

### *“Streamline the time to complete design and construction process for projects”*

*Sacramento Session\**

#### **Speed Project Delivery**

- The average planning time of a Corps of Engineers project is roughly 5.6 years.
- As of 1996, it took the Corps an average of 1.5 years for reconnaissance studies, and 3.4 years for feasibility studies, with a one-year gap in between.

#### **Revise Priorities**

- Now is the time to re-examine study methodologies, especially economic principles and guidelines for cost-benefit studies.

#### **Re-examine study methodologies for better cost/benefit and environmental decisionmaking**

The Corps project delivery process was not discussed explicitly at all the listening sessions but was identified within the context of many water resource challenges. However, when it was discussed, the main concern that resounded was the need for a streamlined and faster Corps project delivery process. Some participants said that the current decision-making process within the Corps is too slow and needs to be accelerated. Others felt that the extended time to move a project from conception to construction is a barrier for non-Federal sponsors and their participation. One suggestion was to delegate more decision-making authority further down the chain of command.

Participants stated that there was a need to re-examine study methodologies, especially economic principles and guidelines for cost-benefit studies. They generally believed that cost-benefit analysis guidelines should be rewritten because they are too restrictive. Participants in general also felt that projects



*Stakeholders must be part of the project development process so that the best and most informed decisions can be made.*

must take into account the full range of benefits, including social, cultural, and environmental values when determining whether a project should be approved.

It was also suggested that this process involve all stakeholders in the project recommendation process, rather than just having the Corps make the decision on what projects are recommended. In this way, environmental groups and other stakeholders would be included from the beginning, rather than being left to challenge projects later.

#### **Regional concerns**

Specific issues varied at each listening session depending on the other hot regional challenges. Some participants of the Sacramento session for example, wanted to see a reduction in the time and cost needed to implement flood control operations and maintenance (O&M). Some participants also felt that the Corps should stay with projects after they have been built, rather than hand them off to others to manage.

Some Sacramento participants also recommended the development of a realistic and flexible planning methodology for Federal justification of navigation improvement projects. They suggested that guidelines should be realistic regarding actual practice of national and global shipping fleets. Planning should be undertaken with greater emphasis on future fleet, and should expand the “project benefits” categories to include a broader scope including custom revenues, land creation, environmental mitigation and restoration.

At the New Brunswick session, many participants focused on regulatory aspects and project review. It was suggested that a fast moving maritime transportation system cli-

*\*Topics in this paper were identified at 16 Listening Sessions between June and November 2000. The purposes of the Listening Sessions were to start a dialogue and to provide citizens an opportunity to tell us what they believed the Federal role should be in addressing water resources.*

*Participants saw the need for better partnering during data collection, studies, and monitoring programs.*



### Comments from the Listening Sessions

"The most important water resources challenge facing the Nation is the rural environmental infrastructure in Alaska." *Anchorage Session*

"Sharing problems and policy discussions with others. Cooperation and coordination is a very great challenge." *St. Louis Session*

"Keep this kind of dialog going and not doing it once in a blue moon (the 'dog and pony show'). Providing consistency and regularity in what's required." *Chicago Session*

"Become leaders for a consortium that brings forward the issues of multiple use." *Vancouver Session*

"Regional sediment management and coordination with Federal agencies." *Sacramento Session*

"Restoration of river systems impacted by mining activity." *Anchorage Session*

"More attention needs to be focused on environmental resource base rather than economic development/cultural issues." *Anchorage Session*

"Monitor and reevaluate projects using good science." *Omaha Session*

"Study existing facilities and rehabilitate/redesign to mitigate for impacts or restore natural processes." *Vancouver Session*

"Encourage agencies to work together to accomplish the common goal instead of working in 'stovepipes.'" *Washington, D.C. Session*

mate requires a more flexible, region-oriented, expeditious response to insure that America can meet its requirements in a timely cost-effective manner. Several participants felt that there is a need to reduce the amount of time it takes to get a project approved by the Corps. The extended time required for approval of improvement projects puts ports in a disadvantaged position to respond to rapidly changing maritime trends.

Participants at the Anchorage session generally felt that there should be more flexibility in criteria and standards for evaluating the potential projects. Some participants recommended developing a mechanism that allows for a special provision for rural areas of Alaska. Participants also asked that the output by the seafood industry and national wetland values be included in calculating cost-benefit ratios. Some participants at the San Diego national listening session suggested that the Corps should restructure to allow for better delivery. Some indicated that local agencies have core competencies which could be utilized by the Corps to streamline the process. Others indicated that many local sponsors have considerable capability to implement flood management practices and that the Corps should develop policies and programs that allow local implementation of Federal projects. Some participants at this session also recommended redefining National Economic Development (NED) benefits of projects to account for environmental limitations. They stated that current NED benefits do not effectively account for concerns of other Federal players and stakeholders and could result in conflicts that can render the project unbuildable.

### **Americans say the Federal government should:**

- Incorporate environmental sustainability principles into project development processes.
- Deliver projects faster. Reduce the time lag between concept and construction.
- Emphasize full stakeholder involvement from a project's beginning.
- Improve sponsor communication, education, and involvement in decision-making.
- Develop consistent interpretation of National Economic Development (NED) benefits.
- Provide efficient processes that incorporate stakeholder inputs early on.
- Include due consideration of economic, social, and environmental benefits during project formulation.