

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Planning Process and Considerations for Impact Assessment and Decision-Making

International Association for Impact Assessment

24th Annual Conference

Vancouver, BC

April 2004

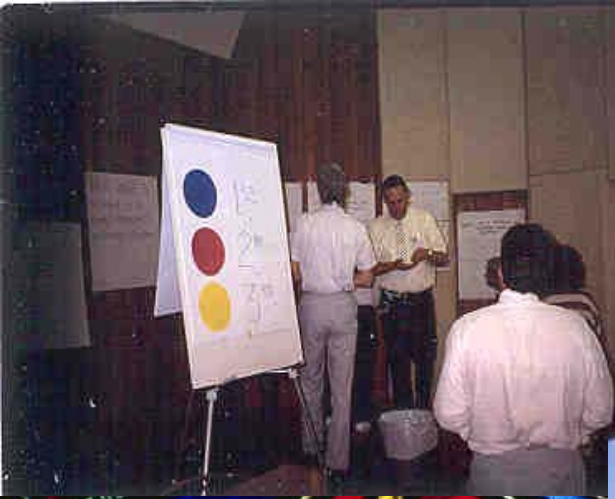
Richard Fristik, Kenneth D. Orth

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Institute for Water Resources ,
Alexandria, VA USA

Outline

- ✱ What is the Corps of Engineers and what do we do?
- ✱ What is our planning process?
- ✱ The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- ✱ Compare/contrast planning process and NEPA
- ✱ Corps efforts to strengthen impact assessment





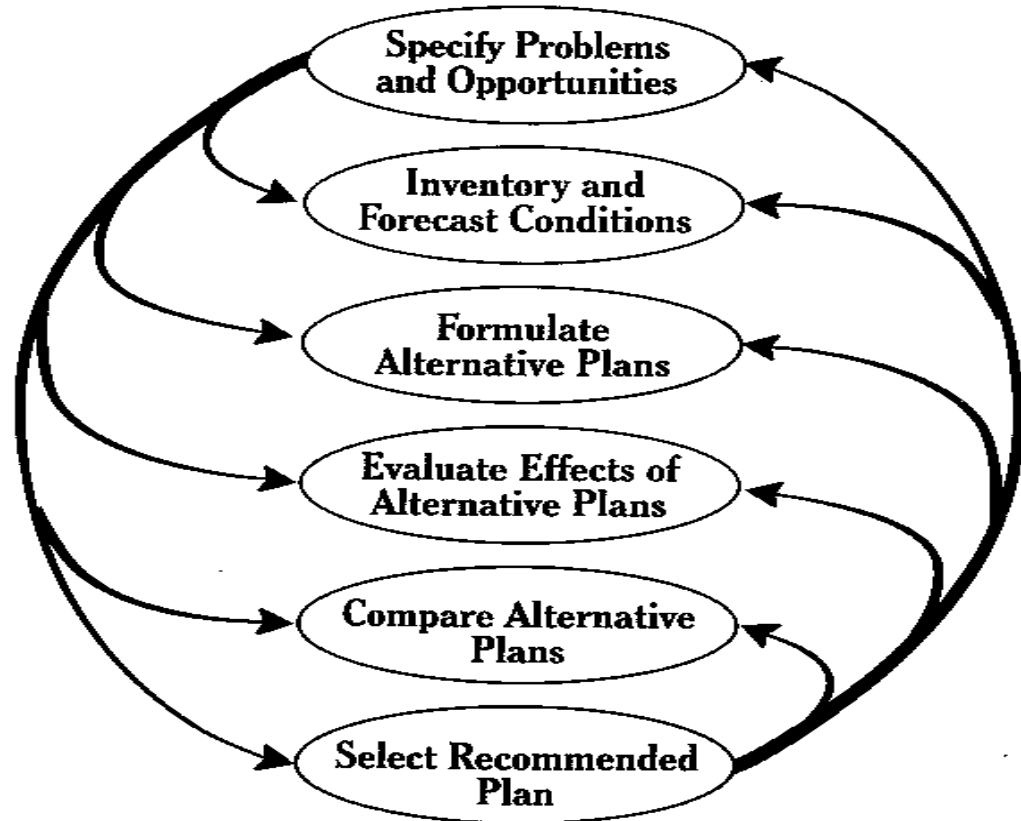
Corps Planning Process

- ✱ The 1983 'Principles and Guidelines'* form the basis for Corps/other Federal agency water resource planning
- ✱ National Economic Development (NED) and Environmental Quality (EQ) evaluation procedures
- ✱ The 'Federal Objective': "... to contribute to national economic development consistent with protecting the Nation's environment ..."

* Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. U.S. Water Resources Council, 1983

The Six Steps

PLANNING PROCESS



National Environmental Policy Act

- ☀ Help agencies make informed decisions based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore and enhance the environment
- ☀ A broad concept of 'environment', and recognizes "future generations"
- ☀ "... declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment"

NEPA (cont'd)

- ✱ Established the Council on Environmental Quality (in Executive Office of President)
- ✱ Preparation of a “detailed statement” on the environmental impacts of proposed action
- ✱ Opportunity for other agencies and public to review and comment on the statement, i.e., to have a say in Federal decisions

... Planning is the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement)

Planning Process Steps	EIS Paragraphs
Problems & Opportunities	Purpose of and Need for Action
Inventory and Forecast	Affected Environment
Formulation	Alternatives Including Proposed Action
Evaluation	Environmental Consequences
Comparison	Alternatives Including Proposed Action
Selection	None

IAIA04

9

Comparing the NEPA regulations and the P&G ...

- ✱ Both cover essentially the same set of ideas
- ✱ The NEPA EIS format and the P&G planning process are essentially the same requirements
- ✱ Both recognize the repetitive (iterative) nature of the decision-making process
- ✱ Federal water agency planning might not be very different if either were eliminated



Efforts to strengthen IA and decision making

- ✱ Planning Models Improvement Program
- ✱ Peer Review
- ✱ Environmental Operating Principles
- ✱ Environmental Management Systems