

## Authorization and Planning of Water Resources Projects

Corps of Engineers water resources activities are normally initiated by non-federal sponsors, planned collaboratively between the non-federal sponsor and the Corps, constructed by the Corps, and operated and maintained either by the Corps or by a non-federal sponsoring agency.

When local interests feel that a need exists for improved navigation, flood protection or other water resources development, they may petition their representatives in Congress. A congressional committee resolution or an act of Congress may then authorize the Corps of Engineers to investigate the problem and submit a report. Water resources studies, except studies of the inland waterway navigation system, are conducted in [partnership with a nonfederal sponsor](#), with the Corps and the sponsor-jointly funding and managing the study.

Normally, the planning process for a water resource problem starts with a brief reconnaissance study to determine whether a project falls within the Corps' statutory authority and meets national priorities. Should that be the case, the Corps district where the project is located will carry out a full feasibility study to develop alternatives and select the best possible solution. This process normally includes public meetings to determine the views of local interests on the extent and type of improvements desired. The federal, state, and other agencies with interests in a project are partners in the planning process.

In making recommendations to Congress for project authorization, the Corps determines that the proposed project's benefits will exceed costs, its engineering design is sound, the project best serves the needs of the people concerned, and that it makes the wisest possible use of the natural resources involved and adequately protects the environment.

Once the Corps of Engineers district completes its feasibility study, it submits a report, along with a final environmental impact

statement, to a higher authority for review and recommendations. After review and coordination with all interested federal agencies and the governors of the affected states, the Chief of Engineers forwards the report and environmental statement to the Secretary of the Army, who obtains the views of the Office of Management and Budget before transmitting these documents to Congress.

If Congress includes the project in an authorization bill, enactment of the bill constitutes authorization of the project. Before construction can get under way, however, both the federal government and the project sponsor must provide funds. A federal budget recommendation for a project is based on evidence of support by the state and the ability and willingness of a non-federal sponsor to provide its share of the project cost.

Appropriation of money to build a particular project is usually included in the annual Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act, which must be passed by both Houses of the Congress and signed by the President.

### **Related Links**

[General Investigations Program](#)

[Major Steps in Developing Water Resource Projects](#)

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