FRM-PCX Webinar Series #1: POOCs and FWOP
Planning CoP Webinar
April 11, 2019
Q&A Session

This webinar provided an overview of common challenges associated with the first two steps of the planning process for Flood Risk Management (FRM) studies. Problems, Opportunities, Objectives, and Constraints (POOCs) and forecasting the Future Without Project condition (FWOP) are foundational steps to plan formulation and must be re-visited throughout the study to ensure success. The webinar was presented by Mr. Nicholas Applegate (National Technical Specialist, FRM Planning Center of Expertise) and Jerry Fuentes (Regional Technical Specialist, Sacramento District). This is the first in a series of webinars from the FRM Planning Center of Expertise (FRM-PCX) focused on helping project delivery teams (PDTs) with current and relevant challenges on their FRM Planning studies by providing tips, tools, and lessons learned.

This summary of the Question / Answer session of the webinar is not a transcription; questions and responses have been edited and reordered for clarity.

Can you share examples of what makes a strong floodplain management plan?

What I consider to be a strong plan is one that has taken a look at numerous eventualities, not just a single flooding scenario. Another characteristic of a strong floodplain management plan is to consider the big picture – e.g., are evacuation plans sufficient to handle the amount of traffic in any given emergency; if not, how can they be improved? Good floodplain management is also about managing development within the floodplain wisely.

Can you expand on why a constraint is not really a constraint if it precludes us from identifying the National Economic Development (NED) plan? *(See presentation slide 26)*

The Corps, to meet its statutory requirements, *must* identify a NED plan, although it doesn't necessarily have to be the recommended plan. If something is precluding you from identifying the NED plan, the issue needs to be overcome or addressed. For example, eliminating certain solutions because there is a lack of sponsor support for them is not appropriate – local support is not one of the criteria for identifying the NED plan.

Can a team accept more risk if you know the risk will be re-assessed at a specific point in the future?

This is not a decision for any one person; it's a good discussion for an in-progress review (IPR) or a milestone meeting. For example, after a team identifies and documents a specific risk in the risk register, the risk management strategy may be to reassess it in the future, identifying the triggers for reassessing that risk.

How do we incorporate climate variability for FWOP for inland climate change?

The tools made available by the Climate Preparedness and Resilience (CPR) CoP should be used: the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (VA); USACE Climate Hydrology Assessment Tool; USACE Nonstationarity Detection Tool; and USACE Screening-Level Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment at the Watershed-Scale Tool. Links to these tools are available on the Planning Community Toolbox. Those aren't your only options, but using other tools and/or models should be coordinated with the CPR CoP. The bottom line is that we need show how our project performs over the project life in an uncertain future. Also, we want to ensure that our plan selection would not change under different future conditions. For sea level change (SLC) in particular, the whole point is to bracket the range of project performance over time between the high and low SLC curves.

Are there certain known future actions that will impact the project life scenarios or period of analysis, particularly with respect to sea level change or climate change (i.e., storm intensity/frequency) – for example, scheduled levee lifts or raises?

Sea level change estimates go out 100 years, and so is something to consider in the project life scenarios. It doesn't impact the period of analysis (which will generally be 50 years), but you will have to document the robustness of your project over time. Scheduled levee lifts should not impact your period of analysis, but will impact how you need to model your with-project future conditions in the economic model.

Can you provide an example of when the period of analysis would not be 50 years?

If we're looking at an alternative with a reservoir or dam, we have often used a 100-year period of analysis for the evaluation. In the dam safety world, that's the standard period of analysis. However, no matter what the project purpose, you should be thinking beyond the period of analysis (e.g., given projected sea level change you will need to discuss robustness and adaptive capacity of your project over time). PL 84-99 evaluations also typically use a shorter period of analysis.