



### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources

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#### IWR Climate and Global Change Lead Spreads Word about Adapting to Climate Change

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. Institute for Water Resources (IWR) Climate and Global Change Team lead Kate White, PhD, PE, was recently featured in the *Society of Women Engineers'* fall 2013 magazine for her insight and work in climate change adaptation. The article, "We Have Met the Future and It's up to Us," highlights viewpoints from three female engineers on the increase in concern for protecting coastlines and cities from the threats of climate change.

Dr. White, who is the senior lead for climate and global change for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), highlighted the USACE missions related to and affected by climate change, including USACE's responsibility protecting and managing the nation's water resources and civil and military infrastructure. "As a water agency, virtually everything we do is impacted by climate change," she said in the article.

Dr. White discussed how the USACE began recognizing changes in climate that were occurring, especially in snow-dominated watersheds in the west, and how the USACE focus on adaptation takes into consideration many specialists, from civil and geotechnical engineers to planners, economists and climate scientists. In 2007, Director of Civil Works Mr. Stephen L. Stockton, PE, directed that Dr. White and her colleague Dr. Rolf Olsen should begin to work together with other water resources agency representatives to develop a better understanding of the issues. "You have to get the whole picture before you take action, because with complex systems, there are many unintended consequences," she said in the article. Additionally, Dr. White discussed the importance of understanding how to plan for an uncertain future when dealing with the likely effects of climate change.

Highlighted in the article was how Hurricane Sandy became a turning point in public debate, changing the question from "Is climate change real?" to "How can we protect our coastlines from another super storm?" The article discussed how these questions were framed at different levels of government.

USACE frequently highlights the need for collaboration in facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of water management. This emphasis on collaboration is demonstrated in this article – Dr. White is working with two of the other women featured. She is a member of the interagency Climate Change Adaptation Community of Practice along with the Environmental Protection Agency's Leanne Nurse. She also worked with Leah Cohen of New York City on the Sandy Task Force Science Coordination Task Group.

Dr. White is the USACE representative on the Climate Change and Water Working Group (CCAWWG), a consortium of scientists from federal agencies with water management and climate change adaptation responsibilities. It is responsible for informing policy and preparing the U.S. to face climate change issues in years to come. Dr. White is also involved with several projects sponsored by the White House Council on Environmental Quality as well as other interagency groups.

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