Principles and Guidelines for Federal Investments in Water Resources

Federal Support Toolbox


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On March 22, 2013, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released updated Principles and Guidelines (P&G) for Federal investments in water resources.

To view the updated Principles and Guidelines, please visit: www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/PandG
Principles & Requirements and Draft Guidelines

- The updated P&G consist of final Principles & Requirements (P&R) that lay out broad principles to guide water investments, as well as draft Interagency Guidelines for implementing the Principles & Requirements.

- Draft Guidelines will be available for 60 days of public comment beginning March 27th. Once the Guidelines are finalized, each agency will update its procedures as needed to apply the new P&G to their agency-specific missions.
Background on Changes

- P&G are the rules that govern how federal agencies assess their water resource development projects and activities.
- New P&G will apply to a wider range of Federal agencies and activities, and emphasize more integrated approaches.
- New P&R specify that Federal water resources investments shall reflect national priorities, encourage economic development and protect the environment.
- Overall intent is to ensure decision-makers consider a more diverse range of benefits and costs associated with water resources development proposals.
Federal Objective

“The Federal Objective, as set forth in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, specifies that Federal water resources investments shall reflect national priorities, encourage economic development, and protect the environment by:

1. seeking to maximize sustainable economic development;
2. seeking to avoid the unwise use of floodplains and flood-prone areas and minimizing adverse impacts and vulnerabilities in any case in which a floodplain or flood-prone area must be used; and
3. protecting and restoring the functions of natural systems and mitigating any unavoidable damage to natural systems.”

1983 P&G: “Federal objective of water and related land resources project planning is to contribute to national economic development consistent with protecting the Nation's environment, pursuant to national environmental statutes, applicable executive orders, and other Federal planning requirements.”
Restrictions on USACE

- New Principles and Requirements align with the USACE Civil Works Strategic Plan and its overarching goal of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

- Manager’s Report on Appropriations for FY12 has restricted USACE from developing or implementing new rules or guidance upon issuance of the revised P&G. Under current Continuing Resolution, this funding restriction still applies.

- The restriction also specifies that the Corps shall continue to use the 1983 Water Resources Principles and Guidelines during that same period.
D. Risk & Uncertainty

i. Climate Change. “… projected accelerating changes in aquatic systems and sea level resulting from a changing climate should inform the understanding of water resource needs and how these needs can be realistically addressed. Analysis of climate change impacts should be informed by both historical records and models of projected future impacts of an altered climate on water resources.”
P&R: Land Use and Adaptive Management

D. Risk & Uncertainty

ii. **Future Land Use.** “Future land use patterns should be assessed and analyzed as part of the evaluation process....”

iii. **Adaptive Management.** “… Adaptive management measures should be clearly identified and evaluated as part of alternative actions or strategies in order to further reduce uncertainty, particularly when more detailed information and better tools are not readily available.…”
Development of project-level procedure

Forecast future conditions of the study area

- Because forecasts of future conditions are inherently uncertain, *degree of uncertainty must be characterized* (quantitatively and/or qualitatively at the commensurate level of detail) for all forecasts. Key assumptions used in the forecasts must be explicitly stated. Where uncertainty may meaningfully affect the baseline in a manner that could affect the investment decision, *multiple baselines can be used*, with a clear explanation of the basis and assumptions underlying each.

- Forecasts of future conditions *should account for expected changes* in hydrologic and other conditions *as a result of a changing climate* when these are likely to be significant.
Federal Support Toolbox
Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future

“A Federal Support Toolbox of Federal authorities, programs, technical tools, and scientific and management information would facilitate Federal agencies to support water planning across the Nation.”
Federal Support Toolbox

Watertoolbox.us

National Action Plan (NAP)

1. Establish a Planning Process
2. Improve Water Resources and Climate Change Information for Decision making
3. Strengthen Assessment of Vulnerability of Water Resources to Climate Change
4. Expand Water Use Efficiency
5. Support Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)
6. Support Training and Outreach to Build Response Capability
What is IWRM?

- **Sustainable outcomes** — the practice of making decisions and taking coordinated actions for outcomes and benefits that use or affect current economic, environmental and quality of life resources conditions in ways that preserve these resources for future generations.

- **Collaborative planning** — a process that avails collaboration to secure the input of all stakeholders about their interests and needs.

- **A systems perspective** — a systems approach that arrays interests and needs as input variables, modeling a system of interdependent variables with multiple outputs.

- **A geographic context** — a geographic perspective that examines who is doing what where at a broad geographic scale, e.g., a river basin, watershed or coastal zone.

- **Balanced aims** — a process that seeks to balance multiple objectives as diverse desired outputs producing multiple benefits.
Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Actions

- Action 17: Work with States and interstate bodies (e.g., river basin commissions) to provide assistance needed to incorporate IWRM into their planning and programs, paying particular attention to climate change adaptation issue.
West Maui Watershed Study

- Focus: Reduce land based pollution impacts across the watershed that impact nearshore waters.
- Expected Outcome: Integrated watershed plan that identifies and prioritizes actions to be implemented across federal, state and local jurisdictions and among many partners.
- Designation: US Coral Reef Task Force Priority Partnership in the Pacific
Ohio River Basin Alliance: a coalition of Federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, NGOs, universities, consultant professionals.
Action 19: Work with States to review flood risk management and drought management planning to identify “best practices” to prepare for hydrologic extremes

- Strengthen coordination among Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies on drought and flood issues
- Work closely with States to review flood and drought planning activities to identify “best practices” that can be shared with others
- Reviewed State Hazard Mitigation Plans (SHMPs) and surveyed State officials
Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Actions

- Action 20: Develop benchmarks for incorporating adaptive management into water project designs, operational procedures, and planning strategies

- Technical team
  - USACE, DOI (USGS), USDA (Forest Service, NRCS), EPA, NOAA

- Products
  - Inventory of existing “adaptive management” practices and policies in Federal government
  - Recommendations for wider application of adaptive management strategies
Federal agencies want to “plan” and “study” and “recommend” but not “fund” and “do.”

- State official