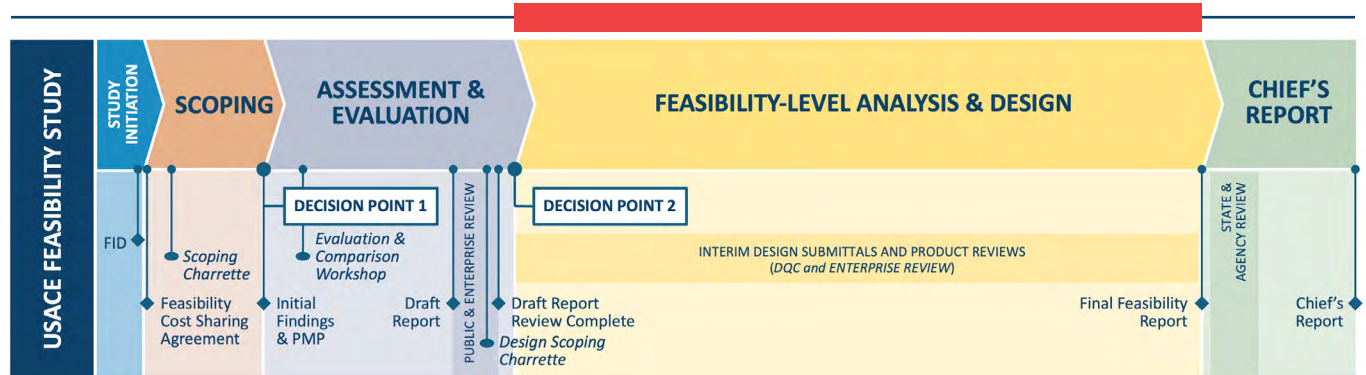
The decision(s) will be documented in a signed Decision Point 2 memorandum for record (MFR) documenting key decisions for the study and its path forward.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Signed MFR
  - » Documents key decisions
  - » Documents the path ahead for the study, including the selected plan and any early actionable increments
- ▶ The risk register, including any feedback from the decision maker (referenced in, but not attached to MFR)
- ▶ The project management plan



## FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS AND DESIGN PHASE



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

During the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design Phase, the full project delivery team focuses on disciplined closure. The time for exploration is over. This phase is a focused sprint to execute the design plan developed at the Design Scoping Charrette and agreed upon at Decision Point 2. The project delivery team's goal is to resolve all outstanding technical and policy issues, finalize a certifiable cost estimate for an implementable project, and produce a legally and technically sufficient final feasibility report that is ready for senior leader endorsement.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

The outcome of this phase is a fully compliant, legally defensible, and technically complete recommendation, documented in the final feasibility report that recommends a specific project for Congressional authorization and funding. The methods and analyses completed shall produce a project that has a high-probability of being completed within the proposed authorized cost and perform as intended.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM TO ANSWER IN THE FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS AND DESIGN PHASE

The focus of the project delivery team is moving deliberately toward the final feasibility report and Chief's Report within the resources available to the team.

### Design Execution

- ▶ Has the team successfully advanced the design of the Tentatively Selected Plan (or separable increment) to the 35% design threshold as defined in the basis of design?
- ▶ Have the associated coordination and resource impact mitigation plans (if necessary) been developed to support the design?

### Scope Management

- ▶ Have we maintained fidelity to the Tentatively Selected Plan (or separable elements) approved at Decision Point 2, or have scope changes emerged during detailed design?
- ▶ If changes are necessary, have they been documented and coordinated with the Vertical Team, and do they fall within our "room to operate" or will they require formal approval or re-release of the draft feasibility report to the public and other federal agencies?

### Cost Certification

- ▶ Does our cost estimate meet the Class 3 standards required for certification by the Cost Engineering Mandatory Center of Expertise, and does the accompanying cost schedule risk analysis fully account for all remaining implementation risks?



- ▶ Has the project delivery team developed the acquisition and implementation plans to support the cost and duration of the recommendation?

### Review Resolution

- ▶ Have all significant internal and external review comments been resolved and documented in a way that strengthens the final recommendation?
- ▶ How did the project delivery team leverage our “bounded uncertainty” narrative to address comments without expanding scope outside of our “room to operate”?

### Final Justification

- ▶ Does the final feasibility report tell a clear, consistent, and compelling story that justifies the recommended plan from start to finish?
- ▶ Has any new information emerged during the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase that materially affects the original Tentatively Selected Plan decision, and if so, how was it documented and resolved?

## STUDY TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS AND DESIGN PHASE

The non-federal sponsor, project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead (“core team”) continue to lead the study. This group drives daily decision-making and will meet regularly to:

- ▶ Continually engage with the other disciplines to resolve review comments and advance the design of the selected plan to the 35% threshold.
- ▶ Assess progress against project management plan targets.
- ▶ Identify emerging risks and mitigation strategies, with a specific focus on the critical path to achieving Class 3 cost certification of the recommended plan or early actionable increment (including the necessary implementation and acquisition plans to inform the cost estimate).

- ▶ Prepare for vertical team engagements and key events.
- ▶ Ensure the feasibility report narrative stays current.

The core team’s alignment is the foundation for broader project delivery team and vertical team alignment. The following roles and responsibilities are provided within the context of this phase of the study.

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** As an active study partner, the non-federal sponsor continues to actively participate in the refinement of the recommendation. The non-federal sponsor’s key roles in this phase are to provide timely input on design details, assist with securing access for on-the-ground data collection (for example, geotechnical surveys), and formally concur with the final project cost-sharing agreement.

**LEAD PLANNER:** The lead planner typically “owns” the main report and ensures it tells a clear and defensible story justifying the recommendation. They are responsible for working closely with the review manager, managing the resolution and incorporation of all comments from agency and public reviews (as necessary), and ensuring the final document is fully policy-compliant and ready for signature.

**ENGINEERING TECHNICAL LEAD:** The engineering technical lead leads the multi-disciplinary technical team to advance the design of the Tentatively Selected Plan (or early actionable elements) to a 35% level of design. They are responsible for integrating all technical appendices (H&H, geotechnical engineering, structural engineering, etc.) and ensuring the design documentation is technically sound, complete, and supports the certified cost estimate.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** The project manager manages the increased technical scope, budget, and schedule associated with this resource-intensive phase. The project manager drives the team to meet all deadlines, ensures the formal review processes are completed, and ensures the certified cost estimate is completed and approved on time.



**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** The cultural resources team member coordinates with the engineering technical lead regarding plan details and engineering activities and additional surveys; incorporate consultation and comments; revises the area(s) of potential effects as needed based on the development of 35% level of project design, conducts cultural resources surveys as necessary for engineering activities or for additional effort to identify historic properties, develops appropriate agreement document to resolve adverse effects, develop rough order of magnitude estimates to carry out activities documented in an agreement document, etc.

**ENVIRONMENTAL LEAD:** The environmental lead's primary responsibility is to advance the draft NEPA document (Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement) into its final, legally sufficient form. This involves meticulously incorporating and resolving all comments from enterprise review, public review, and resource agency coordination. They will lead the detailed refinement of the environmental impact analysis for the approved Tentatively Selected Plan and work closely with the engineering technical lead and cost engineer to develop the final, detailed mitigation plan. Their work culminates in preparing the final NEPA decision document (Finding of No Significant Impact or Record of Decision) for signature upon completion of the Chief's Report.

**TRIBAL LIAISON:** The Tribal Liaison is responsible for managing and documenting the formal Government-to-Government consultation process. Following the selection of the Tentatively Selected Plan, they will ensure Tribal Nations are consulted on the specific details of the recommended plan, its potential impacts on Tribal resources or interests, and the proposed mitigation measures. Their crucial role is to ensure the agency's trust responsibilities are met and that the entire consultation process is documented accurately and completely for the administrative record, providing a clear basis for the final project decision.

**COST ENGINEER:** Following the confirmation of the Tentatively Selected Plan and resulting pathway to completion at Decision Point 2, the project delivery

team will execute the plan they previously developed to deliver the finalized scope definition, design maturity, technical and cost review which will result in a certified total project cost estimate. The primary responsibility in this phase is to advance Tentatively Selected Plan (or early actionable increment) to an appropriate design maturity required to support a detailed Class 3 level cost estimate, in accordance with ER 1110-2-1302, ensuring all project features and implementation costs are accurately captured. Based on this detailed estimate and developed construction/project schedule, the cost engineer will then lead the project delivery team through the formal cost and schedule risk analysis to produce a robust and defensible cost risk register and contingency. A critical function of the project manager in this phase is managing the entire quality control of all products (technical and cost) and the enterprise review of both technical and cost products through to cost certification: the project delivery team will work with the review team on the technical package and required technical review while the cost engineering team will coordinate the cost review with the Cost Engineering Mandatory Center of Expertise to review the estimate and supporting package in accordance with ER 1110-2-1302. Upon successful completion of the technical and cost review the Cost Engineering Mandatory Center of Expertise will issue the cost certification, which is a prerequisite for the final report and the agency's final investment decision.

**REALTY SPECIALIST:** The Realty Specialist is responsible for managing, integrating and documenting the real estate analysis and costs in the Real Estate Plan appendix and throughout the final feasibility report. Following the selection of the Tentatively Selected Plan, they will analyze the specific details, costs, impacts, and schedule to provide the lands, easements, and rights-of way required for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the recommended plan, including those required for relocations, borrow material, and dredged or excavated material disposal.

**OTHER PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM MEMBERS:** The list above is not meant to be exhaustive, but capture some of the typically critical functions to aid in study production.





The needs and roles for each study will be specific to that study and will be one of the key outputs of the requirements identified during the development of the project management plan.

**SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS:** Additional subject matter experts may work directly with the PDT to scale technical analyses, engage in problem solving, and assess risk associated with decisions. Utilization of the Planning Centers of Expertise, the Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise, and other relevant Centers of Expertise to provide or help identify subject matter experts to support or supplement the project delivery team is highly recommended.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** Members of the vertical team serve as the primary quality control function. The Division, for example, executes the formal enterprise reviews to ensure the final feasibility report and its appendices meet all agency standards for technical sufficiency and legal defensibility before it is elevated for final approval.

**DECISION MAKER:** While the major feasibility phase investment decision was made at Decision Point 2, the District Engineer (District Commander) executing the decision certifies the final feasibility report. Their role is to ensure the project delivery team has successfully addressed all review comments and produced a complete, high-quality report. Their signature approves the final report package for transmittal to HQ.

### PROCESS FLOW AND KEY PRODUCTS IN THE FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS AND DESIGN PHASE

The Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design Phase spans the period between Decision Point 2 and the final feasibility report transmittal to USACE Headquarters. The following process flow is generally sequential, though review activities and environmental compliance coordination occur concurrently as products mature. Teams should adjust timing based on design complexity, data collection requirements (for example, geotechnical investigations, surveys), and environmental compliance schedules documented in the project management plan approved (or affirmed) at Decision Point 2.

### Independent External Peer Review

Independent external peer review, if required, is anticipated to typically occur after Decision Point 2. The review is conducted by a panel of external experts under contract to complete an independent review.

Products produced (if independent external peer review is required) include:

- ▶ Final Independent External Peer Review report documenting comment resolution
- ▶ The public posting of the Agency Responses to the Independent External Peer Review

### Enterprise Review

The project delivery team formally adjudicates and incorporates comments received from the various internal and external reviews into the planning and design documents. The review documentation will include how each comment was considered and resolved (including where changes were not adopted and why). The project delivery team's response should leverage the 'room to operate' established in the draft feasibility report's trigger-based narrative, providing clarifying detail without being forced into premature design decisions. Critical/high priority comments should be resolved first; medium/low priority comments can be addressed as design progresses or documented for consideration during the pre-construction engineering and design phase.

Technical and quality reviews are anticipated at key points as the analysis continues in the Feasibility-Level Analysis and Design phase, in alignment with the current review plan.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Draft Enterprise Review Summary Report (to be updated as additional reviews occur throughout the study)
- ▶ Updates to the draft feasibility report incorporating resolved comments
- ▶ Updates to the risk register



### Advance Design Maturity

For any aspects of the initial recommendation identified to continue to a potential inclusion in the Chief's Report, the team advances the design of the Tentatively Selected Plan and/or any early actionable increments to 35% level of design. This includes finalizing proposed construction and access layouts with required estates, identification of utility and facility relocations with disposition, performing more detailed modeling, finalizing any surveys or sampling, and refining material quantities. Consult Engineering and Construction Bulletin (ECB) 2023-9 for more comprehensive list of requirements for 35% design maturity.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Updates to the technical analyses and draft feasibility report (appendices) including:
  - » Proposed construction and access layouts with required estates
  - » Utility and facility relocations with disposition and compensability determination
  - » Detailed modeling (H&H, structural, geotechnical) sufficient to validate design assumptions
  - » Surveys, geotechnical investigations, and material sampling sufficient to validate design assumptions
  - » Estimated material quantities and construction methods
  - » Draft construction phasing and sequencing plans
  - » Concept drawings at 30% completion showing key dimensions, layouts, and details
  - » Design calculations supporting major design decisions
  - » Constructability assessment and risk analysis
- ▶ Updates to the risk register

### Coordination and Consultation

Feasibility phase coordination and consultation continues. This includes ongoing formal Government-to-Government consultation with Tribes. The study team completes needed environmental compliance activities such as Endangered Species Act consultation, Clean Water Act Section 401 compliance, and identification of historic properties within the area(s) of potential effect of the recommended plan and consult to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse effects, if identified, execute an agreement document.

Products produced (or updated) may include:

- ▶ Clean Water Act compliance documentation
- ▶ Endangered Species Act compliance documentation
- ▶ Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report
- ▶ National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 compliance documentation
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The final feasibility report
- ▶ Project briefing materials, for example: project placemat, ArcGIS StoryMap, fact sheet, briefing deck

### Synthesize and Document

The team synthesizes feasibility-level design, results of agency consultation and coordination, and other analyses into the final feasibility report and integrated NEPA document.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The final feasibility report
- ▶ Project briefing materials, for example: project placemat, ArcGIS StoryMap, fact sheet, briefing deck





» Engineer using monitors and a handheld device to remotely operate an excavator

### Finalize and Certify Cost Estimate

The Cost Engineer develops the final Class 3 cost estimate for the recommended plan. This estimate undergoes a mandatory, independent certification by the Cost Engineering MCX.

Products produced (or update) include:

- ▶ Cost Estimate certification
- ▶ The Enterprise Review Summary Report
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The final feasibility report

### Assemble and Transmit Final Report Package

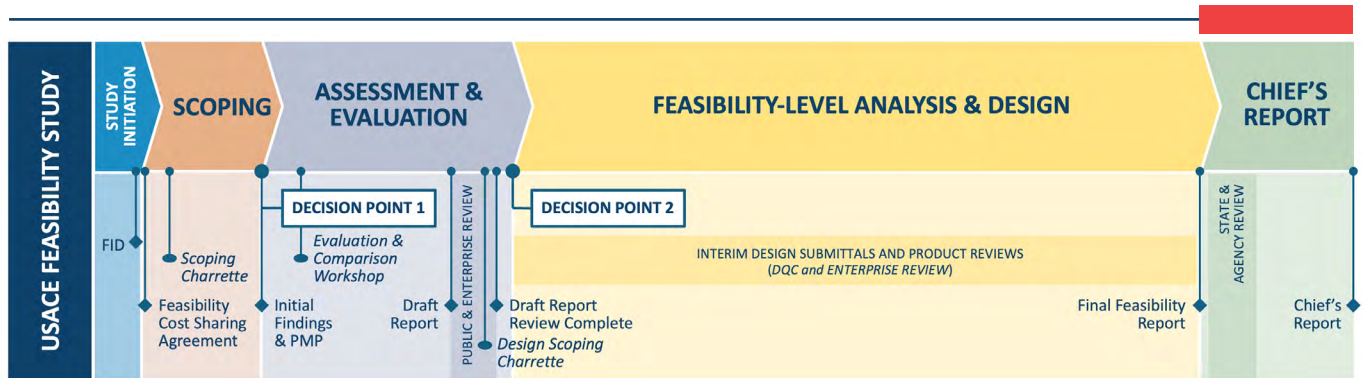
All appendices, comment-response matrices, and the main report body are updated and compiled into a single, cohesive package for final review. The final feasibility report and appendices and Enterprise Review Summary Report are transmitted to USACE Headquarters for the Chief's final consideration.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Final Enterprise Review Summary Report
- ▶ The risk register
- ▶ The final feasibility report and associated supporting documentation



## CHIEF'S REPORT PHASE



RAPID FRAMEWORK: KEY DECISIONS AND PRODUCTS IN A USACE FEASIBILITY STUDY

### MINDSET

The mindset for this final phase of the feasibility study is endurance, patient responsiveness, and justification.

The District project delivery team's active execution role is complete. The team's primary role now is to support the formal state and agency review process, justify or defend the final feasibility report's findings, and provide swift, clear responses to high-level policy and interagency questions. The time from "last touch" of the report from the District to final request for information can span significant lengths of time depending on the budget process, the Congressional project authorization cycle, and other factors. The District will need to be ready to respond expeditiously to these requests for information from HQUSACE, OASA(CW), and the Office of Management and Budget. The goal is to shepherd the final feasibility report findings to a signed Chief's Report without delay or rework.

The Headquarters team, led by the Planning and Policy Division's Office of Water Project Review, in close coordination with the relevant Command Integration Element, shepherds the final feasibility report into a Chief's Report package for routing and approval.

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

The outcome of this phase of a feasibility study is a signed Chief of Engineers Report that is ready for transmission to the Administration and Congress for authorization, accompanied by a signed NEPA decision document. The Chief's Report represents the official USACE recommendation and positions the project for Congressional authorization and future appropriations.

### KEY QUESTIONS FOR USACE HEADQUARTERS TO ANSWER IN THE CHIEF'S REPORT PHASE

#### Compliance and Legal Sufficiency

- ▶ Does the report and its recommendation comply with all current laws, administration policy, and executive orders to support a final recommendation from the Chief?
- ▶ Have all outstanding comments from internal and external reviews been sufficiently resolved and documented?
- ▶ Are there any modifications required in the Chief's Report from what is recommended in the Final Report to account for any issues identified?

#### Review Resolution and Coordination

- ▶ Have all formal State, Tribal, and other federal agency comments been adequately considered and addressed?





- Is the final feasibility report and its documentation legally and technically sufficient for the Chief of Engineers to endorse?

### Responsiveness

- Is USACE providing timely and complete responses to any requests for information from OASA(CW) or reviewing agencies?

## STUDY TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE CHIEF'S REPORT PHASE

The non-federal sponsor, project manager, lead planner, and engineering technical lead ("core team") continue to lead the study. Although the feasibility study has been completed, this group continues to meet regularly to:

- Continually engage with HQUSACE and the Command Integration Element to support the State & Agency review and final policy assessment.
- Assess progress against the final report transmittal and signature schedule.
- Identify emerging risks to a successful Chief's Report signature.
- Prepare for the final senior-leader briefings.
- Ensure all supporting documentation for the Chief's Report is complete and accessible.

The core team's alignment is the foundation for broader project delivery team and vertical team alignment. The following roles and responsibilities are provided within the context of this phase of the study.

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR:** The non-federal sponsor continues to act as the primary external champion for the project, providing formal letters of support, communicating with stakeholders, and ready to confirm their partnership obligations and support senior leaders and external agencies.

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Actively manages the report's passage through the final review stages. The project manager coordinates responses to requests for information, facilitates communication between the

project team and headquarters reviewers, and tracks the report's status, ensuring there are no avoidable administrative delays.

**PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM:** The technical leads of the project delivery team serve as the deep subject matter experts for the project. Their role is to be highly responsive to specific, technical requests for information, providing clear, concise justifications for the technical and planning decisions made in the report.

**COMMAND INTEGRATION ELEMENT:** The Command Integration Element chief will serve as the lead for supporting the transmittal and final processing of the study with the relevant vertical team functions.

**VERTICAL TEAM:** The vertical team will advocate for the report within their respective functional channels at the Division and Headquarters. They help socialize the report, defend its integrity, and provide the internal validation needed to secure senior leader endorsements.

**DECISION MAKER:** This role is sequential and involves two products:

**FINAL FEASIBILITY REPORT:** The District Commander serves as the Transmittal Authority for the final feasibility report package. Their signature on the final feasibility report formally endorses the package and transmits it to Headquarters, certifying that it has been completed in accordance with current laws, agency policies, and is ready to support a Chief's Report.

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** The Chief of Engineers serves as the Final Endorsing Authority. Their signature on the Chief's Report makes the project the official recommendation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and makes it eligible for authorization by Congress.

## PROCESS FLOW & KEY PRODUCTS

The Chief's Report Phase typically spans final months between the final feasibility report package transmittal and the signed Chief's Report. The following process flow is sequential and largely governed by statutory review periods and USACE Headquarters coordination processes. Project delivery teams should coordinate



early with their respective Command Integration Element and Headquarters vertical team to understand current processing timelines and any additional requirements.

### Transmittal of Final Report

The final, District-approved feasibility report is formally transmitted to Headquarters to begin the final actions to support the Chief's Report and associated activities.

Products include:

- ▶ Signed final feasibility report
- ▶ Draft Chief's Report
- ▶ Enterprise Review Summary Report
- ▶ Briefing materials for senior leaders (for example, a project placemat)

### State and Agency Review

A formal 30-day review period where the Governors of affected states and other interested federal agencies (and Tribes) provide their official comments on the final recommendation (Chief's Report).

Products include:

- ▶ Draft Chief's Report
- ▶ State and agency review letters to state and other federal agencies
- ▶ State and agency review comment responses

### Headquarters Policy Assessment

Concurrent with the state and agency, Headquarters offices (including Planning and Policy, Engineering and Construction, Real Estate, Office of Counsel) conduct their final policy and legal compliance assessment to ensure the recommendations from the final feasibility report are sufficient to be carried forward in the Chief's Report, or identify if alterations to the recommendation (to be reflected in the final Chief's Report) may need to be considered by the Chief. The policy assessment will inform further decision-making, including the Chief's Report. The District is typically not expected to respond to the assessment; however, they may provide responses if they choose to do so. No modifications to the feasibility report are expected.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Policy assessment documentation

### Finalize Chief's Report

The formal, summary-style Chief of Engineers Report is finalized, summarizing the study and making the official recommendation for the Chief's signature. The Headquarters team makes any final, required edits to the draft Chief's Report based on the Headquarters policy assessment and state and agency reviews and also finalizes the Documentation of Review Findings to summarize the completion of all reviews.

Products produced (or updated) include:

- ▶ Updates to Chief's Report based on any changes required from State and agency review and Headquarters policy assessment
- ▶ Documentation of Review Findings

### Final Briefings and Chief's Report Signature

The District Commander and other USACE Senior leaders brief the Chief of Engineers on the recommendation(s) and findings. The Chief's Report package will be routed by the Command Integration Element for the Chief's consideration. Upon concurrence, the Chief signs the Chief's Report, making it the official position of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. An additional pre-brief may be required to the DCG-CEO, which typically occurs after state and agency review and within 30 days of the final briefing to the Chief. The Command Integration Element will be responsible for ensuring the required briefings are scheduled and protocols followed.

Products include:

- ▶ Signed Chief's Report
- ▶ Coordination Documentation
- ▶ Congressional Notification Letters



» Levee and floodgate inspection

### Finalize NEPA Documentation

Following the signing of the Chief's Report, the final step of the feasibility phase of project development is to formally close out the NEPA process. After receiving final policy clearance from OASA(CW) and observing any required waiting periods, the final environmental decision document can be signed. If a Finding of No Significant Impact is to be signed for an Environmental Assessment, the ASA(CW) typically delegates this to the District Commander, but this should be confirmed on a case-by-case basis. If a Record of Decision is to be signed for an Environmental Impact Statement, these are usually signed by the ASA(CW). The signing of this document represents the final, legally binding conclusion of the environmental analysis for the feasibility study.

Products include:

- Signed Finding of No Significant Impact or Record of Decision

### Records Management

All products should be archived in the project files for future reference during pre-construction engineering and design and construction phases.

The final feasibility report should be posted to the District website.

The final Chief's Report, after transmittal to Congress, will be posted to the public-facing Planning Community Toolbox.





## BEYOND THE CHIEF'S REPORT



» Dune grass planted to help strengthen the resiliency of coastal storm risk reduction as part of the beach renourishment after Hurricane Sandy

The signed Chief's Report is a major milestone, but not the end of the process for the recommended project as both authorization and appropriation are required for further action. The District's role shifts to supporting Congressional authorization and appropriations efforts, coordinating with HQUSACE Office of Legislative and Tribal Affairs, and maintaining sponsor engagement.

### AUTHORIZATION

- ▶ The Chief's Report is transmitted simultaneously to OASA(CW) and Congress for consideration
- ▶ Congress must authorize the project (typically through a biennial Water Resources Development Act)
- ▶ Authorization, while not a given, typically takes between one and four years, depending on legislative cycles

- ▶ The District, Division, and Headquarters will support Congressional inquiries and hearings in accordance with guidance provided by OASA(CW)

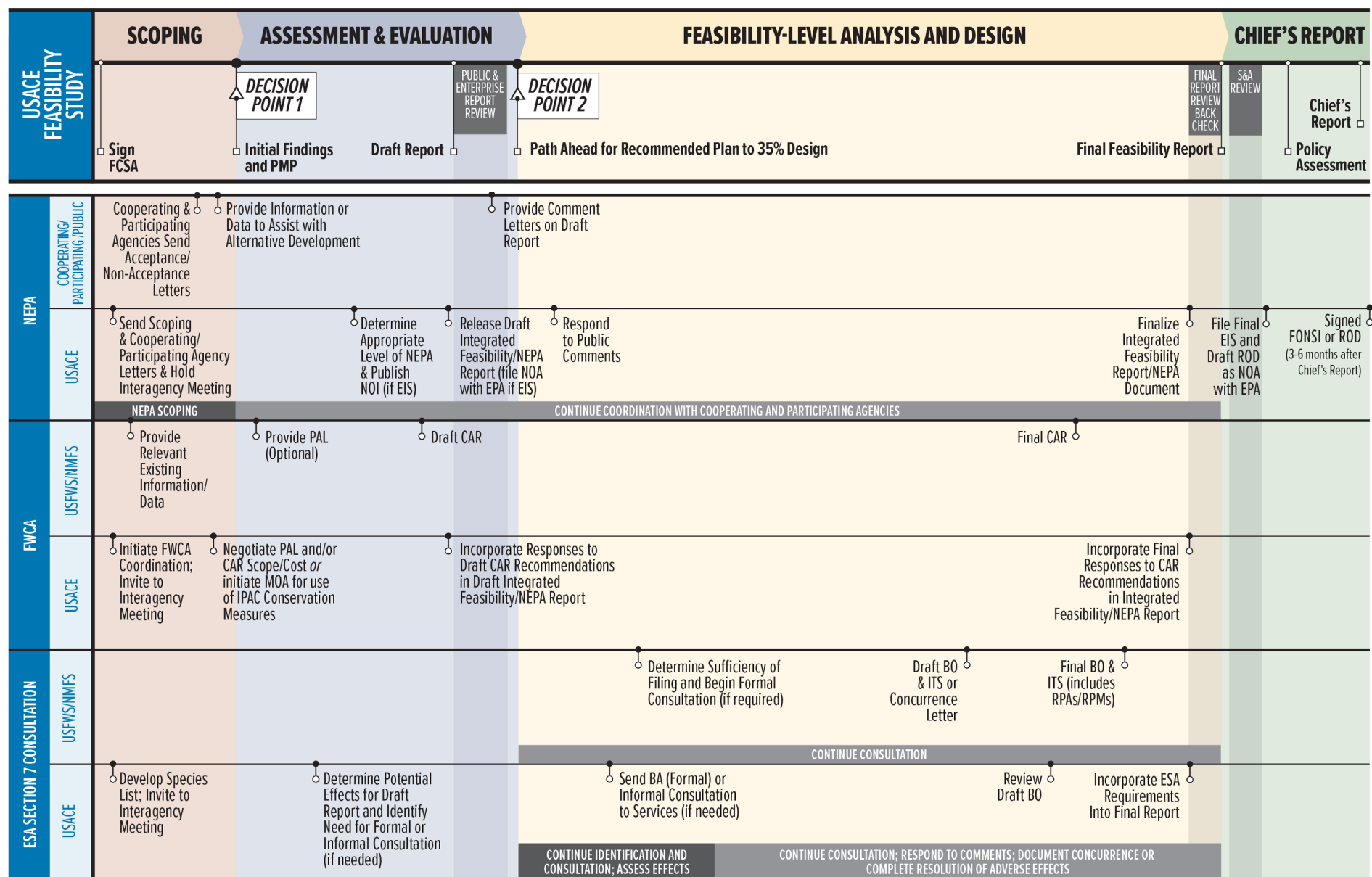
### APPROPRIATIONS

- ▶ Appropriations (project funding) typically occur through annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations bills
- ▶ Congress must appropriate funds to USACE for the project's continued pre-construction engineering and design phase and for the project's construction phase
- ▶ Competition for federal funding is intense; strong Congressional support is critical



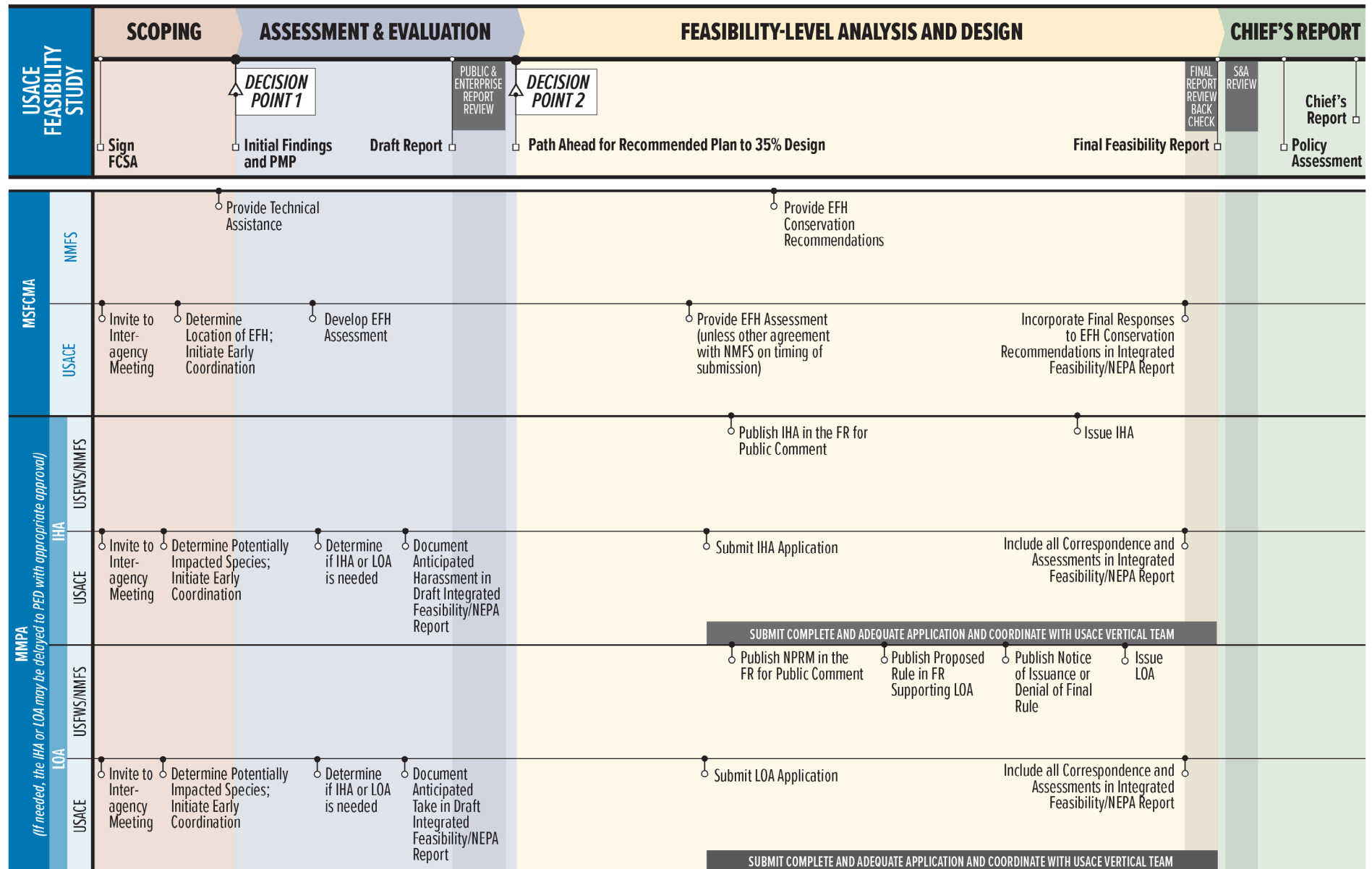


# RECOMMENDED TIMELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS (1 OF 3)



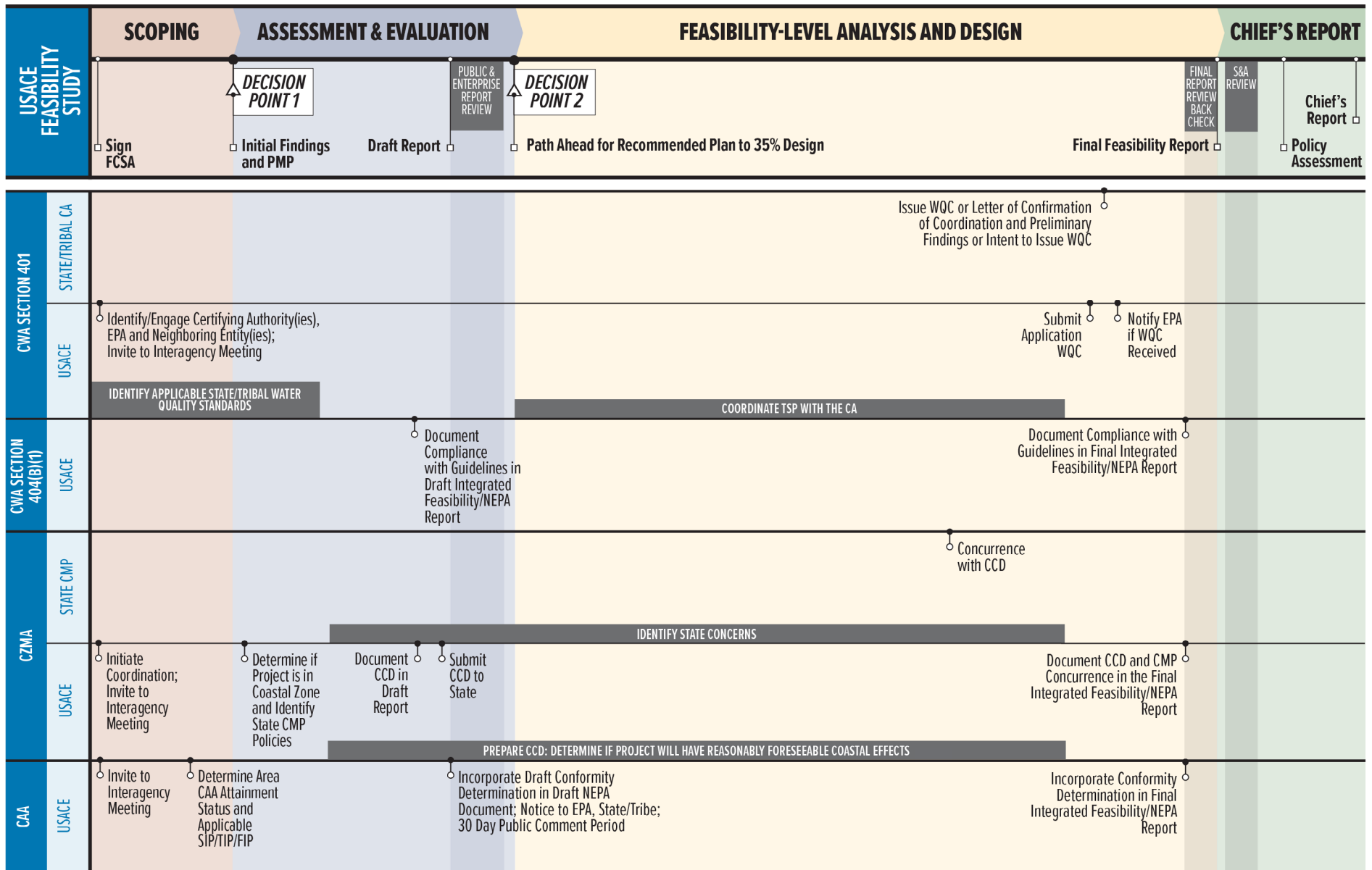


## RECOMMENDED TIMELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS (2 OF 3)





## RECOMMENDED TIMELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS (3 OF 3)







## TIMELINE ACRONYMS

Listed below are the acronyms used in the recommended timelines shown on pages 54-56.

- ▶ **BA** – Biological Assessment
- ▶ **BO** – Biological Opinion
- ▶ **CA** – Certifying Authority
- ▶ **CAA** – Clean Air Act
- ▶ **CAR** – Coordination Act Report
- ▶ **CCD** – Coastal Consistency Determination
- ▶ **CMP** – Coastal Management Program
- ▶ **CZMA** – Coastal Zone Management Act
- ▶ **EFH** – Essential Fish Habitat
- ▶ **EIS** – Environmental Impact Statement
- ▶ **EPA** – Environmental Protection Agency
- ▶ **ESA** – Endangered Species Act
- ▶ **FIP** – Federal Implementation Plan
- ▶ **FONSI** – Findings Of No Significant Impact
- ▶ **FR** – Federal Register
- ▶ **FWCA** – Fish And Wildlife Coordination Act
- ▶ **IHA** – Incidental Harassment Authorization
- ▶ **IPAC** – Information For Planning And Conservation (Usfws)
- ▶ **ITS** – Incidental Take Statement
- ▶ **LOA** – Letter Of Authorization
- ▶ **MMPA** – Marine Mammal Protection Act
- ▶ **MSFCMA** – Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation And Management Act
- ▶ **NEPA** – National Environmental Policy Act
- ▶ **NMFS** – National Marine Fisheries Service
- ▶ **NOA** – Notice Of Availability
- ▶ **NPRM** – Notice Of Proposed Rulemaking
- ▶ **PAL** – Planning Aid Letter
- ▶ **PED** – Preconstruction Engineering & Design
- ▶ **PMP** – Project Management Plan
- ▶ **ROD** – Record Of Decision
- ▶ **RPA** – Reasonable And Prudent Alternative
- ▶ **RPM** – Reasonable And Prudent Measure
- ▶ **SIP** – State Implementation Plan
- ▶ **TIP** – Tribal Implementation Plan
- ▶ **TSP** – Tentatively Selected Plan
- ▶ **USACE** – Us Army Corps Of Engineers
- ▶ **USFWS** – Us Fish And Wildlife Service
- ▶ **WQC** – Water Quality Certificate



# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Although these resources and guides were developed prior to adoption of the RAPID feasibility study framework, the core planning process and engagement with the non-federal sponsor, federal agencies, states, tribes, and stakeholders remains fundamentally the same. Additional resources for feasibility study execution can be found on the USACE Planning Community Toolbox at <https://planning.erdc.dren.mil/toolbox/index.cfm>.

## USACE FEASIBILITY STUDIES & PLANNING

### *Partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Guide for Communities, Local Governments, States, Tribes, and Non-Governmental Organizations (2019)*

Partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A Guide for Communities, Local Governments, States, Tribes, and Non-Governmental Organizations provides potential sponsors with information on the programs and processes available for non-federal partners and USACE representatives to work together to address the Nation's water resources problems. The Guide includes an overview of the USACE Civil Works Program and describes how USACE can work with local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies and other non-federal partners on activities ranging from technical services and advice to planning and constructing water resources projects.

### *Planning Primer (1997)*

The Planning Primer is a condensed version of the USACE Planning Manual. It is an introduction to planning and how it is done using the six-step planning process for those who have no formal training in planning.

### *SMART Planning Feasibility Studies: A Guide to Coordination and Engagement with the Services (2015)*

This guide was developed through a collaboration between USACE, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA Fisheries. The Guide provides an overview of the SMART Planning process and demonstrates how key environmental coordination and compliance activities fit into that process. The Guide highlights opportunities for engagement and coordination at all stages of a planning study, re-emphasizing the need for early coordination.

### *Scoping Guide for Civil Works Planning Studies (2023)*

This guide highlights some of the key procedures, processes, and guidance that a study team should use during the initial scoping phase of a study, which is generally the first 90 to 120 days from the execution of the Feasibility Cost Share Agreement. It especially highlights best practices for collaboration during initial scoping, which is critical for a study's success during this fast-paced timeframe when the foundation of the study is being developed. It also outlines best practices for confirming, refining, and adjusting the scope throughout the study. The guide does not discuss the process required in law for National Environmental Policy Act scoping.

### *Planning a Risk Informed Planning Charrette: The Charrette Handbook (2024)*

A charrette is a structured, collaborative session in which a group comes together to develop a solution to a problem. The Planning Charrette Handbook provides additional details and information for study teams undertaking a planning charrette and the support team that will be assisting them.



## POLICIES & GUIDANCE

### Guidance Memoranda

#### *Interim Federal Interest Determination (FID) Guidance (2026)*

This interim guidance clarifies how the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (OASACW) coordinates with USACE through the RAPID feasibility framework on Federal Interest Determinations and preliminary study scoping efforts. It builds on the 14 “Build Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” documents issued in February 2026 by Secretary Telle, specifically “Realignment of the Investigation Phase and Federal Interest Determination to Ensure Effective Use of Federal Resources,” and is intended to facilitate engagement among OASACW, Headquarters, and the Divisions while final guidance is developed.

#### *Realignment of the Investigation Phase and Federal interest Determination to Ensure Effective Use of Federal Resources (2026)*

The purpose of this memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works is to provide policy direction on the Civil Works investigation phase, inclusive of Preconstruction Engineering and Design, to optimize U.S. Army Corps of Engineers resources, while capitalizing on authorities, as well as non-Federal partner and contractor capabilities to propel building water resources infrastructure that benefits Americans.

### Engineer Regulations

#### *Engineer Regulation 1105-2-103: Policy for Conducting Civil Works Planning Studies*

This regulation provides overall direction by which USACE formulates, evaluates, and recommends projects for implementation and other actions to address water resources problems through the Army Civil Works program. The planning process must address the Nation’s water resources needs in a systems context and seek to identify innovative alternatives for application across the full range of the USACE programs and authorities. In parallel with the development of these important planning concepts, this regulation is also intended to be useful for those outside of the USACE (or non-federal partners) authorized to develop water resources projects.

#### *Engineer Regulation 1165-2-217: Civil Works Quality and Review Policy*

This engineer regulation establishes policy and procedures for a comprehensive accountable review strategy for Civil Works by providing a seamless process for review of all projects throughout the lifecycle. This regulation will ensure the quality and credibility of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decisions, implementation, and other work products. It reinforces that quality and comprehensive review are equal to cost and schedule compliance. This regulation presents a framework for establishing the appropriate level of review, including the level of independence from production and the detailed requirements to accomplish this, including documentation and dissemination.

#### *Engineer Regulation 1110-2-1150: Engineering and Design for Civil Works Program*

This regulation defines engineering responsibilities, requirements, and procedures during the design, construction, and operations phases.

#### *Engineer Regulation 1110-2-1302: Civil Works Cost Engineering*

This engineer regulation provides policy, guidance, and procedures for cost engineering responsibilities for all Civil Works projects assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

#### *Engineer Regulation 5-1-11: USACE Business Process*

This regulation establishes policy and doctrine to accomplish all work performed by USACE.