Civil Works Partner Session Summary
May 15, 2019

BACKGROUND:
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) hosted a national level partner session on May 15, 2019 on the Revolutionize USACE Civil Works (CW) initiative. This session was designed to engage a diverse group of partners on the 3 main objectives of Revolutionize USACE CW: 1) Accelerate Project Delivery, 2) Transform Financing and Budgeting, and 3) Improve Permitting and Regulation Reform. Over 30 partner organizations representing a variety of interests participated in the session and provided valuable feedback to USACE and the Revolutionize USACE CW effort.

Purpose: Convene national level partners to:
1. Provide an overview of Revolutionize USACE CW and identify how USACE has incorporated partner feedback to date.
2. Gain input from partners on ongoing actions.
3. Gather ideas about ways USACE can improve project delivery and streamline permitting within our current authorities.
4. Learn more about how, if at all, Revolutionize USACE CW actions have had impacts on partner efforts to date.

KEY THEMES:
• Overall support for Revolutionize USACE CW and the changes the USACE is making to accelerate infrastructure delivery and implement agency culture change.
• While many recognize that efforts to improve processes and make changes are being made, most have not seen the results of these efforts in their activities to date.
• Consistent application of policies and processes across districts is needed, particularly as new guidance is developed and decisions continue to be delegated down to the lowest level.
• Communication, particularly two-way communication, should be a major focus of USACE broadly and through this initiative.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

General Comments
• **Leverage Non-Federal Partners**: USACE should pursue better ways to leverage relationships with non-federal partners. Are there tools beyond project partnership agreements for sponsors to take projects or components of projects over and other tools that can be used in implementing WRRDA Section 1043?
• **FOIA Issues**: Issues related to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests came up numerous times from partners. They criticized USACE websites and identified the difficulties in finding information on these sites. The need to have more information available to the public was discussed as a way to reduce the number of FOIA requests partners must submit to obtain information.
• **WRDA Implementation Guidance**: USACE needs to improve its process for developing and issuing Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) implementation guidance. Partners requested a more transparent and involved process with better two-way communication.
Objective 1: Accelerate Project Delivery

- Acquisition and Procurement Processes: There are many issues with these processes that prevent timely acquisition and procurement, even during emergencies. Changes to improve and shorten the process should be pursued.

- Delegate Decision-Making: Partners encouraged USACE to continue to delegate decisions to the most appropriate level and identified that they are seeing inconsistent application of delegations to date.

- Risk-Informed Decision-Making: Participants supported efforts to implement this approach but identified that the effort will only work if USACE leadership allows staff to take risks, make mistakes (on occasion) and seek more consistent application.

- Non-Structural and Nature-Based Solutions: USACE needs to continue to implement non-structural and nature-based solutions and ensure that the direction to “move dirt” does not counter the pursuit of these options.

- Non-Federal Involvement in Execution: Partners are very interested in getting more involved in the execution of projects and want USACE to help them do that through guidance and changes to processes.

Objective 2: Transform Financing and Budgeting

- Contributed Funds: Many partners requested that USACE evaluate the contributed funds process and find ways to speed it up. USACE needs to get better at accepting funding from partners.

- Metrics: A review of budget metrics was encouraged as partners expressed issues with the current metrics. For instance, it was pointed out that a focus on expenditures does not necessarily equal efficiency and project progress.

- Multi-Year Capital Plan: Partners were supportive of a five-year action plan and the transparency such a plan would provide. There were questions about how effective this plan could be when USACE only receives one-year funding.

- Benefit Cost Analysis: Partners encouraged USACE to look at improving benefit cost analysis and a more holistic approach to benefits.

- Support for WIFIA: Support for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan program was mentioned by a number of sponsors.

Objective 3: Improve Permitting and Regulation Reform

- Coordination with Partners: Improve coordination with Tribes and states regarding decisions that will impact them and their programs. Consultation with Tribes should happen early and often.

- Information and Tracking Systems: Partners requested more information in USACE tracking systems and improvements to those systems not just for the applicant but the public as well so that more information is available to the public.

- Implementation of Guidance: Ensure consistent application of new guidance. Changes need to be consistently embraced at all levels of the agency.

- 2008 Mitigation Rule: Partners identified opportunities for improvements if changes are made to the rule including with the Interagency Review Team (IRT) and out of kind mitigation.

- One Federal Decision (OFD): While many partners mentioned that the process has been difficult for the first few projects going through OFD, they are very appreciative of USACE’s efforts on this initiative and believe there will be significant benefits going forward.

- Share Best Practices: As states take on more permitting efforts, they ask that USACE share best practices and lessons learned to help guide their activities.
• **Training and Education**: More training and education is needed to address some of the issues discussed by partners. Webinars and recordings are very helpful for USACE staff and partners to understand guidance and changes as well.

**Communication**

• **Two-Way Communication**: Communicating effectively with partners was a major focus of the session. While appreciative of this session, the need for USACE to do much more two-way communication was expressed by almost all partners.

• **Culture Change**: Partners encouraged USACE to continue pushing culture change for the agency through Revolutionize USACE CW. Ensuring that this change has traction and is achieved throughout the agency is key.

• **STRATCOM Plans**: Partners suggested that every project delivery team should have a strategic communication (STRATCOM) plan that they implement to guide communication with all interested parties.

**NEXT STEPS:**

• **Continuing the Dialogue**: USACE encourages partners to continue to provide the USACE Infrastructure Team feedback on how we can enhance this session and future events, ideas for improving communication, additional comments on Revolutionize USACE CW including project specific examples of what has worked well due to the effort and areas for improvement.

• **June Webinars**: The USACE Infrastructure Team will be hosting two webinars on June 20 and 28 to provide an overview of Revolutionize USACE CW and reach a broader set of partners for feedback.

• **Refine Efforts**: USACE will continue to refine Revolutionize USACE CW activities and communication efforts per the feedback received from partners to improve the initiative and drive culture change within the agency.
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:
• American Association of Port Authorities
• American Council of Engineering Companies
• American Public Power Association
• American Rivers
• American Shore & Beach Preservation Association
• American Society of Civil Engineers
• Associated Builders and Contractors Inc.
• Associated General Contractors of America
• Association of Clean Water Administrators
• Association of State Flood Plain Managers
• Association of State Wetland Managers, Inc.
• Big River Coalition
• California Marine Affairs & Navigation Conference
• Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (for Restore America’s Estuaries)
• Deep Foundations Institute
• Dredging Contractors of America
• Ecological Restoration Business Association
• Environmental Council of the States
• Inland Waterways User Board
• Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association
• National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies
• National Association of County Engineers
• National Association of Homebuilders
• National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
• National Congress of American Indians
• National Hydropower Association
• National Waterways Conference
• National Water Resources Association
• National Water Supply Alliance
• United States Levee Safety Coalition
• Waterways Council, Inc.
• Western States Water Council

USACE PARTICIPANTS:
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http://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Infrastructure/revolutionize/