

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

**Chief Counsel's  
Civilian Honors Program**



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**





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## The Organization

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is the world's premier public engineering organization. Since the first Chief Engineer was appointed in 1775, USACE has established a long tradition of serving the public by meeting the nation's most complex engineering needs. In the early years of our nation, USACE built fortifications for national defense, and established its role in developing the nation's waterways for navigation. It also helped explore and open the west by mapping interior lands and improving the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. USACE has built critical infrastructure and world famous monuments such as the Washington Monument, the Panama Canal, the Pentagon, and NASA's Space Center. And USACE has always played an important role in disaster relief, responding to floods and earthquakes to bring assistance to those affected and to begin the process of recovery. Today we continue to provide the most effective engineering solutions to complex national issues affecting national security, disaster relief, and the environment.

We are made up of approximately 32,000 civilian and 650 military men and women. Our military and civilian engineers, scientists and other specialists work hand in hand as leaders in engineering and environmental matters. Our diverse workforce of biologists, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, natural resource managers, attorneys and other professionals meets the demands of changing times and requirements as a vital part of America's Army.



Our mission is to provide vital engineering services and capabilities as a public service across a full spectrum of operations from peace to war in support of national interests, including:

- Planning, designing, building and operating water resources and other civil works projects including navigation, flood control, water supply, recreation, hydroelectricity, environmental restoration, and other civil infrastructure projects.
- Responding to emergencies and natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes.
- Administering the Army's permitting responsibilities under the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 to protect and conserve the nation's water resources.

- Designing and managing the construction of military facilities for the Army and Air Force to include infrastructure critical to national security both domestically and in support of missions like the Global War on Terror.
- Providing design and construction management support for foreign nations, federal agencies, and state and local governments.
- Acquiring, managing and disposing of over 24 million acres of property and providing real estate services for the Army, Air Force, the Department of Defense (DoD), and other Federal agencies.



## **The Nation's Investment**

Our projects are directed by the President and the Congress with multibillion dollar annual funding for the military and civil works programs. Non-federal sponsors share in the cost of civil works projects.



## Organization of the Agency

We work under the direction of the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff. Five Assistant Secretaries support the Secretary. USACE works most closely with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology. USACE is commanded by an Army Lieutenant General.

## Geographic Locations

Our headquarters is located in Washington, D.C. In addition, we are geographically organized into 9 regional divisions, 6 specialized centers and laboratory facilities, and 45 subordinate districts throughout the world. Generally, each of our locations has an Office of Counsel staffed with up to 20 attorneys. Each district and division office is headed by a military commander.

A list of our office locations can be found at:

<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cecc/cm/locations.htm>

For more information about a specific location, visit <http://www.usace.army.mil> and click on "Find a local Corps office."





## Legal Services

The USACE Legal Services Community of Practice is a national law firm with Counsel offices in approximately 50 cities around the globe. These offices employ approximately 450 attorneys. We are counselors to decision-makers and practice preventative law, playing a critical role in the planning and development of USACE projects to facilitate smooth and effective execution. We employ knowledge management tools such as collaborative on-line practice groups to provide high quality services, and we regularly interface with our partners in other Federal, State and local agencies to deliver vital projects that are critical to states, local communities and the nation's economic well-being and security.

As attorneys, our mission is to represent USACE as an organization in diverse practice areas such as contract law, environmental law, fiscal law, litigation, real estate law, legislation, labor and employment law, international law, admiralty, intellectual property law, negligence, water rights, and ethics. Our goal is to operate our community of practice as a unified and integrated system that ensures sound, timely and responsive advice and representation for program clients and commanders.

USACE's far ranging mission responsibilities worldwide offer legal practitioners a unique opportunity to serve the public interest and hone their legal skills on cutting edge issues of national importance.

**Contracts:** Contract attorneys serve as legal advisors to USACE contracting officers on all facets of federal procurement law and policy. This includes providing advice concerning the solicitation, award, administration and termination of all types of contracts relating to the military and civil works programs such as the Global War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, military family housing, and remediation of hazardous waste sites. Our attorneys also advise on acquisitions relating to privatization initiatives and foreign military sales. Attorneys practicing federal procurement law play an active role in the acquisition team from early strategy sessions regarding competition and contract type to representation in claims litigation or settlement negotiations. Contract attorneys provide advice regarding federal procurement statutes and the Federal Acquisition Regulation and its supplements, and directly represent the agency on bid protests at the Government Accountability Office and contract claims before the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals.



**Environmental:** Environmental attorneys support many different USACE programs, including the regulatory program, the environmental restoration program, and the water resources development program. A few examples of USACE's environmental responsibilities include the implementation of section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the

clean up and restoration of thousands of contaminated formerly used DoD sites, and improvement of damaged aquatic ecosystems. Specific projects on which our attorneys provide advice include the ten billion dollar comprehensive effort to restore, preserve and



protect the Florida Everglades and the clean up efforts after Hurricane Katrina. Environmental attorneys deal with the entire range of environmental and resource statutes as they help to ensure full compliance with all applicable federal and state environmental requirements during the construction, operation and maintenance of USACE's unique network of civil and military public works.

**Real Estate:** Real estate attorneys are intimately involved in both the transactional and policy aspects associated with the acquisition, management and disposal of Army and



civil works property including the real estate aspects of cost shared civil works projects, title work, closings, condemnation and encroachment resolution actions in federal district courts, and the preparation and review of deeds and disposal documents. With an increased emphasis on public-private ventures and asset management, our real estate attorneys work on innovative leasing and financial projects involving the use of

Army property for marinas and recreation activities on USACE-managed lakes, family housing and enhanced use leases on installations, and the transfer of Army property under the DoD Base Closure Program.

**General Administrative Law:** Administrative law attorneys provide advice on the proper application of billions of dollars of military construction and civil works authorities each year. Our attorneys work closely with commanders regarding the proper expenditure of

appropriated funds to execute such missions as flood control, implementation of regulatory programs, and rivers and harbors projects. Administrative law attorneys provide advice on the interpretation of general laws, specific civil works and military projects authorities, and on the proper use of our emergency authorities for



natural disasters, national emergencies and military contingency operations. In addition, administrative law attorneys negotiate interagency agreements under the Economy Act and negotiate international agreements on behalf of the Army.

**Litigation:** We are continually involved in litigation affecting critical national issues such as enforcement of the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, wetlands preservation, Fifth Amendment takings, and equal employment opportunity. USACE litigation responsibilities include torts, admiralty, real estate, and personnel law. At any given time, we may be involved in over 800 cases with potential liability exceeding \$2.9 billion. Litigation attorneys work directly with U.S. Attorneys and Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys writing memoranda and briefs filed in federal district courts and the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. The Chief Counsel encourages new litigation attorneys to seek qualification as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys, allowing them to independently handle litigation in U.S. District Courts on our behalf. In instances when our employees are sued in their official capacities, litigation attorneys obtain authorization for DOJ representation.



Recent significant cases include: *In re Katrina Canal Breaches Consol. Lit.*, 533 F.Supp.2d 615 (E.D. La. 2008); *Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715 (2006); *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, 531 U.S. 159 (2001); *South Florida Water Management Dist. v. Miccosukee Tribe of Indians*, 124 S.Ct. 1537 (U.S. 2004).

**Labor/Personnel:** Because of its size and diversity, USACE is a unique and challenging agency in which to practice labor and employment law. Labor and employment attorneys represent USACE in litigation involving discrimination, sexual harassment, adverse personnel actions, unfair labor practices, and unemployment compensation before the

Merit Systems Protection Board, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Federal Labor Relations Authority, as well as in federal court in cooperation with DOJ. In addition, the expanding emphasis on alternate dispute resolution has required our attorneys to become skilled negotiators and mediators outside the courtroom. Labor and employment attorneys are involved in all facets of labor



management relations, from traditional union contract negotiations to implementing the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). In order to prevent disputes before they occur, labor and employment attorneys serve to educate USACE employees on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Equal Pay Act, as well as on important court decisions and agency regulations that affect USACE.



## Chief Counsel's Civilian Honors Program

We select a limited number of graduating law students to participate in the Civilian Honors Program. The program is designed to attract outstanding individuals from diverse backgrounds and specialty areas seeking a legal career in a federal agency with a varied and complex practice in legal fields such as government contracts law, environmental law, real estate law, administrative law, labor/personnel law and litigation. We recruit highly qualified students from the nation's leading law schools to fill positions in over 50 offices worldwide. The program provides new attorneys challenging work, significant responsibility and unparalleled development opportunities to serve the public and gain valuable legal experience in the process. For more details about our practice visit:

<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cecc/cm/welcome.htm>

**Recruiting Process:** USACE recruits both through on-campus recruiting and the direct submission of application materials. Our on-campus recruiting efforts include interview programs and regional minority and other job fairs. Candidates who are selected through this screening process are then interviewed by the Chief Counsel. Candidates approved by the Chief Counsel are pre-qualified and are eligible to interview with the head of the legal office where a potential opening is located. Offers of employment are made after a candidate is interviewed and selected by the head of the legal office where the opening is located.



**Selection Criteria:** Generally, only those students who are in the top one-third of their law school class will be considered. However, this criterion may be waived for applicants who demonstrate unusual compensating qualifications, such as significant pertinent public service experience, technical background, or other academic degrees. Candidates must also exhibit excellent oral and written communication skills. Demonstration of academic excellence such as law review, Order of the Coif or similar honors, or competitive participation in moot court is highly desirable. To be considered, applicants must be third-year law students or Master of Laws candidates who will graduate no later than June of their academic year of application or law school graduates currently participating in a judicial clerkship program. Only U.S. citizens are eligible to apply. Each person selected into the Civilian Honors Program must undergo a complete security investigation in order to obtain a security clearance.

**Bar requirements:** Admission to the Bar is required within the first 14 months of USACE employment. Admission to the Bar of the highest court of any jurisdiction in the United States will satisfy this requirement.

**Compensation:** USACE civilian honors attorneys are hired into the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) pay system as Pay Band 01 law clerks at the equivalent pay of GS-11 step 1 under the General Services (GS) system and are converted to attorney series positions upon admission to the Bar. After a year of satisfactory service as an attorney, civilian honors attorneys are promoted to NSPS Pay Band 02 at the equivalent GS-12 step 1 pay. For information about the NSPS pay system, please see <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/>

**Professional Development:** USACE offers a stimulating environment where attorneys can develop their talents. New attorneys will receive training and developmental assignments to assist them in honing their legal skills and becoming a vital part of the USACE team. We offer many in-house courses sponsored by USACE, the Army, DOJ and other federal agencies. Training is also available at universities, bar and other professional organizations. In addition, USACE hosts an annual New Attorney Conference at its Headquarters.

**Vacation (Annual Leave):** Based on service time, employees earn vacation hours in each pay period. For fewer than 3 years of service, employees earn 13 vacation days each year. For 3-15 years of service, employees earn 20 vacation days each year. For 15 years or more of service, employees earn 26 vacation days each year.

**Sick Leave:** Regardless of length of service, employees earn 13 days of sick leave annually. Sick leave may be used for work absence due to illness, injury, pregnancy, or for scheduled medical and dental appointments. Sick leave may also be used for caring for another family member in the same circumstances, subject to certain restrictions.

**Holidays:** USACE employees enjoy 10 paid federal holidays annually.

**Fitness and Health:** We support our employees' fitness and health. Many USACE offices have modern fitness centers on site where employees can pursue exercise and fitness activities.

**Retirement:** One of the most important benefits of working for the Federal Government is the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). FERS is an excellent retirement system designed to be responsive to changing times and federal workforce needs. FERS consists of three components including Social Security, a basic federal annuity and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). In TSP, the Government matches eligible employee contributions dollar-for-dollar up to the first 3% of pay contributed each pay period and 50 cents on the dollar for the next 2% of pay contributed. Group Life Insurance: Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) provides several levels of coverage for employees, their spouses and children. The Government contributes to part of the cost of the premium for basic insurance, and the employee pays the balance of the cost. Participation in FEGLI is optional.

**Reimbursable Expenses:** USACE may be able to reimburse Civilian Honors Program attorneys for such expenses as moving costs and bar dues.



## Honors Attorney Testimonials

*The opportunities for ownership of substantive legal issues and exposure to clients right out of the gate are what define being a government lawyer. The Corps has that - almost immediately you are given as much responsibility as you are willing to take on, and you quickly develop subject matter expertise. The Corps also has a robust culture of mentoring. I have never encountered a Corps attorney who was not willing to carve time out of his or her busy day to spend time with a new attorney to discuss a thorny legal issue, how to work with a client, or one's career progression. The senior attorneys' encouragement and investment in new attorneys makes the Corps a great place to start a career.*

**Max Wilson, George Washington University '06, Headquarters, Washington, D.C.**



*Joining USACE Legal Services has been one of the best decisions of my professional life. The agency is complex and multi-faceted, with substantial opportunities for professional growth. Over the span of just a few years, I have worked in a Division office with regional oversight of five Districts throughout the Southeast, travelled to both Iraq and Afghanistan in support of USACE's multi-billion dollar construction programs underway in those countries, and undertook a developmental assignment in a small civil works District in North Carolina for several months. Now, I am the Center Counsel for the Transatlantic Programs*



*Center, managing USACE's legal services in support of projects throughout the Middle East and Africa. USACE's commitment to professional development is exceptional. The agency deeply invests in the growth and advancement of its attorneys, continually exposing them to novel, interesting and challenging work.*

**Derek Santos, University of Pennsylvania '04, Transatlantic Programs Center, Winchester, VA**

*I have been with USACE since September 2007, and have been pleasantly surprised by the number of diverse projects in which I have had the opportunity to be involved. Though half of my time here in Rock Island is devoted to providing legal support for the Real Estate Division, I have also enjoyed work covering a wide range of mission-related fields: from providing advice on the Corps' Tribal Nations' policy paper, drafting copyright notices, facilitating employee focus groups District-wide, to researching and writing reports on diversity and improving employee performance, translating documents from French to English to assist in the development of a more cost-efficient fish passage device, and advising on the international carbon credit regime established by the Kyoto Protocol. My HP experience has been invaluable here in Rock Island because it has greatly developed not only my legal skills, but also my ability to work effectively with a team of professionals from a variety of highly technical disciplines. So each day working as an HP attorney, I know that I will grow and learn and interact with a group of talented individuals committed to public service. This is a good thing to know for a new attorney.*

**Lynn A. Marshall, Northwestern University '07, Rock Island District, Rock Island, IL**



## **How to Apply to the USACE Chief Counsel's Civilian Honors Program**

Students are considered to have applied by participating in on-campus screening interviews with USACE recruiters or by submitting a resume, transcript and writing sample to:  
[CECC-HON@usace.army.mil](mailto:CECC-HON@usace.army.mil)

Although submission by e-mail is preferred, application materials may also be mailed to:

Chief Counsel's Civilian Honors Program  
HQUSACE (Attn: CECC)  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20314

All application materials must be postmarked by October 15 of the academic year in which the applicant graduates or of the final year of a judicial clerkship.

