

Planning Guidance Letter #96-03

Expedited Reconnaissance Study Phase Guidance

CECW-PE (August 16, 1996)

MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND DISTRICT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Planning Guidance Letter 96-3, Expedited Reconnaissance Study Phase

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this guidance is to detail procedures and requirements for implementing an expedited reconnaissance study. ([Click here to go directly to enclosure](#))

2. **Background.** In the Fiscal Year 1997 budget testimony, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works stated that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will review current processes and will find ways to produce quality feasibility studies more quickly and at less cost. All FY 97 new reconnaissance starts will proceed under the Expedited Reconnaissance Study Program. The new process will result in a Section 905(b) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (WRDA86) Analysis of limited scope that complies with the requirements for signing a feasibility cost-sharing agreement. Most of the reconnaissance phase effort and funds should be devoted to preparation of the Project Study Plan (PSP). At present, it takes an average of 13 months to complete the reconnaissance report and another year to negotiate and sign a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA). The goal of this process is to reduce the overall time by at least a year, with a target of 6-12 months from initial obligation of funds to signed FCSA. Remaining first year funds would be available to proceed directly into the feasibility study.

3. **Reconnaissance Study Tasks.** The Expedited Reconnaissance Study shall accomplish the following four essential tasks:

- a. Determine that the water resource problem(s) warrant Federal participation in feasibility studies. Defer comprehensive review of other problems and opportunities to feasibility studies;
- b. Define the Federal interest based on a preliminary appraisal consistent with Army policies, costs, benefits, and environmental impacts of identified potential project alternatives;
- c. Prepare a PSP; and

d. Assess the level of interest and support from non-Federal entities in the identified potential solutions and cost-sharing of feasibility phase and construction. A letter of intent from the local sponsor stating the willingness to pursue the feasibility study described in the PSP and to share in the costs of construction is required.

4. Expedited Reconnaissance Study Requirements.

a. The Expedited Reconnaissance Study will address the requirements of Section 905(b) of the WRDA 86, as amended. This provision required that the reconnaissance study will include a preliminary analysis of the Federal interest, costs, benefits, environmental impacts, and an estimate of the costs of preparing the feasibility report.

b. The expedited reconnaissance study will cost no more than \$100,000.

c. The development of a PSP is an essential task in the Expedited Reconnaissance Study. The PSP shall be developed in accordance with guidance provided in EC 1105-2-208. The PSP shall be submitted to HQUSACE for certification as outlined in Paragraph 5 below.

d. Existing, readily-available data should be used during the Expedited Reconnaissance Study. Sponsor, other agency, State, and local government sources of available data must be used to the maximum extent possible.

e. The accomplishment of Tasks 3a and 3b, shall be based on professional and technical judgment, utilizing an experienced study team. Special attention must be given to identifying the problem, project purposes, types of outputs, and whether the intended project purpose and/or likely outputs are consistent with Army/Corps implementation and budgetary policies.

f. While sound judgment and limited analytical approaches should be employed during the Expedited Reconnaissance Study, following the detailed procedures for conducting economic and environmental analyses, as outlined in Principles and Guidelines (P&G) and Corps regulations based on P&G, will not be required. However, the principles of P&G justification will be followed. Economic and environmental investigations should be limited to assessments of benefits and costs of a limited number of potential solutions in sufficient detail to indicate that a solution to the water resource problem will likely warrant Corps participation. The economic assessment should describe the existing conditions, and potential magnitude and types of benefits from proposed actions. Likewise, the environmental assessment should describe existing conditions, effects of potential measures, and the likely requirement for mitigation.

g. To keep the Expedited Reconnaissance Study focused, costs low, and durations short, the following items should not be included for these studies: (1)

development and formalized displays of detailed cost estimates (such as MCACES); (2) detailed engineering and design studies and data gathering; (3) detailed environmental resources evaluations; (4) optimization and benefit-

cost analyses; (5) detailed real estate information; (6) report preparation; (7) formal coordination with other Federal and state agencies; and (8) other studies not directly needed to support the essential tasks required in paragraph 3 above.

5. Expedited Reconnaissance Phase Procedures.

a. The requirement for a traditional Reconnaissance Report is waived. A Section 905(b)(WRDA 86) Analysis, [format enclosed](#), is to be used. It will define the value of proceeding with a feasibility cost sharing agreement. The Section 905(b) (WRDA 86) Preliminary Analysis should be submitted to HQUSACE for review and approval prior to completing the negotiation of the PSP. PSP discussions with the non-Federal sponsor should be initiated at the start of the study phase and should be continuous throughout the study phase.

b. Upon the completion of PSP negotiation, based on the approved Section 905(b)(WRDA 86) Analysis, the PSP will be submitted to HQUSACE for approval. Prior to the execution of the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement, the Reconnaissance Review Conference (RRC) is to be held. The focus of the RRC will be the presentation of the final PSP and certification of the reconnaissance phase. The RRC can be scheduled as early as 14 days after the PSP is received by HQUSACE.

6. **Implementation.** Districts anticipating FY 97 new reconnaissance study starts should be prepared to implement this guidance upon receipt of FY 97 work allowance.

(Signed) STANLEY G. GENEVA, Major General, USA, Director of Civil Works

ENCLOSURE - FORMAT FOR S.905 (b)ANALYSIS

Section 905(b) (WRDA 86) Analysis

1. STUDY AUTHORITY. Include the full text of principal resolution(s) and/or other study authorities. Provide study funding summary including budget and appropriation history.

2. STUDY PURPOSE.

3. LOCATION OF PROJECT/CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT.

4. DISCUSSION OF PRIOR STUDIES, REPORTS AND EXISTING WATERPROJECTS.

5. PLAN FORMULATION.

a. Identified problems: Provide assessment of water and related land resources problems and opportunities specific to the study area. The following information is required: (1) Existing conditions; (2) Expected future conditions; and (3) Concise statements of specific problems and opportunities with emphasis on problems warranting Federal participation in the feasibility study.

b. Alternative plans: Description and discussion of the likely array of alternatives to be developed in the feasibility phase.

c. Evaluation of .Alternatives: Description and discussion of the likely benefits, costs, and environmental impacts and outputs for each alternative analyzed.

6. FEDERAL INTEREST. Define the Federal interest based on a preliminary appraisal consistent with Army policies, costs, benefits, and environmental impacts of identified potential project alternatives.

7. PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL ANALYSIS. A letter of intent from the local sponsor stating the willingness to pursue the feasibility study described in the PSP and to share in the costs of construction is required.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS. Recommend whether to continue to a feasibility study or not, based on consistency with Army and budgetary policies and likelihood of a project meeting criteria for Federal participation in project implementation. Provide estimated cost of feasibility study and schedule for completion.

9. POTENTIAL ISSUES EFFECTING INITIATION OF FEASIBILITY PHASE. Discussion on any potential issues which may affect the initiation of the feasibility phase or project implementation.

10. PROJECT AREA MAP

(District Engineer Signature Block)