

Issue Statement
NEPA/Plan Formulation Workshop

Focus: There has long existed a degree of uncertainty regarding the exact role of NEPA in decision making and disclosure of federal activities. Guidance, while effective in answering many questions, leaves ample latitude for on-the-job interpretation which is largely subjective until tested by the courts. With a continued stream of outgoing plan formulation and NEPA experts retiring or otherwise leaving the Corps, we are faced with the challenge of training a new and upcoming group of professionals, as well as assuring all of our plan formulators and NEPA practitioners are as clear and consistent as possible in their understanding and application of the plan formulation and NEPA process and documentation thereof. This workshop would allow us, as a group of active NEPA and plan formulation practitioners, to explore the inter-relationship between the NEPA process and plan formulation and how the role of NEPA is perceived, how the process is conducted and managed.

Benefits: A clearer and more accurate understanding of the NEPA and plan formulation processes, two critical and complex processes conducted by our community of practice, is expected to lead to better quality planning, better quality and more defensible work products, better service to our customers and overall less confusion on the part of our staff and resultant stress.

Participants: There are a variety of offices within the Corps which are dealing with or affected by various aspects of the practices mentioned above. Obviously, the **Planning Offices**, have at their heart the plan formulation process, **Environmental Resources Offices**, hold NEPA as their overarching federal statute and primary vehicle for planning, public disclosure and decision making; **Office of Counsel** plays a key role in, among other things, assuring the legal sufficiency of our NEPA documents; **Regulatory** have their own NEPA issues and challenges working with the public and private sector project proponents; and **NWD** and **HQ** staff play an important oversight role to all of the districts and play a key role in getting projects through our federal processes to approval. Any and all interested and available staff are invited, welcome and would be expected to benefit from the presentations and discussions being proposed herein. Each district and separable office would be expected to fund their own participation. The workshop is specifically designed to minimize expense and so those traveling from **Portland** and **Walla Walla** should be able to make this a one day trip without having to overnight \$\$\$\$. A key focus of this workshop would be on sharing knowledge and experiences from and between senior staff to those relatively new to the Corps planning process. All participants would be expected to participate actively, ask questions and offer personal experiences, ideas and opinions.

Outcome: The proceeds of this conference would be taken down in notes by a dedicated note-taker, any lessons learned or otherwise interesting information or follow-on issues would be noted and an assigned person would be tasked to follow-up. Notes would be disseminated to all participants. Should the assembled group agree, and assuming funding and management support were forthcoming, the conference may

produce task groups to tackle specific issues at a later date or export lessons from this conference to other districts within NWD.

Logistics: The workshop will begin at 1000 hrs in the Fairmont Rm. at Federal Center South, Seattle, WA on September 14, 2004. The Fairmont Rm. is located at the far southwest corner of the building. Bring your own lunch or purchase lunch at our cafeteria on the first floor, north end of building. Pls remember to bring CAC card (ID) to ease security procedures. Parking is either east of the building across East Marginal Way South or in the north parking lot (access from Diagonal St. at light just north of building). We will end the workshop at a reasonable hour so folks can catch flights or drive to Portland without unduly burdening them with traffic.