



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

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Planning Associates Participate in Critical Thinking

WASHINGTON, DC. Each year, individuals are chosen to participate in the year long Planning Associates (PA) program, which is designed to broaden planners' competencies in solving complex water resources problems and challenges, and to strengthen their technical and professional leadership talents.

The yearlong training in USACE Civil Works business lines, team leadership, the planning process and the broader picture of the services USACE team members provide to the nation culminates with the "critical think product" presentations. These presentations emphasize critical thinking and the application of knowledge garnered during the year-long course.

This year's teams include Team Delta, whose presentation was about the inclusion of water quality in the USACE planning process; Team Phoenix, who presented on incorporating qualitative and quantitative concepts of resilience into the planning process; and SMART Team, who presented on an alternative model for cost-sharing operations and maintenance activities at the nation's ports. The presentations took place in the Washington, DC area during the second week of September, and an awards ceremony was held on September 10, 2013.

The class began its journey in Washington, DC with an orientation, team building, team leadership and communications class. As part of that process, they created a vision and logo for the program. They also designed an internal team newsletter that discussed each course and its lessons learned. This material from the Planning Associates newsletters is being used to enhance course descriptions in the Planners Toolbox website and the training mission of IWR's website.

Throughout the year, participants examined how the new USACE SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Risk Informed, Timely) planning process and its emphasis on risk management in decision making touched on each facet of the year's program. Course planners revamped many instructional plans and materials to encompass the new direction.

This year's participants include the following:

- Sara Brodzinsky, a Planner from the Chicago District, Chicago, Illinois.
- Janet Cote, an Ecologist from the Norfolk District, Norfolk, Virginia.
- Travis Creel, a Plan Formulator from the New Orleans District, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Martha Jackson, a Water Resources Planner/Study Manager from the Sacramento District, Sacramento, California.
- Thomas Maier, a Biologist from the Pittsburgh District, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- Rachel Mesko, a Water Resources Planner from the Seattle District, Seattle, Washington.
- Jason Norris, a Study Planner from the Alaska District, Anchorage, Alaska.
- Courtney Reed, an Economist from the New Orleans District, New Orleans, Louisiana.

- Andrew Roach, a Biologist from the Baltimore District, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Byron Rupp, a Physical Scientist from the New England District, Concord, Massachusetts.
- Sierra Schroeder, a Community Planner from the St. Paul District, St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Thomas Topi, an Economist from the Kansas City District, Kansas City, Missouri.

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