



US Army Corps of Engineers

Institute for Water Resources

BUILDING STRONG®

Conflict Resolution and Public Participation Center (2010)

Status: **Project Manager:**

In Progress [Hal Cardwell](#)

Purpose: The Conflict-resolution & Public-participation Center's mission is to help Corps staff anticipate, prevent, and manage water conflicts, ensuring that the interests of the public are addressed in Corps decision making. The center achieves this mission by developing and expanding the application of collaborative tools to improve water resources decision making.

Objective: 1) Build the capacity of USACE staff to participate in and conduct collaborative processes; 2) Support successful collaborative and participatory processes for specific project and program activities; 3) Strengthen institutional knowledge and information exchange about conflict resolution and public participation across the Corps and with external partners; 4) Establish the Corps as a thought-leader in the field by conducting research and pilot testing new processes, tools and approaches that meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. 5) Ensure the effective implementation of federal policies and programs on conflict resolution and public engagement and the participation of Corps' leadership in national and international forums by providing policy support to headquarters.

Benefits: Engaging in collaborative action successfully will help the Corps develop and implement better solutions to water resource problems. Collaborative problem solving – with communities, other agencies, and other stakeholders - will generate broad public support for solutions that will need to be implemented across many organizations and their authorities. Such collaborative problem solving and implementation is key to successful integrated water resources management. An auxiliary benefit of an increasingly collaborative and participatory Corps will be an improved public image with national recognition of the Corps' commitment to participation.

Progress: Through its Institute for Water Resources, USACE has an almost legendary history within the U.S. government in the conflict resolution and public participation areas. In the 1970s, IWR USACE Public Involvement & Public Participation programs were primarily focused on Civil Works. USACE was considered to be a leader in the U.S. government and collaborated with the White House to create the Interagency Council on Public Participation. USACE training in these fields set U.S. government standards. During the 1980s, the focus on participation gave way to an increased focus on cost sharing as a way to collaborate. At the same time planning emphasis also decreased.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, IWR USACE, in collaboration with the Chief Counsel, created the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program, focusing primarily on military programs and less on Civil Works. The program achieved 50% per year reduction in claims or about \$500 million per year on average for over five years before it was cancelled. Again, USACE training set the standard for U.S. government programs. For this, USACE was presented the Hammer Award by Vice President Gore.

During the 1990s, USACE construction initiated a program in partnering, which was added to the ADR program. It too dealt primarily with military and construction programs. Through this program the USACE partnered with Army General Counsel to create a national movement in construction industry which resulted in major improvement in contracting through the U.S. government and which spawned partnering programs in many states. Now there is a renewed interest in the tools of conflict resolution, collaboration and participation and a new convergence among the tools.

Products:

Related Links:

- [Conflict Resolution and Public Participation Center](#) (*project web site*)

Partners:

- [CADRe Workshop Participants](#)
- [Interagency and International Services](#)
- [North Atlantic Division](#)
- [Northwestern Division](#)
- [South Atlantic Division](#)
- [South Pacific Division](#)
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- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- University of Arizona
- [Virginia Tech](#)
- [Western States Water Council](#)
- Willamette Partnership