



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
CIVIL WORKS
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SACW

FEB 23 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDING GENERAL, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF
ENGINEERS

SUBJECT: Realignment of the Investigation Phase and Federal Interest Determination to Ensure Effective Use of Federal Resources

1. Reference SACW memorandum (Prioritization of Effort Within the Army Civil Works Program), 23 February 2026.

2. Background: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide policy direction on the Civil Works investigation phase, inclusive of Preconstruction Engineering and Design, to optimize U.S. Army Corps of Engineering (Corps) resources, while capitalizing on authorities, as well as non-Federal partner and contractor capabilities to propel building water resources infrastructure that benefits Americans. Authorization studies are costly and take too long. Delays in completing studies unnecessarily increases study costs while allowing water resources issues to compound. The Water Resources Development Act of 2024 tripled the number of authorized feasibility studies placing additional demands on the oversubscribed investigations portfolio, amplifying the need for judicious use of limited federal resources and other mechanisms to advance implementable solutions.

3. Policy: My intent is to focus Corps expertise on developing and implementing feasible solutions to the nation's toughest navigation, flooding and ecosystem challenges while leveraging non-Federal and contracting capabilities to advance implementable solutions. Early involvement by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (OASA(CW)) is key to ensuring investigations are properly scoped, compliant with law and emerging policy, and focused on solving problems related to the Corps primary mission areas. To provide more efficient delivery of studies in alignment with Administration goals, the following actions must be undertaken:

a. Federal Interest Determination and Scoping Concurrence: For all new (FY26) investigations, it is imperative that the likelihood of Federal interest be determined before feasibility study scope, budget and timeline are developed. Specifically, a Federal Interest Determination (FID) must be completed within 45 days at a cost of no more than \$100,000 and should consider leveraging contracting resources. The purpose of the FID is to determine if the project falls under the core mission areas of flood risk management, navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration and to confirm there is one reasonable alternative that, if investigated through a feasibility study, is likely to result in a water resources development project being recommended for congressional authorization. The determination of Federal Interest should be based on

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an assessment of whether a potential alternative exists that is reasonably likely to produce economic, social, and environmental benefits that when considered in totality will exceed anticipated costs in accordance with law and published FID guidance. Equal consideration should be given to those communities considered economically disadvantaged as defined in the Implementation Guidance for Section 160 of WRDA 2020 (33 U.S.C. 2201). Lastly, the FID should confirm that a potential non-Federal sponsor exists that has the legal and financial capability to meet all project implementation requirements, to include providing the necessary real estate and non-Federal cost share, as well as the capability to meet all operation, maintenance, repair, replacement and rehabilitation responsibilities. If Federal interest is not substantiated, the non-Federal interest (NFI) will be provided notice and apprised of available cost-shared technical assistance authorities to aid in further advancing water resources solutions for local implementation. If Federal interest is affirmed, the OASA(CW) will review findings and assure alignment with Administration policy and priorities prior to the Corps preparing an estimate of scope, schedule and budget for completing a feasibility level investigation. Following OASA(CW) concurrence in the FID, the Corps will work with the NFI to develop the scope, schedule and budget for an investigation in compliance with established law and policy, encompassing any direction provided by OASA(CW). Exceptions to policy at any juncture in an investigation will be rare, and upfront. Any matter involving policy issues, unique circumstances, or controversial matters should be forwarded to my office immediately for resolution. OASA(CW) concurrence on scope is a firm requirement designed to aid in the appropriate policy direction of each study and enable delivery of policy compliant products.

b. Preconstruction Engineering and Design (PED). Prior to the initiation of PED, the Corps will brief the OASA(CW) the PED scope to ensure concurrence on effort and any potential policy requirements. At any juncture during PED, if the District determines that the recommended plan requires reinvestigation or remodeling of the proposed project and may require a general or limited reevaluation report, upfront OASA(CW) concurrence on the study scope is required prior to initiating work.

c. Maximize use of enterprise resources and contracting resources. Approved investigation studies are an enterprise activity that require an enterprise solution while being managed within an area of responsibility. District Commanders need to work with in-house and contracting resources enterprise-wide to advance work in alignment with approved scopes and statutory cost and time limits. Policy waivers for time and costs are unlikely and are discouraged. Overarchingly, the Corps should consider expanding the use of contracting services to augment in-house staff, in lieu of hiring, particularly for work outside of the priority mission areas of navigation, flood risk management, and restoration of nationally significant ecosystems.

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d. Line-Item Reviews and Investigation Reset. I applaud the recent effort to review the existing investigations portfolio to ensure ongoing work aligns with Administration priorities and available resources, including non-Federal capabilities and contracting resources, so that the Corps can effectively deliver products within legislated timelines. As a rule, investigations are expected to be complete within the current allocated budgets and timeline commitments. Time and funding for investigations should be limited to three years and \$3M with exceptions that exceed those limits being rare, therefore, requests for additional time and funding are discouraged. Project Delivery Teams (PDTs) must consider rescoping or resetting any study effort that exceeds approved parameters. If a study is paused for more than the approved time, the current study effort will be terminated. A briefing of the active investigation portfolio review is requested no later than 31 March 2026.

e. Investigation Milestone Review. I am directing the Corps to assess the current investigations milestone structure to determine opportunities for materially streamlining the investigation processes. The intent is reenvisioning the need and purpose of the current Planning milestones (Alternatives, Tentatively Selected Plan, and Command Validation milestones) to ensure that milestone meetings propel work at every juncture. The Corps will report to the OASA(CW) by 31 March 2026, with a recommendation for action.

f. Assessment of Current Review Requirements. I am directing the Corps to assess its current review policies, both internal and external to the agency, and to identify opportunities to streamline, consolidate, and eliminate outdated or ineffective policies and procedures. The effort is not limited to Civil Works planning but encompasses the entire life cycle from investigation, construction, and operation and maintenance, to include Independent External Peer Review and Safety Assurance Reviews by Outside Eligible Organizations. An initial briefing shall occur NLT 31 March 2026.

4. Briefing and Implementation. USACE will provide my office a briefing of the effort to complete this directive within 15 days of the date of this memorandum and quarterly thereafter until these measures build momentum and implementation is achieved.

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5. Questions about the policy in this memorandum should be directed to Ms. Robyn Colosimo, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, Project Planning and Review at 703-614-3977 or robyn.s.colosimo.civ@army.mil.



ADAM R. TELLE

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