

Enhancing Community Connections with USACE Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Resources

Report by Caroline Roche
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ICWP
INTERSTATE COUNCIL ON WATER POLICY

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Introduction



Caroline Roche

Spring 2025 ICWP Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Research Intern

Caroline holds a dual degree in Political Science and Fine Art from the George Washington University (Class of 2024).

Caroline is from Chicago and currently lives in Washington, DC. She works as a Policy Assistant at ESP Advisors, an oceans-focused environmental policy consulting firm. She hopes to grow her career and connections in the world of resilient water policy, and pursue higher education (which she would love to discuss with any and everyone who has advice about graduate school for a young water-policy professional).

Pooja Kanwar, Phd.

Spring 2025 ICWP Mentor

Pooja is the Water Policy Consultant for the Division of Ecological and Water Resources in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. She is an ICWP Board member and Caroline's mentor for this research project.



She has been with the Department since 2017, working on water resources planning and interdisciplinary collaborative work with water agencies and partners across the State. She has been in the water resources field for over 20 years, with a focus on human and social dimensions of water resources management. She holds a BS in Geography and Environmental Studies from the University of Iowa, MS in Natural Resource Management and Administration, and a PhD in Natural Resources, with a certificate in Ecological Economics, from the University of Vermont.

Scope and Methodology

This report was initiated through the Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) 2025 Spring Internship program. The project focuses on supporting the identification and engagement of communities, especially those that have been traditionally underresourced, for targeted outreach under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program. The scope of the project includes analyzing how states define and prioritize disadvantaged communities in their outreach of PAS, with the goal of providing actionable recommendations for ICWP member states and policy stakeholders.

To inform this work, 10 personnel involved in PAS implementation across the country, including staff from state agencies and departments, USACE district and national offices, and non-governmental stakeholders with relevant involvement were interviewed. These conversations provided insight into barriers, successes, and opportunities for expanding access for PAS engagement. This research also included reviewing relevant federal guidance, examples of PAS projects from various online locations, and the Application Guide compiled by 2024 ICWP Spring Intern, Amishi Singh, to contextualize my findings and ensure continuity.¹ The resulting analysis and recommendations are intended to strengthen and expand partnerships, inform stakeholder decision-making, and support ICWP's mission to advance integrated water resource planning across states.

1. Singh, Amishi. "USACE PAS Application Guide." Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP), 20 June 2024, icwp.org/minutes/committee-minutes/legislation-and-policy-committee/usace-pas-application-guide-amishi-singh/.

The PAS Program

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program, authorized by Section 22 of Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in 1974, provides technical support for water resource planning across the nation. There are two types of assistance within the program: Technical Assistance, which involves targeted tasks like floodplain mapping and modeling, and Comprehensive Plans, which have a broader scope such as watershed management. A key distinction between the two is in cost-sharing: Technical assistance requires the non-federal sponsor to contribute 50% in cash, whereas comprehensive plans allow the 50% match to be made through in-kind services, which is often more feasible for communities. For economically disadvantaged communities, there are fee waivers that can reduce or eliminate the local cost share, such as the Section 8119 Amendment of the WRDA of 2022 that waives the PAS program funding match for economically disadvantaged communities. These communities qualify if 51% of the study area meets the criteria of being a federally recognized tribe or territory, having low per capita income, or high unemployment based on census data.²

As defined in Section 160 of WRDA 2020, an economically disadvantaged community includes areas with per capita income at or below 80% of the national average, unemployment at least 1 percentage point above the national average, Indian Country as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1151, or areas near Alaska Native Villages, U.S. Territories, or communities identified as disadvantaged by the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).³

The WRDA Section 1156 waiver, introduced in the 1980s and specific to tribes, waives a portion of project costs up to a congressionally adjusted amount that can be used for ancestral lands, even if they aren't currently designated tribal lands. This waiver is less strict about direct benefit and requires a cost-share agreement, unlike the 8119 waiver which requires only an approval memo. The USACE National PAS Program Manager oversees these waivers, manages the national PAS budget, monitors projects, and provides guidance on implementing evolving legislative directives. The typical timeframe for completing work under each PAS project is one to two years.⁴

Examples of PAS studies and activities completed include:

- Watershed planning
- Flood risk management
- Surface and groundwater quality
- Stormwater management
- Coastal resiliency
- Environmental conservation and restoration
- Water supply and demand
- Wetland delineations
- Stream assessments
- GIS mapping

2. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Planning Assistance to States." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters, www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Technical-Assistance/Planning-Assistance/

3. Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) , Michael L. Connor, and DoD Department of the Army. "Memorandum for Commanding General, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Implementation Guidance for Section 160 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, Definition of Economically Disadvantaged Community." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 14 Mar. 2023, usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utis/getfile/collection/p16021coll5/id/35998.

4. St. Paul District. "Planning Assistance to Tribes and States - Overview." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Programs-Project-Management/District-Programs/Planning-Assistance-for-Tribes-and-States/. Accessed June 2025.

	Comprehensive Plans	Technical Assistance
Purpose	To develop broad, long-term plans for the development, use, and conservation of water and related resources	To support ongoing water resources management by providing specific technical expertise and data integration
Scope	Wide-ranging: can cover full watersheds, basins, ecosystems, or statewide efforts, may address multiple water resource challenges	Narrower: focused support for existing planning documents or needs like hazard mitigation, sustainability, resilience, and climate adaptation
Outputs	A comprehensive water resources plan that identifies issues and proposes strategic solutions	Technical products like datasets, models, or assessments that support existing planning or management efforts
Cost Share	50% federal / 50% non-federal (cash or in-kind); waivers available for Tribes and Territories	50% federal / 50% non-federal (cash only); no in-kind contributions allowed

In fiscal year 2022, the congressionally appropriated USACE Civil Works budget was 8.343 billion,⁵ and the PAS program received a significant funding boost of \$30 million through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This was a major increase from its typical annual budget of around \$9 million.⁶ This funding enabled a large-scale outreach effort and supported a wave of new projects that began taking shape from late 2022 to early 2024. Although outreach continues, it has slowed considerably compared to 2023. By 2024, the program's annual appropriation was \$4.5 million, not due to policy changes but because resources are focused on completing the list of funded projects. This means that the funding for 2025, under continuing resolution (CR) conditions, is \$4.5 million once again.⁷ Once carryover balances decrease and current projects are completed, appropriations may rise again and enable more new projects to be taken on.

5. "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Releases Work Plan for Fiscal 2022 Civil Works Appropriations." *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters*, 25 May 2022, www.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/News-Release-Article-View/Article/3042747/us-army-corps-of-engineers-releases-work-plan-for-fiscal-2022-civil-works-appro/.

6. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "2022 Spend Plan Addendum." Civil Works Supplemental Work Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 30 Mar. 2022, usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utis/getfile/collection/p16021coll6/id/2280.

7. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Fiscal Year 2025 Remaining Items Justification Sheet." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters, 11 Mar. 2024, usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utis/getfile/collection/p16021coll6/id/2484.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Background

The Environmental Justice (EJ) movement in America began as grassroots activism in the 1980s, led by communities of color and low-income populations fighting against disproportionate pollution and toxic waste exposure in their neighborhoods. EJ first became a formal federal priority under President Bill Clinton in 1994 with Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."

This executive order directed that "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories and possessions." This order created an interagency working group and required agencies to develop strategies to reduce environmental inequalities. It was an effort reflecting growing awareness of environmental and social fairness.⁸

Decades later, in 2023, President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 14096, "Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All," which defined environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people." This executive order instructed federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), to make environmental justice part of their core mission by identifying, addressing, and mitigating disproportionate environmental and health burdens, especially those related to climate change, legacy pollution, and systemic inequities, and to do so through meaningful public engagement and equitable decision-making.

On his first day in office on January 20th, 2025, President Trump revoked Biden's order with Executive Order 14148, "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions," halting the coordinated federal effort to tackle environmental disparities and leaving the issue less officially prioritized at the federal level." The next day on January 21st, the President also revoked President Clinton's 1994 Executive Order that laid out the foundation for federal environmental justice.

8. Miller, Vernice, and Renee Skelton. The Environmental Justice Movement, 22 Aug. 2023, www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement.

Executive Order 14096 – April 21, 2023

Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All

Sec. 3. Government-Wide Approach to Environmental Justice. (a) Consistent with section 1-101 of Executive Order 12898 and each agency's statutory authority, each agency should make achieving environmental justice part of its mission. Each agency shall, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law:

vii) provide opportunities for the meaningful engagement of persons and communities with environmental justice concerns who are potentially affected by Federal activities, including by:

(A) providing timely opportunities for members of the public to share information or concerns and participate in decision-making processes;

(B) fully considering public input provided as part of decision-making processes;

(C) seeking out and encouraging the involvement of persons and communities potentially affected by Federal activities by:

(1) ensuring that agencies offer or provide information on a Federal activity in a manner that provides meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency and is accessible to individuals with disabilities;

(2) providing notice of and engaging in outreach to communities or groups of people who are potentially affected and who are not regular participants in Federal decision-making; and

(3) addressing, to the extent practicable and appropriate, other barriers to participation that individuals may face; and

(D) providing technical assistance, tools, and resources to assist in facilitating meaningful and informed public participation, whenever practicable and appropriate;

Executive Summary

This report examines the current landscape of the USACE PAS program with a particular focus on how it engages with communities in their divisions and districts. Amishi Singh, the Spring 2024 Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) Intern, published an application guide and report about the PAS program on IWCP's website about a year prior to this report's publishing. In the past year, the broader political context has shifted significantly with the 2025 election and inauguration of President Donald J. Trump. Under the current administration, many federal agencies are experiencing pressure to reduce previous emphasis on engaging with environmental justice.⁹

Even without considering the diminished emphasis on EJ concerns within PAS outreach, the structure of USACE community engagement is variable. Each USACE district handles outreach differently, depending on internal resources and staffing models; some districts have dedicated outreach coordinators with various different titles, while others rely on staff who hold multiple responsibilities and have limited capacity to conduct consistent, proactive engagement for new projects. The absence of a centralized communication strategy means that many communities are unaware of the program's existence or how to access it, especially in rural or underserved areas. Compared to other federal agencies like EPA, which offer public dashboards and transparent grant tracking, the USACE provides less visibility into projects.

In recent years, USACE districts have used tools like EJSCREEN and the Council on Environmental Quality's CEJST to identify disadvantaged communities for planning support. The recent removal of CEJST from official federal use reflects the broader political shifts away from prioritizing underserved communities.

9. "Department of Justice Terminates Environmental Justice Settlement Agreement, Advancing President Trump's Mandate to End Illegal DEI and Environmental Justice Policies." Office of Public Affairs, Department of Justice, 11 Apr. 2025, www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-terminates-environmental-justice-settlement-agreement-advancing-president.

Since connecting with communities that can benefit from Planning Assistance remains a priority, districts are now attempting to fill the gap with local data and manual analyses, but the lack of national guidance means that practices vary across the country.

Although this report no longer considers the current day to be the “best” time to apply for PAS due to a pause in large outreach for new projects and uncertainties in the new administration, this is a good time to connect with USACE staff to understand PAS and the pathways into the program. A fully planned project is not needed to make these connections– approaching the USACE with information about unique community needs and challenges is enough to start the conversation. Although national environmental justice mandates and screening tools are no longer available, local data and knowledge can still be utilized to identify areas of greatest need.

This report recommends that ICWP members advocate for dedicated PAS outreach funding in congressional appropriations (while also ensuring that the new engagement efforts are accompanied by overall increased funding for program capacity). ICWP could also actively promote the PAS program by developing and sharing clear guidance, case studies, and success stories that help demystify USACE processes for new partners. Finally, this research could continue with another intern/fellow conducting geospatial analyses of current PAS projects (which would be easier if a master list of some sort was provided by USACE) and how they overlap with factors like low-income areas or environmental stressors like flooding or low water quality levels.

Benefits of PAS

1. Flexibility and Responsiveness

PAS stands out among federal planning programs for its broad eligibility (including states, tribes, communities, and NGOs) and its rolling application structure. Unlike other programs with rigid annual cycles, PAS can respond quickly to emerging needs—especially after flood events or through interagency meetings. This flexibility makes it an accessible entry point for local or state governments seeking technical planning support.

2. Empowerment of Underserved and Small Communities

PAS is especially valuable for rural or underserved communities that lack the resources or staffing to prepare water resource plans or even clearly define their top priority water resource issues. With cost-share waivers, PAS allows small or disadvantaged communities to access technical assistance that would otherwise be out of reach. These studies often serve as launchpads for future funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), or state agencies by providing credible, USACE-backed planning documents.

3. Bringing Together Multiple Stakeholders

PAS supports collaborative, non-construction planning studies, which can convene federal, state, tribal, local, and nonprofit stakeholders around complex water and environmental challenges. A project like a watershed study, for example, that involves river authorities, state natural resource offices, nonprofits, etc. could benefit from having a USACE Project Manager acting as a central connection point between entities.

Challenges of PAS

1. Processes for Outreach are Variable

The outreach for technical assistance programs including PAS can differ significantly across USACE districts. While some have dedicated outreach coordinators and engage frequently with communities and state agencies, others integrate outreach into broader planning roles. As a result, awareness of PAS opportunities often depends on existing relationships or participation in interagency efforts.

2. Planning Assistance Capacity is Limited

PAS is a relatively small program within the USACE's broader mission portfolio, and funding levels, though occasionally supplemented, are typically modest. Each district must balance its available staff and resources against program demand, which means capacity for new projects may be limited in any given year. Understanding this context can help prospective partners plan ahead and align with available windows of opportunity.

In FY22, the PAS program received a one-time boost of \$30 million through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—well above its historical average of around \$9 million. This funding enabled a large-scale outreach effort and supported a wave of new projects that began taking shape in late FY23 and into FY24. However, with that influx came a significant increase in obligations and carryover work. By FY24, the program's appropriation returned to \$4.5 million, with most of that committed to ongoing studies. As of FY25, under CR conditions, funding remains tight and focused on project completion. Districts continue to scope and plan for new work, but the pace of outreach and new starts has naturally slowed until current commitments are fulfilled and appropriations stabilize.

3. Transparency, Communication, and Engagement

USACE follows established internal procedures to scope, cost, and deliver PAS studies, which can feel unfamiliar to partners new to working with USACE. For example, USACE staff typically lead project delivery and select contractors, and roles are defined early in the agreement. While this structure ensures accountability and consistency, it may require close coordination to align with partner expectations—especially on cost, timeline, and technical scope.

Strong communication is essential for making the most of PAS. While the program is designed to be flexible and collaborative, it often works best when partners engage early, stay involved throughout project development, and clearly communicate priorities and expectations. Many successful studies have stemmed from proactive local involvement, including participation in technical meetings and joint scoping efforts.

Where can you find information about PAS?

Amishi Singh

Former ICWP Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Research Intern, Spring 2024



Interstate Council on Water Policy Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Application Guide

Amishi Singh

Report Cover Page

3: Fee Waiver Sample

Sample

EXAMPLE PLANNING ASSISTANCE TO STATES LETTER OF INTENT – SECTION 8119 FEE WAIVER

SPONSOR LETTERHEAD

[DISTRICT COMMANDER NAME/DISTRICT PAS PROGRAM MANAGER]
[TITLE]

U.S. Army Engineer Corps of Engineers [SITE LOCATION CORPS DISTRICT] District
[CORPS DISTRICT STREET ADDRESS]
[CORPS DISTRICT CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [DISTRICT COMMANDER]:

The [SPONSOR NAME] is requesting assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a [comprehensive plan/technical assistance] in accordance with Section 22 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1974, Planning Assistance to States (PAS). We are requesting assistance to address the [FLOODING PROBLEMS] [ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION] [BANK EROSION] [NAVIGATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS] [OTHER] in [GENERAL AREA DESCRIPTION].

[GENERAL PROBLEM DESCRIPTION AND ASSISTANCE REQUESTED IN ONE TO TWO PARAGRAPHS, TO INCLUDE IMPACTS TO THE EDC AND BENEFITS OF THE PAS STUDY TO THE EDC]

The [SPONSOR NAME] intends to serve as the partner for the project. We are aware that PAS assistance is cost-shared 50% Federal and 50% non-Federal and do not include site specific designs or construction. As [NAME OF AREA] is an economically disadvantaged community as defined by Section 160 of WRDA 2020, and as described above, we request consideration for the fee waiver provided under Section 8119 of WRDA 2022.

We are committed to this effort and are willing, able and would be financially prepared to participate in the PAS [comprehensive plan/technical assistance]. We look forward to executing a cost-sharing agreement at the appropriate time in the process. Please contact [SPONSOR'S POINT OF CONTACT] for further information or assistance.

SIGNATURE BLOCK

Director, City Manager, Mayor, etc., as appropriate

Example Fee Waiver

Link to Amishi's full report can be found on the ICWP Website or this link: https://icwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Amishi-Singh_ICWP-Internship-Final-Report_2024.pdf

Amishi's Report Findings



In 2024, Amishi concluded that:

1. It was the “best time to apply for PAS.”

The injection of additional funds through the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allowed for a shift from one application window a year to a rolling application cycle, meaning that the timeline for applying has been shortened by up to 11 months. Since it's unlikely that the additional funding will continue once it runs out, it's a good idea to take advantage of that funding now.”

2. Communities did not need a “full project already planned.”

“Many partners approach the USACE with a vague idea or more of an end goal in mind. That is very normal and they are there to work with you to figure out how to most effectively use your money to get a study or plan that will be the most beneficial to you. Don't wait until your proposal is fully fleshed out!”

3. PAS had “almost no outreach budget.”

“According to everyone that I spoke with, the biggest hurdle facing this program is the lack of information about its existence and benefits. Unfortunately, this means that for many people the only way to find out about the program is by word of mouth or previous experience with the program. “

4. The scope of EJ work was “still relatively narrow.”

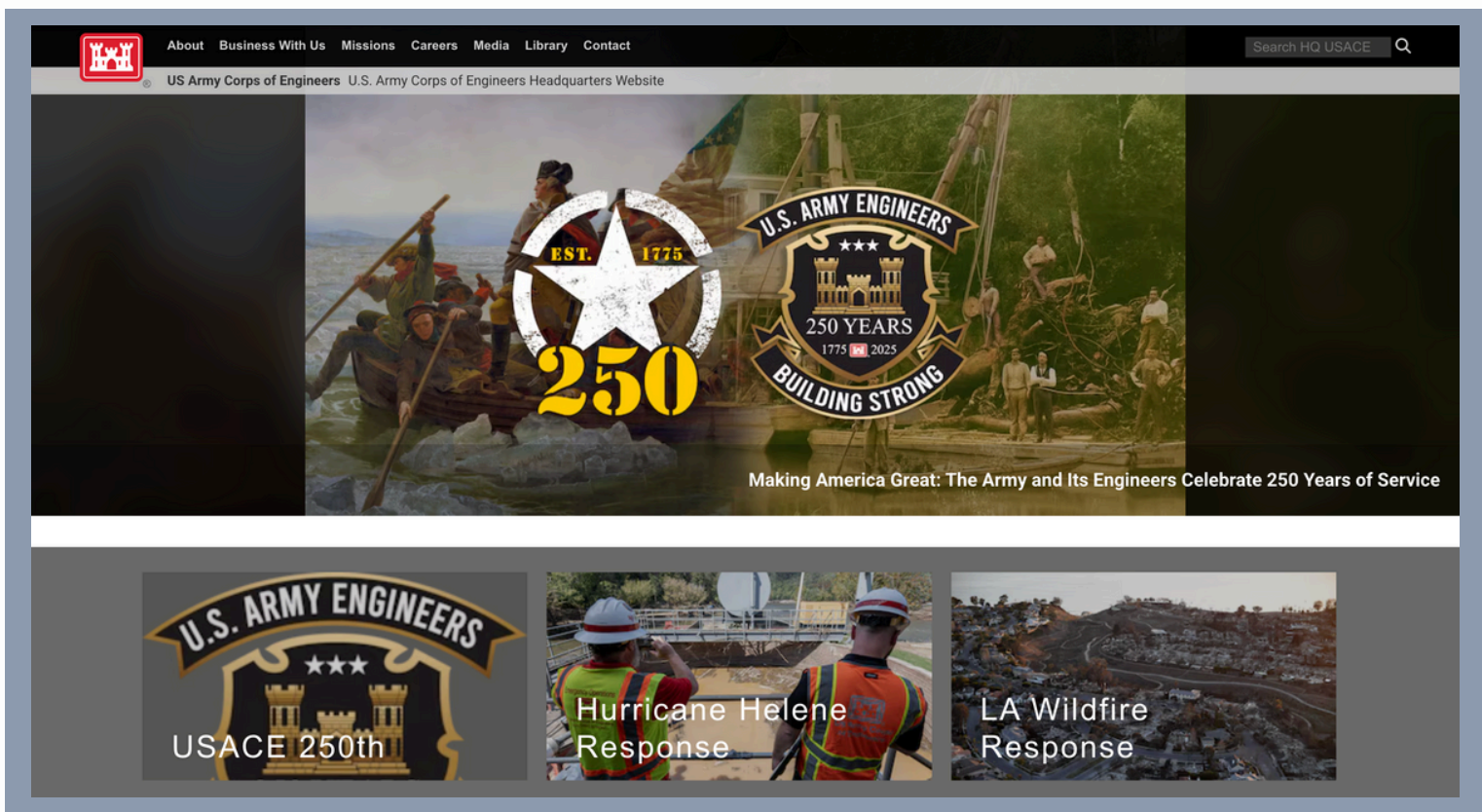
“Everyone who I spoke with had done work with the fee waiver with tribes, but not with any other EJ communities. People attributed this to a lack of knowledge about where those communities are as well as uncertainty about how PAS could be used to address systemic failures surrounding lack of environmental planning, or future climate adaptation needs. Additionally, the requirement that 51% of the study area meet the EJ metrics adds a barrier since most water resource projects do not strictly follow census blocks.”

Where can you find information about PAS?

There isn't a central location that showcases or catalogs individual PAS agreements similarly to how EPA grants are reported publicly in grants.gov. Most of the information online about this program comes from the USACE directly, but they provide a plethora of resources that communities and partners can use to get a better understanding of what PAS is, what the application process looks like, and what kind of projects are possible through this program.


USACE Resources

The national USACE website, ([Usace.army.mil](https://www.usace.army.mil)) has resources available to explain what the PAS program is and what it can do.



<https://www.usace.army.mil/> Screenshot from June, 2025

The national website allows you to scroll through 8 different PAS projects, each with an image and a short description of the planning assistance that was delivered.


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US Army Corps of Engineers U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters Website

[Home](#) / [Missions](#) / [Civil Works](#) / [Technical Assistance](#) / Planning Assistance

Planning Assistance to States

The Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program is authorized by Section 22 of WRDA 1974, as amended, and is often referred to as PAS, and sometimes referred to as the "Section 22" program.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) offers two types of planning assistance through PAS: technical assistance and comprehensive plans. Assistance under PAS covers all USACE mission areas to include flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and navigation, as well as water supply and water resilience. Eligible partners under PAS include any state, or group of states, federally recognized Native American Tribe (Tribal Nation), U.S. Territories, or other non-federal entities to include non-profit organizations with the support of the affected local government. Regional coalitions of governmental entities may also partner with USACE to develop water resources comprehensive plans.


The PAS program is limited to provided planning-level assistance; detailed design, specification, and construction are not included in this program. Implementation of deliverables under the PAS program is the responsibility of the non-federal partner. The typical timeframe for completing work under PAS is one to two years.

How to Request Assistance under PAS

Requests for assistance must be in the form of a letter that includes the location and problem to be investigated, submitted by a state, local government agency, U.S. Territory, federally-recognized Tribal Nation, or other non-federal entity to the appropriate USACE district. A non-profit organization may be a non-federal partner with the submission of a letter from the affected local government consenting to the provision of Section 22(a) assistance to the nonprofit entity working with the state. To find your local USACE district, visit <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Locations>.


Together with USACE, a scope of work will be developed to address the work to be done to address the water resources issue, to include costs and cost-sharing requirements. Upon concurrence of the scope, both USACE and the partner will enter into a Section 22 Agreement, either for the provision of technical assistance or development of a comprehensive plan. Once the agreement is executed and funding is in place, the project will commence.

For template Section 22 Agreements and related requirements, please visit the [USACE Project Partnership Agreement website](#) and expand the Planning Assistance to States section.




Congressman James with HAB sample

→ See More




Black River PAS Flood Study

→ See More



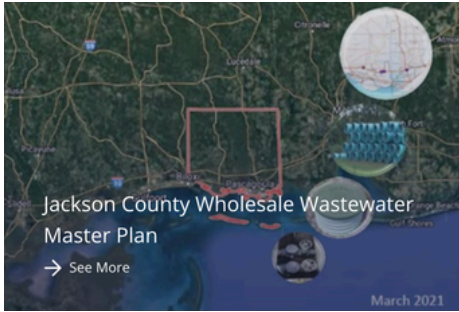
Illinois

→ See More



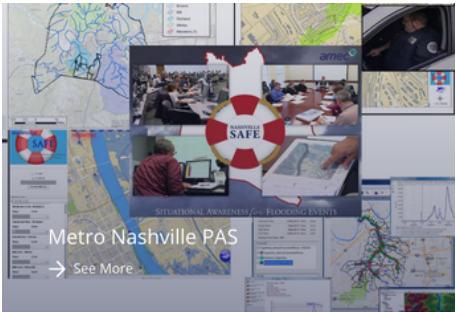
Brule Lake Wild Rice Production Mapping

→ See More




Jackson County Wholesale Wastewater Master Plan

→ See More




Metro Nashville PAS

→ See More



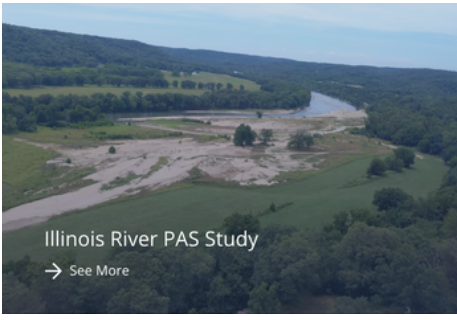
Team collecting fin clips for DNA and H2O for eDNA samples in Council, Alaska

→ See More



Erosion Reduction Technical Assistance Deering AK

→ See More



Illinois River PAS Study

→ See More

Screenshot from <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Technical-Assistance/Planning-Assistance/> June, 2025

How to Request Assistance under PAS

Requests for assistance must be in the form of a letter that includes the location and problem to be investigated, submitted by a state, local government agency, U.S. Territory, federally-recognized Tribal Nation, or other non-federal entity to the appropriate USACE district. A non-profit organization may be a non-federal partner with the submission of a letter from the affected local government consenting to the provision of Section 22(a) assistance to the nonprofit entity working with the state. To find your local USACE district, visit

<https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Locations>.

Together with USACE, a scope of work will be developed to address the work to be done to address the water resources issue, to include costs and cost-sharing requirements. Upon concurrence of the scope, both USACE and the partner will enter into a Section 22 Agreement, either for the provision of technical assistance or development of a comprehensive plan. Once the agreement is executed and funding is in place, the project will commence.

For template Section 22 Agreements and related requirements, please visit the [USACE Project Partnership Agreement website](#) and expand the Planning Assistance to States section.

At the bottom of the **How to Request Assistance under PAS** section (on the far right of the USACE Headquarters website page previously pictured) there is a link to the **USACE Project Partnership Agreement Website**

Model Agreements and Templates

Click each section title below to be taken to that section.

[Specifically Authorized Agreements](#) | [Continuing Authorities Program \(CAP\) Agreements](#) | [Tribal Partnership Program Agreements](#) | [Understanding \(MOUs\)](#) | [Environmental Infrastructure](#) | [Regional Environmental Authorities](#) | [Other Agreements & Templates](#) | [Guidance and Resources](#)

Overview

A **Project Partnership Agreement (PPA)** is a legally binding agreement between the Government and a non-Federal sponsor (state, municipal government, flood control district, port authority, etc.) for construction of a water resources project. It describes the project and the responsibilities of the Government and the non-Federal sponsor in the cost sharing and execution of work.

To streamline implementation and achieve national consistency, policy compliance, legal sufficiency, and equitable treatment of project sponsors, the Corps has developed **models** for drafting individual project specific agreements. For each model posted, there are also links for:

- 1) the History and Applicability of the model; and
- 2) the Implementation Memo for the model that

Please use the MODEL: MS Word version to ensure the latest model. Versions in the Digital Library are legacy versions for record keeping.

Specifically Authorized Agreements

[Collapse All](#) [Expand All](#)

- ☐ Coastal Storm Risk Management PPA
- ☐ Commercial Navigation Harbors PPA
- ☐ Design Agreement
- ☐ Ecosystem Restoration
- ☐ FCSA for Specifically Authorized Studies
- ☐ Structural Flood Risk Management

Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Agreements

Other Agreements & Templates

[Collapse All](#) [Expand All](#)

- ☐ Acceptance of Contributed Funds for a Section 408 Evaluation
- ☐ Additional Measures Donor Ports and Energy Transfer Ports (Section 2106)
- ☐ Escrow Agreement
- ☐ Levee System Evaluation
- ☐ Placement of Dredged Material into a Federal Dredged Material Placement Facility
- ☐ Placement of Dredged Material into a Federal Dredged Material Placement Facility
- ☐ Planning Assistance to States

Section 22 Technical Assistance

- [History and Applicability](#)
- [Implementation Memo](#)
- Template: [MS Word](#)
- Click here for the [Legacy Versions](#)

Section 22 Planning Assistance Comprehensive Plan

- [History and Applicability](#)
- [Implementation Memo](#)

Once in the **Project Partnership Agreement Website**, scroll down the page to **Other Agreements and Templates**. There is a section dedicated to **Planning Assistance to States** that expands and reveals various templates and resources. This website, while not the main or most up-to-date resource from the USACE, could provide value to communities hoping to get a better understanding of what PAS and similar agreements look like.

There is also a USACE resource called the **Planning Community Toolbox**. Planners and the teams they work with can use it to locate official guidance, technical updates, and resources like fact sheets and handbooks needed to develop and evaluate water-resources projects.

Planning Community Toolbox
US Army Corps of Engineers

Home | Planner's Library | Project Delivery | People | Tools | Processes | Training | Search/Index | Contact Us

About Corps Planning

- About Us
- Work with Us
- Current Initiatives

Popular Topics

- Core Civil Works Planning Guidance
- Signed Chief's Reports
- Planning Reports to Congress
- Civil Works Project Planning Website
- Planner's Library
- Planning Centers of Expertise (PCXs)
- Planning and Policy SharePoint

Suggestion Box

Google the Planning Community Toolbox

Planning plays a vital role in supporting the Corps of Engineers Civil Works water resources development mission. Through planning activities, including feasibility studies, Continuing Authorities Program studies, watershed studies, comprehensive/large scale studies, general reevaluation studies, validation studies and other post-authorization change studies - and more, Corps planners help decision-makers identify water resources problems, conceive solutions to them, and compare the importance of the inevitable conflicting values inherent in any solution.

The Planning Community Toolbox includes a wealth of information for planners and project delivery teams, including the policy, guidance, processes, and tools that are used every day in planning.

Core Planning Policies and Guidance

PREVIOUS PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTEBOOK	CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANNING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	CHAPTER 1: Introduction
CHAPTER 2: Planning Principles	CHAPTER 2: Planning Principles
CHAPTER 3: Corps Civil Works Missions	CHAPTERS 3-10: Corps Civil Works Missions - Policies
CHAPTER 4: Types of Studies, Reports & Procedures	APPENDIX A: References
APPENDIX A: References	EP 1105-2-62: Planning Reports and Programs (Awaiting Publication)
APPENDIX B: Public Involvement & Coordination	EP 1105-2-57: Stakeholder Engagement, Collaboration, & Coordination (2019)
APPENDIX C: Environmental Evaluation & Compliance	EP 1105-2-60: Environmental Evaluation & Compliance (Final Draft at HQUSACE)
APPENDIX D: Economic & Social Considerations	EP 1105-2-59: Economic & Social Considerations (Final Draft at HQUSACE)
APPENDIX E: Civil Works Missions & Evaluation Procedures	MULTIPLE EPs: Corps Civil Works Missions - Specific Procedures

Screenshot from <https://planning.erdc.dren.mil/toolbox/index.cfmAssistance/> June, 2025

Planning Community Toolbox
US Army Corps of Engineers

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PLANNING LINKS

Collection Shortcuts

- Core Civil Works Planning Guidance
- Signed Chief's Reports
- Signed Director's Reports
- Guidance Memos
- Planning Bulletins
- Other Bulletins
- Planning Engineer Circulars (ECs)
- Planning Engineer Manuals (EMs)
- Planning Engineer Pamphlets (EPs)
- Planning Engineer Regulations (ERs)
- Economic Guidance Memoranda (EGMs)
- Planning Guidance Letters (PGLs)
- Policy Guidance Letters
- Memorandums of Agreement and Understanding
- USACE Reports and Manuals
- Lessons Learned
- Fact Sheets
- Archive of Policy
- WRDAs and Other Key Laws

Libraries

- Corps National Libraries
- Other Libraries

Planner's Library

The Planner's Library includes links to guidance, fact sheets, handbooks, and other materials useful for Corps Planners and the teams they work with.

Shortcuts to specific collections within Planners Library - Chief's Reports, Planning Engineer Regulations, etc. - are to the left.

If you know what you're looking for, our Keyword search or Google search within the Toolbox will help you get there.

Keyword **Document Type (Default Search All)**

Detailed Google Search

For an in-depth search within documents and the website, click on the Google Planner's Library button below and enter a keyword. The system will search through all the electronic documents currently available in the Planner's Library and Website.

Project Assistance Library

Find and contribute specific study resources by project, business line or geographical location. Planning offices manage their own INTERNAL and EXTERNAL, multi-media collections. Never lose track of critical PDT resources again. Login with your Planner Database password for all features. Districts or divisions should email planningonline@usace.army.mil to learn more.

Key Planning Guidance and Resources

If you're unsure where to begin, key planning guidance and resources are available below, sorted by Corps mission area and by planning team member role.

Corps Planning Fundamentals

- 6-Step Planning Process
- Planning Fundamentals
- Principles, Requirements and Guidelines
- Core Civil Works Planning Guidance
- WRDAs and other Key Laws

Guidance by Mission Area

Screenshot from <https://planning.erdc.dren.mil/toolbox/library.cfm?Option=Start> June, 2025

District and division offices also choose to publicly showcase PAS projects through website highlights, GIS storymaps, media engagement, and more.

The South Atlantic Division Website, for example, has a section on their website that explains how to request assistance, a summary segment titled “All Things Water,” and PAS Study highlights from around the state of Florida.

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)

Media Library Contact About Business With Us Missions Locations

US Army Corps of Engineers South Atlantic Division Website

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How to Request Assistance

Request for assistance must be in the form of a letter that includes the location and problem to be investigated, submitted by a state, local government agency, or Federally recognized Native American Indian tribes to the specific district's point of contact, which can be found below. A nonprofit organization must provide a letter from the affected local government consenting to the provision of Section 22(a) assistance to the nonprofit entity working with the State.

[PAS Fact Sheet](#)

[Templates](#)

Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Program – “All Things Water”

Water, an essential resource to the Nation, represents complexities that encompass environmental, social, cultural, legal, and economic concerns. As such, water resources often require varying degrees of planning solutions. The PAS program facilitates the US Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) mission in assisting States on an array of water resource planning. Authorized by Section 22 of WRDA 1974, as amended (42 U.S.C. &1962d-16), the PAS program helps states, local government, non-Federal entities, and federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes to plan for the use, development, and conservation of water and related land resources. Flexible in scope, PAS studies can build on existing data to develop the basis for local planning decisions. In other study scopes, PAS efforts address information gaps related to a site-specific water resource to better identify problems and opportunities. The length of PAS studies depends on the scope. Some studies can be completed in a few months from receipt of funds, while others may take a full 12 months. In some cases, multi-phased studies can be completed over the course of 2 years, subject to the availability of Federal funds.

Because USACE is not authorized to design or construct under this program, plan implementation may be carried out by the partner. PAS programs are funded annually by Congress and are cost shared (50%/50%) with the study partner. The process for PAS investigations begins after a state, regional, local government, or Native American Indian tribe requests Corps of Engineers assistance under the program.

There are two types of efforts available through the PAS program: Comprehensive Plans and

PAS Study Highlights


[Lake County, FL](#)

[Boca de Cangrejos](#)

[Jackson County, AL](#)

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Lake County, FL PAS Study Highlight

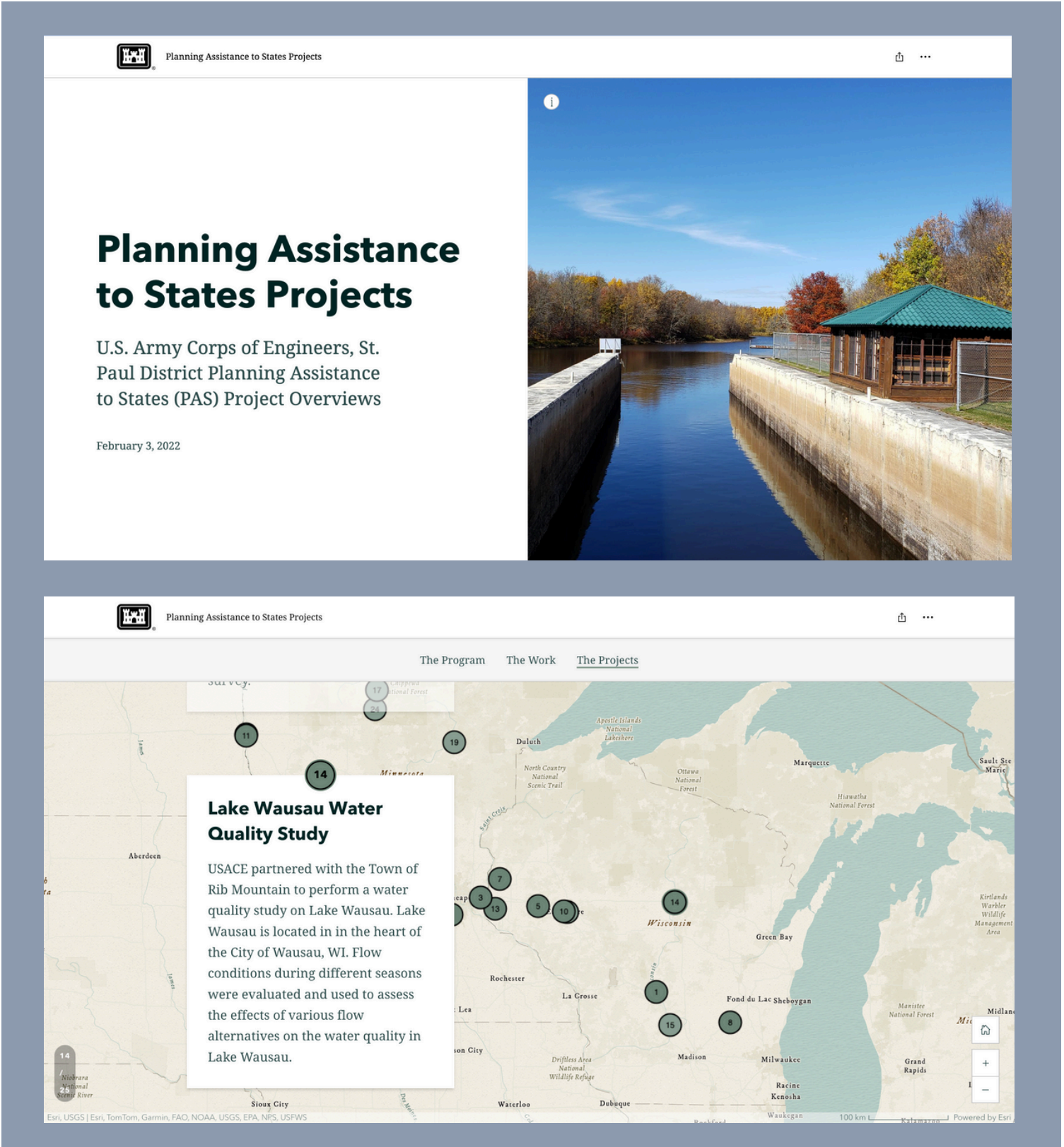


After experiencing flooding in the area, the City of Lake County in central Florida partnered with the Jacksonville District under the PAS program to evaluate ways to measure, manage, and reduce future flood risk with minimal impact to the surrounding areas. The PAS study offered technical assistance to find site-specific data on obstructions to flood flows, formation, and timing; flood depths, stages, or floodwater velocities; and the extent, duration, and frequency of flooding. Natural and cultural floodplain resources were collected to inform a preliminary flood loss analysis with and without the use of flood plain management measures.

The analysis supported the development of management measures to mitigate flood risk to residences and businesses. The PAS study report presented a conceptual-level analysis of the best performing flood risk management plan, and comparison of potentially feasible local solutions.

[BACK](#)

Some districts like St.Paul, MN choose to map their projects publically on a platform called ArcGIS Storymaps. These individual district office efforts help to spread the word about these programs and what kind of work they can deliver.



Published February 3, 2022 Screenshot from <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7fa4f62fa54640c790a89a6ed6607200>, June 2025

How does the USACE connect with communities that can most benefit from technical assistance?

There is no consistent, standardized role responsible for outreach and engagement across USACE divisions; instead, various job titles and roles such as Strategic Planning Coordinators, Outreach Specialists, and Project Managers, take on these responsibilities depending on the district.

Additionally, events like major flooding often trigger collaboration efforts with the USACE, either because they have been made aware of a community's needs by a state agency or because the community has sought support directly. This variability leads to uneven approaches to connecting with underserved or environmental justice communities, shaped by available resources, leadership, and local context. There is also limited capacity to honor these agreements and complete the work, so too much outreach would waste time and resources instead of allowing for actual projects to be completed.

How does the USACE connect with communities?



The “Strategic Planning Coordinator”

A program manager from a USACE district office described how they utilize the PAS program to support localized, community-driven planning efforts. In this district office, PAS projects typically originate through proactive USACE outreach and interagency coordination. This is facilitated by the district’s Strategic Planning Coordinator, who engages with local partners, attends meetings, and identifies opportunities. This is not a title that is consistent across every USACE district. Some PAS projects evolve from earlier efforts—such as flood plain mapping studies, and expand into broader planning under PAS to account for unique needs of the community.

The district relied in recent years on tools like EPA’s EJSCREEN or the Council on Environmental Quality’s Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) to identify environmental justice communities eligible for cost-share agreements. CEJST was removed by the administration from the White House website on January 22, 2025, and the EPA removed its EJSCREEN tool on February 5, 2025.

Although these tools are no longer available for USACE to officially use to justify qualification for fee waivers, the district continues to support underserved communities through manual research and census data. community needs.

How does the USACE connect with communities?

The “Outreach Specialist”



An “Outreach Specialist” and project manager from a large rural district that covers multiple states described the PAS program as a highly flexible and impactful tool. In this rural district, disadvantaged communities are often defined by geographic isolation and lack of infrastructure rather than other issues faced in urban areas. Many projects originate through ongoing relationships or word of mouth rather than formal outreach, and outreach usually happens within the context of other USACE programs, such as emergency management or flood risk reduction, rather than PAS-specific efforts.

To support equitable cost-share waivers in the wake of losing access to national, government-sanctioned EJ screening tools, an associate in the office developed an internal GIS-based tool that integrates multiple socioeconomic indicators and helps identify eligible communities, particularly tribal partners who automatically qualify. USACE districts and divisions who want to better map and understand the areas in their jurisdiction that could most statistically benefit from technical assistance and cost-sharing could invest in this type of intel-gathering strategy.

Unlike some districts that coordinate with state agencies, this district primarily works directly with local governments. The interviewee emphasized that federal budget fluctuations and funding constraints create tension between raising awareness of PAS and managing community expectations, as outreach funds are limited and often prioritized for study execution rather than engagement. The Outreach Specialist is in charge of connecting with communities while managing expectations and priorities.

How does the USACE connect with communities?



The Silver Jackets

Silver Jackets teams are state-led, interagency groups that bring together multiple federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to collaborate on reducing flood risks and improving disaster preparedness. Established to enhance coordination rather than duplicate existing efforts, these teams provide a forum where agencies pool their knowledge, resources, and expertise to address state-identified priorities. Each Silver Jackets team is unique, reflecting local needs, but commonly includes partners like the USACE, FEMA, National Weather Service, and various state emergency management and environmental agencies. Silver Jackets teams began as pilot programs in Ohio (2005) and Indiana (2006) to improve flood risk management through better interagency collaboration. Since then, the initiative has expanded nationwide, with 54 teams now established across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico and Guam. The USACE supports these state-led teams through its Flood Risk Management Program.

Because the PAS program's outreach capacity varies across USACE districts, Silver Jackets teams can play a crucial role in bridging that gap, especially in rural or underserved areas. They help identify local flood risk challenges and connect communities to PAS and other USACE and federal programs. By working collaboratively, Silver Jackets optimize the use of federal, state, and tribal resources and support integrated approaches to flood risk management—from hazard mitigation planning to emergency response.

To learn more about the Silver Jackets, go to <https://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Silver-Jackets/About-Silver-Jackets/>

Report Findings

1. Now may not be the best time to apply to PAS, but it's the right time to connect and engage

While the PAS program has historically been a flexible and valuable tool for collaborative planning, the current funding landscape has significantly limited new project starts. However, this is still a critical time for communities to connect with USACE staff, clarify their local planning priorities, and learn about pathways into the program.

One state water agency interviewed described how their early conversations with USACE helped shape a project around statewide water resource planning, even though the formal application didn't materialize until much later. In another case, regional officials said that because they had longstanding relationships with their USACE district, they were approached proactively about a funding opportunity. Communities with existing relationships benefit from PAS opportunities by laying the groundwork in advance.

Report Findings

2. You do not need a full project already planned, but it's helpful to be clear about the unique needs and challenges of your community

A community does not need to have a fully designed solution in place before initiating conversations about PAS support, although being able to articulate the specific needs, constraints, and lived experiences of local residents can be critical to shaping an effective and appropriate planning effort. For example, a nonprofit organization interviewed brought together five states and several federal and non-governmental stakeholders to tackle water level management—an ecosystem-focused initiative complicated by inter-district coordination and historical litigation concerns. While the initial project concept wasn't fully formed during the application, it turned out to be a successful project that benefitted many different stakeholders in the area through continued collaboration and tailoring of the planning assistance agreement.

Report Findings

3. PAS outreach is variable due to programmatic reasons, and they have various impacts on the accessibility of the program

PAS outreach efforts differ widely from one USACE district to another, and this is just the programmatic structure of the agency. PAS outreach often occurs from the USACE district offices with positions for designated outreach coordinators or strong ties to state agencies. In other districts, where outreach is folded into existing staff roles or dependent on overhead funds, efforts are less prioritized. The fact that each USACE office does things differently makes its impact more difficult to track on a national scale. The absence of a centralized outreach framework means there's no consistent place for local communities to learn about active projects, funding timelines, or examples of past successes unless their district is particularly active on their website or in outreach. Unlike other federal programs, such as Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants, which maintain publicly accessible dashboards on grants.gov and project summaries, USACE offers no equivalent communication tool for PAS. The Silver Jackets program can help bridge some of these gaps, especially in rural areas where federal presence is minimal, but this still depends on state leadership and coordination. As a result, some communities are left unaware of opportunities or uncertain about how to access them.

Report Findings

4. Environmental Justice work isn't just narrow – its existence within agency processes is more fragile than ever

Environmental Justice factors are important to consider when it comes to natural resource planning and providing federal assistance. USACE districts long relied on federal screening tools like EPA's EJSCREEN tool and the Council on Environmental Quality's CEJST to identify environmental justice (EJ) communities for support under Section 22 of the PAS program. However, the recent removal of these tools reflects the broader American political shift away from considering traditionally underserved communities within federal policy decisions. This has created uncertainty across the nation about how to continue to effectively reach underserved populations.

Moving forward, districts are adapting by using alternative methods, such as manually analyzing census data and locally developing Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to meet their obligations. Without clear guidance or consistent resources, environmental justice work risks becoming increasingly fragmented and uneven across districts and national USACE priorities, raising questions about the agency's capacity to address systemic inequities and climate adaptation needs in vulnerable communities.

Recommendations to Support PAS for ICWP Members

1. Advocate for Dedicated PAS Outreach Funding in Congressional Appropriations

ICWP, or members of ICWP who are a part of water infrastructure funding coalitions, could organize to push for dedicated funding for community outreach and engagement within the PAS program. Currently, USACE outreach depends on variable staff leading the initiative, which leads to disparities in program visibility and access across different regions. A consistent, funded outreach mechanism would allow USACE to reach smaller or disadvantaged communities who may not have established federal contacts. However, this push for funding for outreach must be paired with increased overall funding for USACE Planning Assistance itself. Without additional program dollars and staff capacity, districts will be unable to support the influx of communities identified through improved outreach.

2. Promote PAS and Share Success Stories

ICWP members could develop and share materials like Amishi's Application Guide that explains how the PAS program works and how communities can participate. They can also host workshops, trainings, panels, or webinars to help new partners understand USACE processes. Members could document and share examples of successful PAS projects that showcase their benefits to communities. Sharing these examples with lawmakers, agency staff, and the public can help build support for increased PAS funding.

3. Continue the Research and Focus on Environmental Justice

To build on this research, ICWP could consider taking on an intern or fellow, particularly one with data analysis and ArcGIS expertise, to develop detailed geospatial analyses of current and potential PAS engagement areas alongside demographic, flood risk, and environmental vulnerability data. This mapping could identify gaps in outreach and prioritize communities most in need of support, and could then share those results with the USACE.

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