

USACE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICY STATEMENT

As the Nation's largest and oldest manager of water resources, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has long been successfully adapting its policies, programs, projects, planning, and operations to impacts from important drivers of global change and variability. Climate change and variability, both observed and as projected for the future, are among those important drivers of global change having significant impacts to the management of US national water resources and infrastructure.¹ The Nation's water-resource infrastructure managed by USACE both protects public health and human life and annually provides billions of dollars of economic, social, and environmental benefits crucial to the continued progress of the Nation.

It is the policy of USACE to integrate climate change adaptation planning and actions into our Agency's missions, operations, programs, and projects. USACE shall continue undertaking its climate change adaptation planning, in consultation with internal and external experts and with our Districts, Divisions, and Centers, and shall implement the results of that planning using the best available – and actionable – climate science and climate change information. USACE shall also continue its efforts with other agencies to develop the science and engineering research on climate change information into the actionable basis for adapting its Civil Works and Military Programs missions to climate change impacts. Furthermore, USACE shall consider potential climate change impacts when undertaking long-term planning, setting priorities, and making decisions affecting its resources, programs, policies, and operations.

These actions which USACE is now conducting and has outlined for the future are fully compatible with the guiding principles and framework of the US Federal Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force and the Implementing Instructions for Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation issued on 4 March 2011 jointly by the Executive Office of the President's Council on Environmental Quality / Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (CEQ/OFEE) and the Office of Management and Budget.²

Together with CEQ, USACE recognizes the very significant differences between climate change adaptation and climate change mitigation in terms of physical complexity, fiscal and material resources, level of knowledge and technical readiness, and temporal and geographic scale. Because of these differences, understanding and implementing climate adaptation policies and measures requires very different knowledge, skills, and abilities than implementing mitigation measures. Relatedly, USACE understands and is acting to integrate climate adaptation (managing the unavoidable impacts) with mitigation (avoiding the unmanageable impacts). It is the policy of USACE that mitigation and adaptation investments and responses to climate change shall be considered together to avoid situations where near-term mitigation measures might be implemented that would be overcome by longer-term climate impacts requiring adaptation, or where a short-term mitigation action would preclude a longer-term adaptation action.

The successful implementation of this USACE adaptation policy will help enhance the resilience of the built and natural water-resource infrastructure USACE manages and reduce its potential vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change and variability. This success will allow USACE to continue fulfilling its missions using Integrated Water Resource Management to safeguard the Nation's tremendous investment in the built and natural water-resource infrastructure by mainstreaming climate change adaptation in all USACE activities.

¹ USGS Circular 1331 "Climate Change and Water Resources Management: A Federal Perspective", available at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1331/>, a joint document by the USACE, Bureau of Reclamation, US Geological Survey, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/adaptation>

Integrated Water Resource Management to safeguard the Nation's tremendous investment in the built and natural water-resource infrastructure by mainstreaming climate change adaptation in all USACE activities.

Mainstreaming climate change adaptation means that it will be considered at every step in the project life cycle for all USACE projects, both existing and planned, through a logical, rational, legally justifiable process that develops practical, nationally consistent, and cost-effective adaptation measures, both structural and nonstructural, to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance the resilience of our water-resource infrastructure.

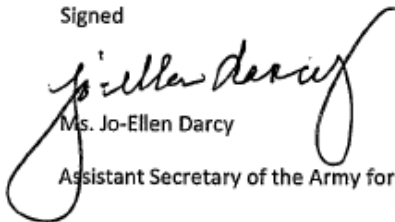
This work to understand and adapt to the impacts of climate and global change is already underway at USACE, and the policy enunciated here is closely aligned with the USACE Campaign Plan³ and the USACE Civil Works Strategic Plan.⁴ USACE has several integrated programs directed at parts of climate change adaptation; in addition, many coordinated elements from other programs support the development of approaches to understand and implement climate change adaptation for implementing the USACE mainstreaming effort.⁵

The magnitude and complexity of climate change impacts facing water-resource managers in the US has spurred USACE to embark on closer, more fruitful interagency cooperation for developing methods supporting climate change adaptation. Close collaboration, both nationally and internationally, is the most effective way to develop the measures to identify and reduce the USACE mission vulnerabilities to potential future climate changes. USACE has demonstrated its commitment to engage and lead such collaboration through efforts including the "Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future Initiative"⁶ and the Federal interagency Climate Change and Water Working Group (CCAWWG).⁷ It is the policy of USACE that these and other productive collaborative efforts around climate and global change adaptation shall continue.

This policy establishes the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works as the Agency official responsible for ensuring implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy does not alter or affect any existing duty or authority. Through this Policy, USACE establishes the USACE Climate Change Adaptation Steering Committee to oversee and coordinate agency-wide climate change adaptation planning and implementation. The Steering Committee is chaired by the USACE Chief, Engineering and Construction, and will include appropriate representation from throughout USACE.

This policy statement shall be effective beginning 3 June, 2011, for all USACE missions, operations, programs and projects and shall remain in effect until it is amended, superseded, or revoked.

Signed



Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Work

³ See <http://www.usace.army.mil/about/campaignplan/Pages/Home.aspx>

⁴ *Sustainable Solutions to America's Water Resources Needs* (Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Civil Works Strategic Plan 2011-2015) approval pending from OMB as of 1 June 2011.

⁵ See <http://corpsclimate.us> for more information.

⁶ See <http://www.building-collaboration-for-water.org/> for more information.

⁷ See <http://corpsclimate.us> for more information.