

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT**

**OF**

**THE HONORABLE LES BROWNLEE  
UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY**

**&**

**ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR CIVIL WORKS**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**BEFORE THE**

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ON**

**INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL,  
AND  
ECONOMIC PRODUCTS THAT SUPPORT AGENCY DECISION-MAKING**

**MARCH 5, 2003**

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the independent peer review of scientific, technical and economic products of the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works planning process. With me today is Lieutenant General Robert Flowers, Chief of Engineers.

The Army Corps of Engineers has and will continue to provide beneficial water resources development and environmental restoration projects to the Nation. No organization has greater responsibility for our Nation's water resource infrastructure than does the Corps.

As the Corps and the Department of the Army formulate projects and programs and present them to Congress for authorization and funding, it is essential that we be able to demonstrate unequivocally that the plans are the result of the best analysis that modern engineering, economics, and environmental science can provide.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works has the principal responsibility for overall policy direction and supervision of functions relating to all aspects of the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works program. We are committed to

taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the Corps of Engineers is providing this Nation with technically sound, environmentally acceptable, and justified water resources development projects.

The Corps has long maintained a detailed technical and policy review process, utilizing experts within the Corps. The Corps also participates in the planning and review of projects by non-Federal sponsors and stakeholders, Federal and State agencies, and the public. As an example, the coordination conducted under the National Environmental Policy Act provides a valuable review of a project. The openness of this planning and review process enables the Corps to improve its planning and project evaluation for individual projects. The involvement of others - both formally and informally - allows  Corps to improve its internal review process and capabilities as it applies lessons learned from outside interests.

Within the Corps, the responsibility for review rests with each of the Corps' 38 Districts and 8 Divisions, and with the Corps Headquarters. The responsibility for the review of the technical aspects of projects is assigned to experts in the Districts, with Divisions providing the quality assurance necessary to make these reviews effective. Policy compliance review is accomplished at Corps Headquarters.

### **National Academy of Sciences Evaluation**

Nevertheless, some problems have been identified with certain projects. Of major consideration for future planning activities is the need for independent peer review to supplement the long-standing Corps internal and public and agency review practices. In recognition of the important need, Congress, in Section 216 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, directed the Corps to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to undertake an evaluation of the processes for analyzing water resources projects, including the need for an independent peer review. The report from the

National Academy of Sciences on the independent peer review portion of this effort was completed in July 2002.

The report recommended a 3-pronged approach for reviews depending upon the complexity and uncertainty of a particular project. The NAS recommended that projects with little complexity receive an internal Corps review, while proposals for somewhat larger and more complex projects should be reviewed by a panel of both Corps and external experts. The National Academy of Sciences recommended that the most costly, complex, and controversial projects should receive an independent peer review by an outside entity with membership of the review panel to be external to the Corps.

My office, in conjunction with the Corps, has included \$3 million in the FY 2004 Budget request for independent peer review. We will aim to conduct these reviews in such a way that they add benefit, and do not significantly delay decisions on project implementation.

### **Improving Corps Planner Capabilities**

The Corps has begun a transformation to strengthen its planning capabilities. The Director of Civil Works has developed a rigorous training curriculum to ensure that Corps planners are fully informed as how to properly formulate and evaluate Corps project proposals. The Corps is cooperating with major universities and has already begun sponsoring Corps staff for graduate degrees in water resources planning.

As for the Corps' internal processes, in addition to strengthening planner training, as I noted above, the Corps has initiatives under way to improve the models used in project evaluations, to strengthen economic analyses, and is intensifying organizational commitments for objective and thorough reviews, so as to make the concept inherent to the culture of project planning. We will work with the Administration and Congress to establish one or more centers of expertise that will be responsible for studies of costly,

complex, or controversial projects The Corps is taking advantage of its extraordinary value engineering expertise, its cross-district review capability, and outside experts to evaluate and validate its findings.

The President's Budget for fiscal year 2004 has included funding to conduct an ex post facto study of a sample of completed Corps projects so that we can determine how well they are delivering their anticipated outputs. The results of this evaluation will also help us improve our review capabilities and better enable the Army to demonstrate the performance and outcomes of Civil Works projects.



### **Strengthening Army Civil Works Reviews**

In addition to these significant improvements in the Corps' review toolbox, the Secretary of the Army has strengthened the review capabilities in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and has directed that office to provide additional oversight of the Corps planning and review programs.

Early in fiscal year 2002, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works established a new group headed by an SES-level Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Project Planning and Review. This four-member group provides a review of Corps Civil Works projects that is separate from the Corps technical and policy reviews. Members of the group have experience in Federal plan formulation and evaluation principals, Civil Works policy, water resources planning, environmental planning, benefit and cost analyses, and National Environmental Policy Act evaluations. The individuals recruited for this new group have almost 90 years of combined water resources planning experience and 42 years of project review experience.

The Office of Project Planning and Review is responsible for review of Civil Works projects that require Congressional authorization or modification, and for the review of already authorized projects when the Secretary of the Army is required to make a

determination on the technical merits, justification, or environmental acceptability before the project can be implemented. In addition, the group will work with the Office of Management and Budget in carrying out Executive Order 12322 and will evaluate projects in support of Corps budgets and Water Resources Development Acts.

### **Summary**

The Army is committed to assuring that the Corps of Engineers Civil Works water resources study process results in recommendations that provide this Nation with technically sound, environmentally acceptable, and justified water resources development projects. Independent peer review will help the Corps meet those expectations.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today before the Subcommittee. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.