

Q&A: SMART Planning in the Reconnaissance Phase (Planning Bulletin 2014-02)

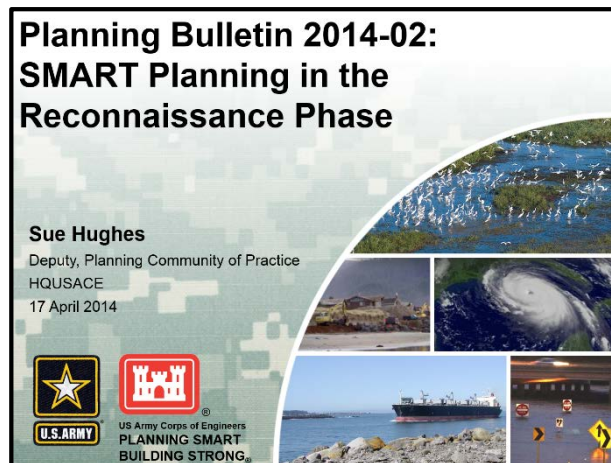
SMART Planning Webinar Series

April 17, 2014

The April 17th webinar, part of a series of information-sharing webinars hosted by the Planning Community of Practice, presented the recently signed Planning Bulletin providing additional guidance to the field on SMART Planning in the Reconnaissance Phase.

Sue Hughes (HQUSACE, PCoP) was joined by Lisa Kiefel (PCoP) for the presentation and questions from the field.

For more information on SMART Planning and the recent PB please visit the Planning Community Toolbox: www.corpsplanning.us.



The questions and responses below are not a direct transcript; they have been reordered and edited for clarity. Additional questions and feedback are always welcome via the Planning Community Toolbox's SMART Guide comment form online at:

<http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=10&Step=1>

Early Coordination with Resource Agencies

Have you talked about early coordination with the resource agencies in the recon phase to improve their understanding of their role?

Absolutely. We encourage that, we recommend that, we included that in the guidance, and we are talking with our colleagues at U.S. Fish and Wildlife and NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service about the importance of initiating coordination (which is different than consultation) early in the process.

Risk-Informed Decision Making

Is risk-informed decision making during the recon to identify areas of uncertainties to be addressed in more detail during the feasibility phase, or should we plan to investigate study uncertainties in the recon?

In general, you are laying the foundation for feasibility. You are identifying the areas of uncertainty so you can appropriately scope your feasibility study to buy-down that uncertainty. You don't need to do that analysis in recon.

Procedural Requirements

Is an approved review plan required in order to initiate the reconnaissance study?

A review plan is not required to initiate the reconnaissance study, but an approved feasibility study review plan is required before signing the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA).

Will the MSC be able to approve the 905(b) before receiving a 3x3x3 exemption approval and or the OWPR memo?

Yes. The 905(b) report is approved by the MSC before the PMP is developed. And the PMP needs to be scoped / developed before you will know the study is expected to be 3x3 compliant or will need an exemption.

Is the PMP approval date for CW040 the date of the 3x3x3 compliance approval from HQ?

No, the Project Management Plan approval date is just that. There is no milestone for the 3x3x3 compliance approval MFR, although the 3x3x3 compliance MFR is required before the FCSA can be signed.

Does the 3-year clock start when the FCSA is signed?

The three year clock starts when the FCSA is signed – and is based on three years of capability funding. The clock does not run without money with it; if you don't receive your funding for six months after the FCSA is signed, the clock isn't running until you have that funding.

If the MSC approves a 3x3x3 compliant Recon and later determines an exemption is needed, is there a 'drop dead date' for when an exemption can be attained?

There is not a drop dead date, but as soon as you know you need an exemption, you should bring that up to Headquarters with the information you need to support that exemption request and your proposed path forward.

The Reconnaissance Report / 905(b) Report

Are we required to include cost estimates for alternatives?

Cost estimates are not required for alternatives developed during the reconnaissance phase.

Laying the Groundwork for Feasibility

How does the scoping that occurs during recon (that results in first PMP and study cost estimate/ schedule) differ from the scoping that occurs in the beginning of the feasibility study? It doesn't seem like you are going to get new information between the two scoping efforts.

When we began to develop the SMART planning process, our vision was for – ultimately - a single phase, Federally funded planning process, knowing that it would take a change in law to go from two-phase to

a single-phase. The scoping done during recon can give you a \$150,000 Federally-funded jump start on the feasibility study. During recon you are identifying the problem you are trying to solve; establishing that there is a Federal interest in solving that problem; and identifying the data available to address that problem during the feasibility phase.

Do you think that with a "good enough" recon-level scoping with vertical team alignment, it would be possible to skip the feasibility-level scoping and start preparing for the alts milestone after the FCSA is signed?

There are other procedural elements that need to be accomplished, such as filing a Notice of Intent (NEPA) and conducting NEPA scoping, before being ready for the Alternatives Milestone with a focused array of alternatives – but you may have a good start on scoping and formulation based on your reconnaissance activities.