

# NAVIGATING POLICY AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW

## (REVIEW MANAGER SOP WEBINAR PART 2)

Planning Community of Practice Webinar  
29 May 2025

Presenters:

Judy McCrea (OWPR)

Kendall Zaborowski (OWPR)

Chris Bouquot (OWPR)

Dan Hughes (NWD / POD RIT)

Jennifer Ryan (MVD)



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# WEBINAR BREAKDOWN

February 13

Review Manager SOP Contents

May 29

1. Evolution of P&LCR roles and responsibilities

2. Dos and Don'ts - Study initiation → Final report submittal

3. MSC review manager perspective

July 24

1. Dos and Don'ts – Final report review → Chief's Report

2. Additional best practices / pitfalls

3. MSC review manager perspective





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# WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU? (PICK ONLY ONE)

**1**

Review  
manager  
(past or  
present)

**2**

Policy Review  
team member  
(but never  
been RM)

**3**

I respond to  
Policy Review  
comments

**4**

I'm involved in  
other tasks in  
the RM SOP  
(outside of 1-3)

**5**

I don't know  
(yet) how the  
SOP is  
relevant to me



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# PRESENTERS AND ROLES

4

MAY 29

**Judy McCrea**  
Plan Formulation  
Reviewer  
Office of Water  
Project Review



**Kendall  
Zaborowski**  
Plan Formulation  
Reviewer  
Office of Water  
Project Review



**Chris Bouquot**  
Economics  
Reviewer  
Office of Water  
Project Review



**Dan Hughes**  
Senior Planner  
NWD / POD  
Regional  
Integration Team



**Jennifer Ryan**  
Senior  
Archaeologist &  
Tribal Liaison  
Mississippi Valley  
Division

JULY 24



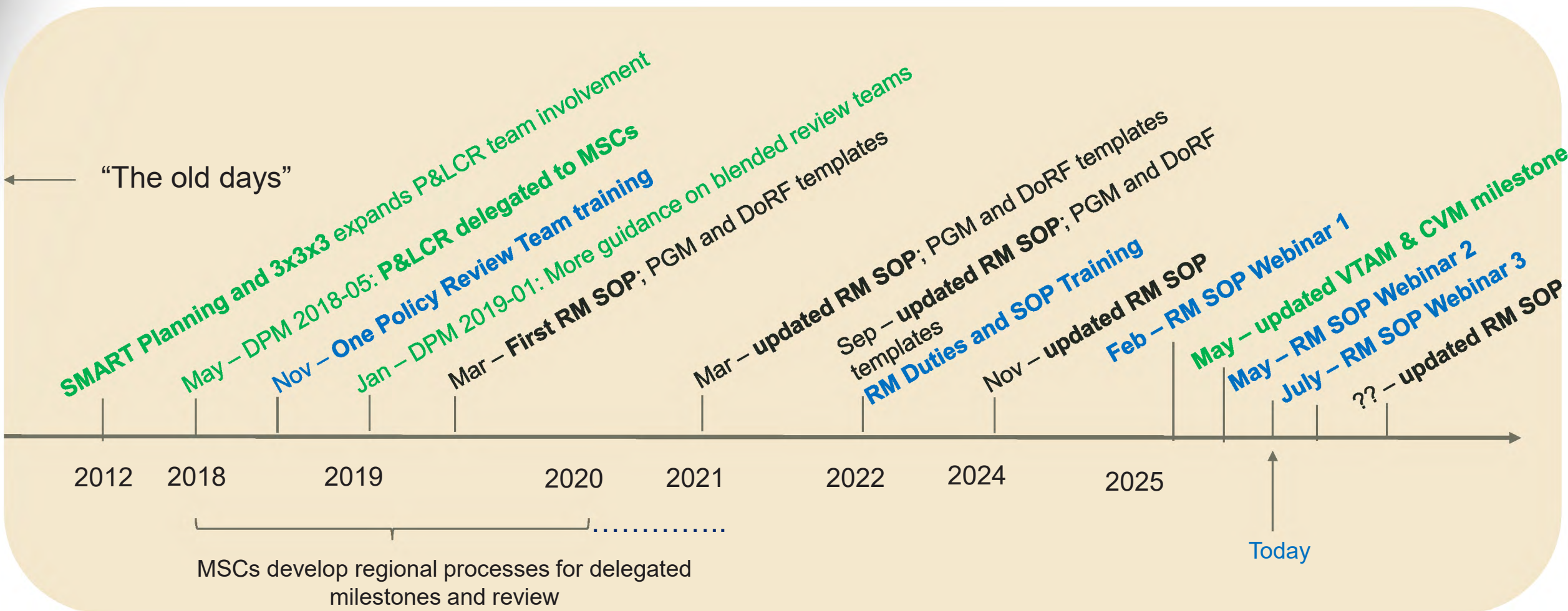


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# EVOLUTION OF POLICY REVIEW TEAMS AND ENGAGEMENT





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# 1 - FORMATION OF THE P&LCR TEAM

Follows EP 1105-2-61, Section 11-2

This slide is from the  
Feb 13 PCoP webinar

The MSC/Division Chief of Planning and the HQ Chief of Office of OWPR will collaborate to identify and endorse a Review Manager. HQ Chief of OWPR will have the ultimate decision as to selection of the Review Manager





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# 1 - FORMATION OF THE P&LCR TEAM

7

## MSCs... Do:

1. **Coordinate assignments early** between MSC Planning Chief and OWPR Chief
2. **Request an OWPR advisor** if there are no OWPR staff assigned as reviewers
3. **Notify RITs and District about assignments** so they can update Project Monitor and review plan

**Don't assign a P&LCR team member *without* buy in from OWPR Chief (especially RM)**



# 1 - FORMATION OF THE P&LCR TEAM

Questions about who does  
what?

Refer to Attachment B...  
(will need to update for Command Validation Milestone)

## ATTACHMENT B: FEASIBILITY STUDY VERTICAL TEAM COORDINATION: KEY HQ AND MSC TASKS

Task	Primary Responsibility	Supported by	Timeline
<b>ASSIGNING POLICY AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW TEAM</b>			
Notify MSC of need for Review Team (RT)	District		As early as practicable; NLT when FCSA signed
Notify respective functional team leads of need for RT	OWPR Chief & MSC P&P Chief		
Coordinate to establish RT based on needs of study	HQ & MSC Functional team leads, including OWPR Chief and MSC P&P Chief		As early as practicable; within 30 days of FCSA signed
Approve RT and select RM, provide names to RIT	OWPR Chief & MSC Chief P&P		
Notification of RT of review responsibilities and projected timeline; document RT in the District Review Plan.	District		Identification of the team should occur within the first month of the study, other activities should occur as early as practicable, NLT AMM
Enter RT in Project Monitor	RIT		As early as practicable, NLT draft report release
<b>THROUGHOUT STUDY</b>			
Serve as District/Study POC	District Planning Chief		





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# 1 - FORMATION OF THE P&LCR TEAM

9

## **PDTs... Do:**

- 1. Include the P&LCR team in the review plan roster and update as needed...**
- 2. ... and use the review plan's roster when sending invitations to major meetings**

**Don't assume that other people will forward invites to the right people (e.g., entire P&LCR team).**





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# 1 - FORMATION OF THE P&LCR TEAM

## P&LCR Team do's:

### Review managers –

1. Send a **welcome message** to the P&LCR team when it is formed
2. Consider **tools to facilitate communication with your team** (email template, DLL, and/or MS Teams site).

### RMs and Reviewers –

3. Create / maintain a **portfolio dashboard of your review assignments**, including team members, next milestone, study status







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# REVIEW PORTFOLIO DASHBOARD EXAMPLE

11

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
1	MSC	District	Study Name	MSC POC	RM	PF	P&LCR team	Last Milestone/Date	Next Milestone/Date	Issues/Potential Concerns/Status	
7	SAD	SAM	Choctawhatchee	Rebecca Johnson (all ER)	<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea	(Env), Mike Wolz (Eng), Lee Danley (Cost), Rebecca Johnson (Ops), Lynn Hoerner (RE), Matt Donaldson (OC), Chanel Mueller (Climate)	FCSA / Sept 2024	AMM / May 2025 (unscheduled)		
8	NAD		City of Boston CSRM		<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea		AMM / Feb 2023	TSP / Jan 26 - Feb 6 2026 ; Draft Report / April 2026	NFS is City of Boston	fr
9	SWD		Clear Creek FRM PACR			OWPR advisor - McCrea					
10	SWT	SWD	Estelline Springs Disposition		Tyler Henry	McCrea		Report of Findings			
11	SAD	SAM	Holden Beach/Brunswick County Beaches	Borer?	<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea	Max Millstein, Higgins, Mike Wolz, Vivian Davis, Nick Applegate, Debby Scerno, RE (??); E&C John Feller, Scott Murphy (OC);	AMM / Jan 2022	Terminating March 2025	3x3 exception - 11 month extension plus 1 year funding delays	
12	POD	POH	Honolulu Harbor	Norris	<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea			TSP		f
13	SPD	SPL	Imperial Streams, Salton Sea basin wide	Conn	Cynthia Fowler	McCrea	Hallisy, Fowler, Hansberry, O'Brien, Ly, Ryan Taylor	AMM 14, 23 June, and 23 Aug 2023	Oct-26		
14	SPD	SPL	Imperial Streams, Salton Sea Early Implementation Project	Conn	Mike Hallisy	McCrea			Apr-26		
15	LRD	LRL	Kentucky River, Beattyville (FRM)	Andrea Carson	Hank Jarboe	McCrea	Jarboe (climate), Boxold, Patricia; Bright, Tonya; Brown, Thomas; Emery, Erich B; Farrell, Paul; Higgins, Jamie; Dena Abou, Jason M CIV	ADM / Jan 2025	Final Report / 23 May 2025		
16	LRD		Kentucky River FRM	Andrea Carson	Dena Abou-El-Seoud	McCrea	Dena Abou-El-Seoud Economics, Judy McCrea Plan Formulation, Mike Abernathy Real Estate, Susanne Herald Office of	AMM 24 April 2025	TSP date pending 3x3 APR		fr
17	SPD	SPL	LACDA Disposition Study	Conn	<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea	Haberer, Hallisy, Bigornia, Allegier, Hansberry, Ryan Taylor, Delabarre	final approved report submitted to HQ 2 July 2024			
18	NWD	NWD	Lower Missouri Flood Risk	Weber	<b>McCrea</b>	McCrea	Topi, Granat/Aaron Quinn, William Otero (w/Ross Hiner for Dam Safety and Glen Bellow for levee	TSP 2 / 24 April 2025	Draft Report / 16 June 2025	draft report 15 June 2025 ; 17 Oct 25 ADM	



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**What's the best way to figure out who's on your study's P&LCR team?**

1. Call the OWPR Chief
2. Look in the review plan
3. Ask the review manager
4. Consult Project Monitor
5. Ask the RIT Planner





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### BOTTOM LINE:

All of these sources are a good starting point, but due to turnover, assignments should be confirmed w/the P&LCR team members

## What's the best way to figure out who's on your study's P&LCR team?

1. Call the OWPR Chief... typically, only do this if you are an MSC Planning Chief
2. Look in the review plan... but double check that the PDT has been updating rosters
3. Ask the review manager... they'd better know! But he/she should also confirm w/P&LCR team
4. Consult Project Monitor... if you have access – but confirm with RM/RIT/OWPR/MSC. Studies prior to draft report may be missing.
5. Ask my RIT Planner... who is going to consult Project Monitor and probably check with RM/OWPR/MSC

# CHATBOX CHECK



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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

P&LCR kickoff meeting with PDT

P&LCR team responsible for reviewing cost, schedule, and scope established in Vertical Team Alignment Memo (VTAM)

Review Manager should work with the P&LCR team to identify policy issues that may arise during the study



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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

16

### PDTs/Districts... Do:

1. Include the P&LCR team in early study activities
  - e.g., kickoff meetings, charettes, and/or a dedicated VT coordination meeting
2. Prior to AMM and TSP milestones, have **at least one readiness/preparation IPR** that includes the P&LCR team.
3. **Coordinate often** with the review team – especially if there are delays or changes to the schedule.





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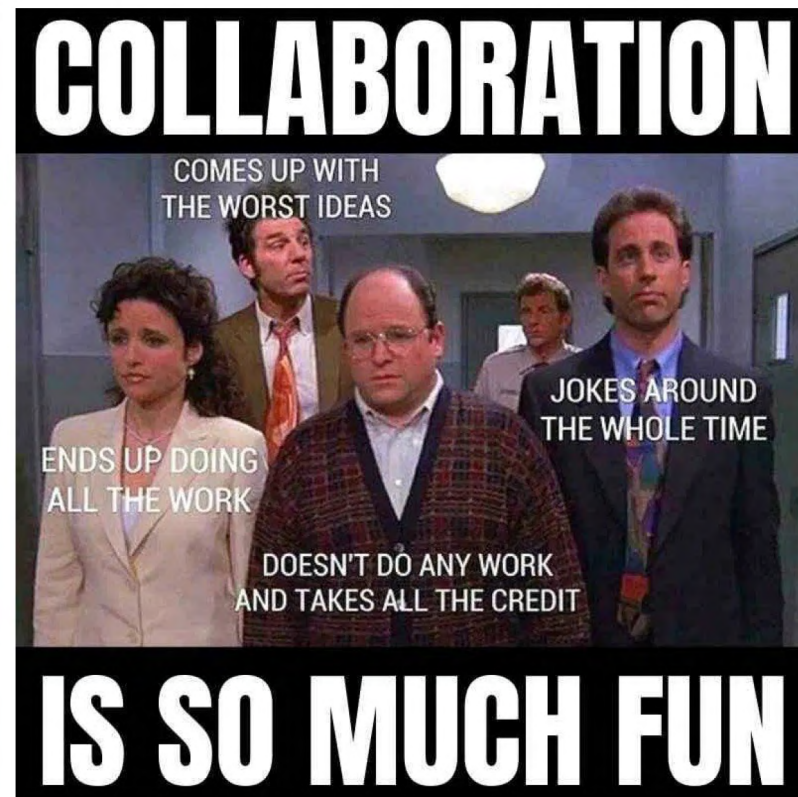
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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

17

### PDTs/Districts...

1. **Don't wait until you're approaching a milestone** before engaging the P&LCR team for the first time
2. **Don't provide milestone RAHs less than one week before milestones.**
  - ✓ If you have a pre-meeting IPR specifically to discuss RAHs, provide at least couple of days in advance.
3. **Don't sign the milestone MFR w/o allowing participants to review the draft MFR.**







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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

18

### Report Summary Best Practices

- ✓ PDTs – use the required template
  - ✓ 10-15 pages max
- ✓ Review teams – give PDTs a heads up if they stray from the template
  - ✓ Better to fix now vs at final report / end of study



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### FEASIBILITY REPORT SUMMARY FORMAT AND CONTENT GUIDE

Version 1.0 – November 2021



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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

19

### Review manager... Do:

1. **Establish rapport** with the MSC, ATR team, project manager & technical leads.
  - ✓ Hold an initial meeting with the project manager / lead planner to go over issues that may need early P&LCR input
  - ✓ Reach out to the MSC main POC on the study (e.g., DST lead) and ATR lead
  - ✓ Ask your P&LCR team members to reach out to their counterparts (PDT / MSC / ATR).
2. **Be proactive about getting study status** when you haven't heard anything in a while (use your portfolio dashboard)



# 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

**Review manager... Prior to AMM/TSP milestones, Do:**

## 1. Check in with your P&LCR team

- ✓ Email, Teams chat, or meeting

## 2. Review the Study Issue Checklists

- ✓ Discuss items of concern w/review team and District
- ✓ Make sure the mission-line-specific checklists are submitted

Study Issue Checklist  
Sept 2022

### BEFORE USING CHECKLIST, FIRST READ THE CHECKLIST INTRODUCTION (ADD LINK)

(Insert Name of Study)	(Date)				
Pre-Alternatives Milestone Meeting Checklist	Y	N	N/A	Pending	Comments
<b>General Issues</b>					
1. Has the vertical team aligned on the scope, budget, and schedule of the study?		*			
2. Has a Project Management Plan with study scope and schedule been developed by an interdisciplinary PDT, including the NFS?		*			
3. Has the team coordinated with the appropriate Planning Center of Expertise and/or the Risk Management Center?		*			
4. Has the team developed a Review Plan? Has the team submitted the review plan to the appropriate PCX for endorsement to the MSC for approval?		*			
5. For studies requiring an IEPR, has the study team contacted the Review Management Organization to inform them of the need for an IEPR?		*			
6. Are the proposed objectives and geographic scope of the study consistent with the study authorizing language?		*			
7. Has the team described the future without project setting (at a minimum a qualitative description of FWOP condition) for the study and key uncertainties related to that condition?		*			
8. Are problems/needs, opportunities, objectives, and constraints clearly defined and are they consistent with NEPA purpose and need?		*			
9. Do any of the alternatives include measures in units of the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) that are not permitted by one of the exceptions in CBRA?	*				
10. Has the team developed a formulation strategy in accordance with the 5 January 2021 ASA(CW) Policy Directive-Comprehensive Documentation of Benefits in Decision Document?		*			
11. As part of scoping, has the team developed decision criteria, unique questions, key uncertainties, as per Planning Manual Part 2, in preparation for		*			





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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

21

### MSCs... Do:

1. **Remember non-MSC P&LCR team members** when preparing to **prebrief MSC decisionmakers** prior to IPRs and milestones
2. **Include P&LCR team when developing the VTAM**, to facilitate eventual vertical alignment.
  - ✓ **Allow ample time to review the VTAM.** (1-2 wks depending on level of precoordination w/review team)



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441 G STREET, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20314-1000

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07-May-2025

#### MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS (MSC)

SUBJECT: Feasibility Study Vertical Team Alignment and Command Validation

##### 1. References

- a. Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) (ASA(CW)) Memorandum, Implementation Guidance for Section 1001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014, Vertical Integration and Acceleration of Studies as amended by Section 1330(b) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2018, 8 March 2019
- b. ASA(CW) Memorandum, Information for the Sponsor at the Agency Decision Milestone (ADM) for Feasibility Studies, 28 March 2016
- c. CECW Memorandum, Subject: Vertical Team Alignment Memorandum (VTAM) Guidance, 29 July 2022
- d. Civil Works Program Development Guidance, published annually
- e. Engineer Pamphlet (EP) 1105-2-58, Continuing Authorities Program, 1 March 2019
- f. EP 1105-2-61, Feasibility and Post-Authorization Study Procedures and Report Processing Requirements, 1 July 2023
- g. EP 1105-2-64, Tribal Partnership Program, 22 February 2024
- h. Engineer Regulation (ER) 1105-2-102, Watershed Studies, 1 April 2022

##### 2. Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the process and expectations for ensuring Command oversight and Vertical Team alignment in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) feasibility studies. This memorandum establishes the Command Validation Milestone and streamlines the requirements for the Vertical Team Alignment Memorandum. These changes will reinforce vertical alignment throughout the feasibility study process.



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## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

22

### VTAM review - What does vertical team alignment mean and what happens when there isn't alignment?

c. The ability to execute high quality studies is dependent on development and execution of a study scope that uses the best available information and is documented in a Project Management Plan (PMP). To develop a study scope, a team will develop a risk register, study schedule and funding stream, and PMP, and provide these documents to their vertical team for review and alignment. Expectations are that districts will continue to ensure these actions are satisfied in study development, even though the risk register and PMP are not required VTAM enclosures.

11. Vertical Team Alignment: [The Policy and Legal Compliance Review manager will document here vertical alignment on the study's scope, schedule, and funding stream. This paragraph will also document any non-alignment with the reason for disagreement and why alignment could not be reached.]



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Agency Decision

Memorandum (VTAM)

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h. Engineer Regulation (ER) 1105-2-102, Watershed Studies, 1 April 2022

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**Who is responsible for ensuring the right people are invited to in progress reviews and milestones?**

1. Project Manager
2. RIT Planner
3. Review Manager
4. Lead Planner





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BOTTOM LINE:

ALL OF THE ABOVE are  
responsible –  
Plus anyone else who gets the  
invitation

*Inclusion is a team sport*

**Who is responsible for ensuring the right people get meeting invites for in progress reviews and milestones?**

1. Project Manager – start with the review plan rosters (do the best you can) and only then ask for help forwarding
2. RIT Planner – especially for ASA(CW) coordination
3. Review Manager – especially for P&LCR team members and OWPR Chief
4. Lead Planner – and rest of PDT – make sure your vertical counterparts are included if needed

## 2 - BETWEEN STUDY INITIATION AND TSP

### Everyone... Do:

**Confirm who is on the review team (especially if there are folks on detail or out on leave) as you approach IPRs / milestones / reviews.**

**Don't assume that everyone who needs an IPR/milestone invitation is included.**

- **Meeting organizer** – use review plan rosters to identify who is on the PDT and vertical team
- **Review manager** is responsible for ensuring the entire **P&LCR team** is included, and potentially the **OWPR Chief**
- **Everyone** should check invites proactively and forward as needed

PROJECT NAME Review Plan

#### Policy and Legal Compliance Team Roster

NAME	OFFICE	Role
TBD	TBD	Review Manager
TBD	TBD	TBD
FILL OUT / ADD AS MANY ROWS AS NEEDED		

#### Vertical Team Roster

NAME	OFFICE	Role
TBD	TBD	Regional Integration Team (RIT)
TBD	TBD	RMO Representative
		MSC
FILL OUT / ADD AS MANY ROWS AS NEEDED		

#### IEPR Review Team Roster *[Delete IEPR Roster if IEPR will not be conducted]*

NAME	OFFICE	Role
TBD	TBD	IEPR Manager
TBD	TBD	RMO Representative
FILL OUT / ADD AS MANY ROWS AS NEEDED		

# CHATBOX CHECK



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## 3 - REVIEW OF DRAFT DOCUMENT

Integrated Draft report package will be sent to MSC and RIT within 60 days of Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) milestone

Review Manager will make sure that all P&LCR team members are aware of deadlines and any relevant issues

Review Manager will capture comments in the Project Guidance Memorandum (PGM) and establish an understanding of all comments

Refer to ER 1165-2-217 – Civil Works Review Policy



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# 3 - REVIEW OF DRAFT DOCUMENT

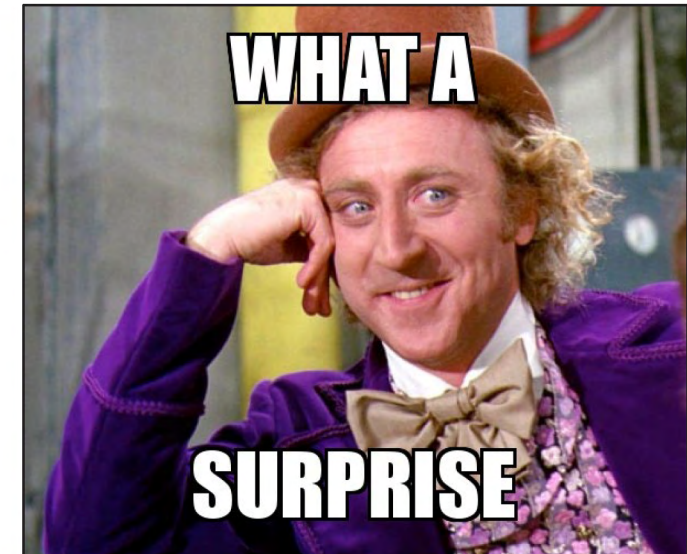
28

Do:

- PDTs/District:
  - Seek approval from OWPR Chief prior to shortening review durations (coordinate through review manager)
  - Ensure you have a complete package before submitting it to the RIT
    - RIT and RM will check for completeness. Review can not start until package is complete
  - Have a kick-off meeting with your PLCR team

Don't:

- PDTs/District:
  - Send a report up cold with no advance notice!





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## 3 - REVIEW OF DRAFT DOCUMENT

### Do:

- RMs:
  - Ensure all comments are in 4-part comment structure
  - Eliminate redundancy and conflicting concerns by consolidating comments
  - Put comments in the appropriate category
  - Allow reviewers a chance to see the PGM before finalizing
  - Have tools to help you (ex: draft intro email)
  - Create an annotated version of the PGM that indicates the author of each comment.

### Don't:

- RMs:
  - Substantially change or remove a comment without discussing with the reviewer
  - Include editorial comments in the PGM
  - Don't assume that all PLCR team members will be able to meet the deadline.





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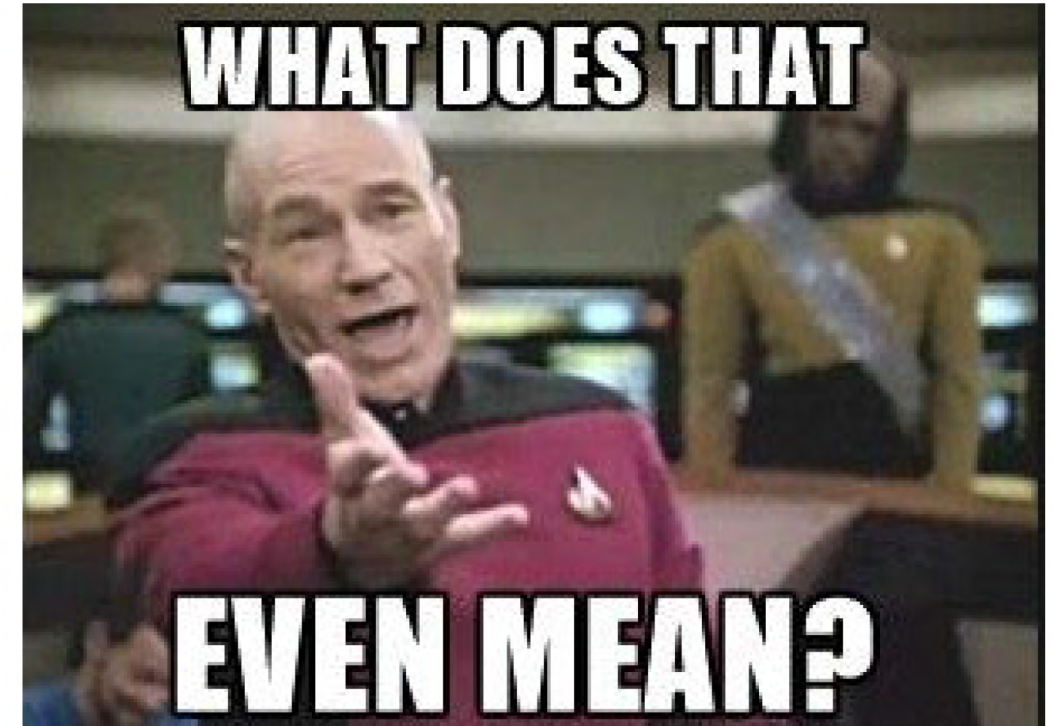


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# DEFINING COMMENT SIGNIFICANCE

30

- **Essentially:**
  - High – could change the recommended plan
  - Medium – could change cost share, costs, consistency, or formulation outside recommendation
  - Low – related to clarity and presentation
  - **YOU DON'T GET TO PICK TWO!**
    - Default to higher





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# 3 - REVIEW OF DRAFT DOCUMENT

31

Do:

- Review team members:
  - Ensure all comments are in 4-part comment structure
  - Spend as much time on providing good, clear solutions as you do providing the concern. Don't be afraid to provide multiple acceptable ways to solve the problem.
  - Reach out to other PLCR team members to discuss issues that overlap disciplines
  - Include the RM on any communications with the PDT

Don't:

- Review team members:
  - Wait to tell the RM you cannot meet the deadline until the deadline!





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**What is the newest planning milestone?**

**Tell us in the chat!**





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# AGENCY DECISION MILESTONE (ADM) -> COMMAND VALIDATION MILESTONE (CVM)

33

**Table 3**

**Key Feasibility Study Tasks (Not all-inclusive)**

Milestone	Task
To be completed before the Command Validation Milestone	Agency Technical Review (ATR) of Draft Feasibility Report / NEPA document including cost estimates
	Public/Agency Review of Draft Feasibility Report / NEPA document, including Government-to-Government consultation.
	Policy and Legal Compliance Review of Draft Feasibility Report / NEPA document completed with comments documented in a Project Guidance Memorandum (PGM)
	Critical or High Significance comments from all reviews compiled, assessed, and actions to resolved determined and documented in a review summary

- As the review manager – not much has changed in terms of responsibilities
- What has changed slightly is the timing –  
*“Timing of the Command Validation Milestone. The Command Validation Milestone meeting will be held within two months of the completion of the concurrent public, technical, and policy and legal compliance review of the draft report.”*
- RM or MSC rep are required attendees for site visits associated with CVMs

# CHATBOX CHECK



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## 4 – BETWEEN DRAFT AND FINAL REPORT

Lead the P&LCR team in working with the RIT, MSC, and PDT to develop a path forward to resolve all comments

Coordinate with Agency Technical Review (ATR) Lead to resolve any conflicts between reviews

Resolution discussions will be summarized by PDT and captured in PGM before Agency Decision Milestone – Review Manager should be included in these discussions

If a comment cannot be resolved, it will be elevated





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## 4 – BETWEEN DRAFT AND FINAL REPORT

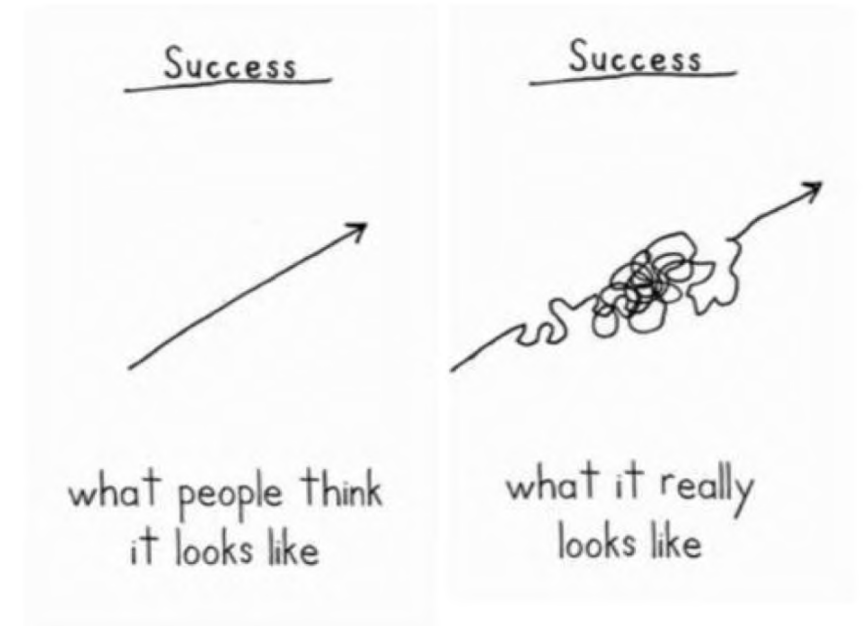
36

### Do:

- Identify a path to resolution of ALL comments.
- Be proactive in elevating outstanding policy issues.
- **Policy exceptions** should be requested as early as possible and always before the ~~Agency Decision Milestone~~ Command Validation Milestone (TBD!).
- Update price level and discount rate information if crossing Fiscal Years.
- If necessary, have IPRs facilitated by the RM to resolve comments.

### Don't:

- Don't present read-ahead material to RM & P&LC RT for a milestone meeting last minute.





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## 5 – DURING COMMAND VALIDATION MILESTONE

The Review Manager will participate in the ADM and discuss P&LCR comments, agreed upon path forward, any risks to scope, schedule, and budget as well as the identified TSP

ADM presentation will be reviewed and coordinated with the P&LCR team

The Review Manager should be able to represent the views of the entire P&LCR team



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# PROJECT PLACEMATS

38

## Background

- ✓ Project Name
- ✓ Vicinity Map
- ✓ Study Authority
- ✓ Study Timeline

## Plan Formulation

- ✓ Problems, Opportunities, Objectives, Constraints
- ✓ Alternatives
- ✓ Evaluation and Decision Criteria
- ✓ Any information important to the plan selection

## Economic, Engineering and Environmental Considerations and Analysis

- ✓ Tribal Consultation

## Tentatively Selected Plan

- ✓ Tentatively Selected Plan/Features & Map
- ✓ Project First Cost, Cost-Sharing
- ✓ O&M costs
- ✓ Benefits
- ✓ Comprehensive Accounting of Benefits
- ✓ Implementation Plan
- ✓ High or significant risks, and risk management strategy
- ✓ Environmental Mitigation
- ✓ Sea Level Change Considerations
- ✓ Trade-off Analysis
- ✓ NEPA Compliance
- ✓ Social Effects
- ✓ Key & Significant Comments received during review as well as path forward





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## 5 – DURING COMMAND VALIDATION MILESTONE

39

### Do:

- RM – Present the high significance comments and how they were resolved.
- RM – present any unresolved comments that need elevating (???).

### Don't:

- Present any unresolved comments that haven't been coordinated in advance.





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## 6 – BETWEEN CVM AND FINAL REPORT

Work with the Vertical Team to assist PDT's timely completion of Final Report based on path forward agreed upon at CVM

PDT will update draft report PGM by adding updated responses (including their final actions and location of related changes in report)

PDT will send updated PGM as part of the Final Report Transmittal Package



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## 6 – BETWEEN CVM AND FINAL REPORT

41

### Do:

- RM – begin drafting the Document of Review Findings (DoRF)
- RM – Use the templates!

### Don't:

- Don't sign the FONSI/ROD with the District or MSC Commanders signature on the Final Report approval.





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# MSC REVIEW MANAGER PERSPECTIVE

Remember that you are  
part of the USACE team  
& final product  
represents USACE

Surprises are rarely  
good

MSC Review Manager  
can be unsupported by  
P&LCR team

Develop a detailed  
schedule to get to the  
CR or DR/M

Check-In meetings with  
PDT, P&LCR team, and  
RIT Planner

Set up meetings with  
the P&LCR team to  
discuss significant  
comments & reconcile  
comments between  
reviewers

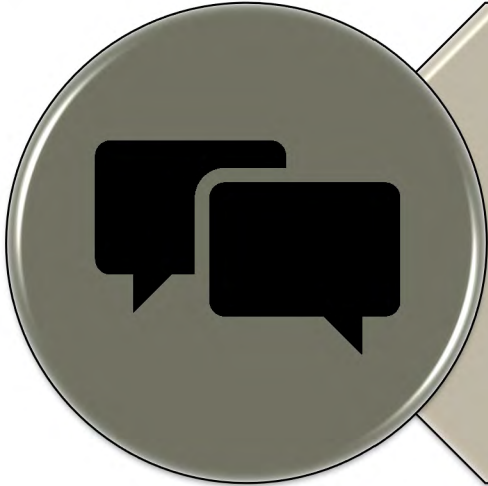


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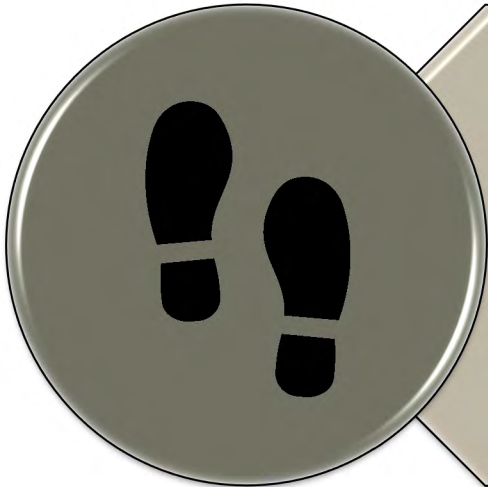


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## WRAPPING UP / IN THE CHAT BOX...



Share something  
you learned today



Identify something  
that needs more  
clarity



# DISCUSSION

