



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

# PLANNING BULLETIN

No. PB 2013-03

Issuing Office: CECW-P

Issued: 15 July 2013

Subject: SMART Planning Milestones

Applicability: Guidance; this bulletin expands upon PB 2012-02.

1. The Corps feasibility study process is a progression of multiple planning decisions from study scoping through the final recommendation of the Chief of Engineers. In SMART Planning, five feasibility study milestones mark the vertical team's confirmation and endorsement of decisions (i.e., completed analysis) *and* the decisions to be made (i.e., the path forward); they are not simply the accomplishment of a series of tasks or the development of specific products.

2. The five feasibility study milestones are:

- a. The Alternatives Milestone.
- b. The Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone.
- c. The Agency Decision Milestone.
- d. The Final Report Milestone.
- e. The Chief's Report Milestone.

3. Alternatives Milestone The Alternatives Milestone marks vertical team concurrence on the array of alternatives the Project Delivery Team (PDT) will carry forward for evaluation and comparison to identify the Tentatively Selected Plan. At this point, the PDT has formulated alternatives and completed an initial screening and preliminary evaluation to develop a focused array. The focused array should represent distinctly different strategies for achieving the water resources objectives in the study area. The vertical team will assess the screening and preliminary evaluation process that has been completed, as well as the criteria and process to be used for evaluation and comparison of the focused array of alternatives. Vertical team concurrence at this milestone does not reflect vertical team agreement on a specific answer or outcome, but on a clear logical formulation and evaluation rationale that indicates the PDT is making appropriate risk-informed decisions following the six-step planning process. The vertical team concurrence may be reached via teleconference, webinar, or during a charette or in-person meeting.

4. Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone: The tentatively selected plan milestone marks vertical team concurrence on a single plan the PDT will carry forward in the feasibility study and the proposed way forward on developing sufficient cost and design information for the final feasibility report. This does not preclude the PDT from also presenting a Locally Preferred Plan. The District Chief of Planning will brief the tentatively selected plan to the HQUSACE Chief,

Planning and Policy. The HQUSACE Chief, Planning and Policy, endorses a tentatively selected plan and the proposed way forward. The MSC provides approval for the District Engineer to release the draft report and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation for public, technical, legal and policy review and independent external peer review (if applicable). Because the PDT is writing the feasibility study report as it goes, and is targeting a 100-page study report, a draft feasibility study report should be largely complete by the milestone meeting.

5. Agency Decision Milestone: After concurrent public, technical, legal and policy reviews, and independent external peer review (if applicable) of the draft report that includes NEPA documentation, the PDT addresses comments and proposes a single plan to Senior Leadership with the proposed way forward on developing cost and design information for the final feasibility study report. The Agency Decision Milestone will include an in-person or virtual briefing conducted by the District Commander, recommending the TSP/LPP to the Deputy Commanding General of Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO) and Senior HQUSACE Leadership Panel (HQUSACE Chiefs of Planning and Policy Division, Engineering and Construction, Real Estate, and Civil Works Program Integration Division). If the selected plan and way forward is not endorsed by the DCG-CEO, the decision log will identify required actions and the study will not proceed into the feasibility-level design stage until the DCG-CEO endorses the path forward.

6. Final Report Milestone: The Final Report Milestone is marked by the Division Engineer's submittal of the final report package to HQUSACE. Following a review of the final report by the HQUSACE policy review team, the DCG-CEO will determine whether to allow release of the draft Chief of Engineers Report and final report/NEPA document for state and agency review as required by the 1944 Flood Control Act (33 U.S.C. 701-1). In order to make this decision, the DCG-CEO will ascertain if all policy issues have been addressed via a mandatory Civil Works Review Board, which will be scalable depending on the scope, complexity, and risk of the Recommended Plan.

7. Chief's Report Milestone: HQUSACE is responsible for the Chief's Report content and schedule. The state and agency and final NEPA reviews are concurrent with HQUSACE's final policy compliance review. The Office of Water Project Review (OWPR) will certify policy compliance after completion of the state and agency and NEPA reviews. OWPR will finalize the Chief's Report for the Chief's signature and the Record of Decision (ROD) for signature by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works). After the policy compliance certification has been completed, the Regional Integration Team (RIT) will process the Chief's Report for signature and will schedule briefings for the Director of Civil Works, the DCG-CEO, and/or the Chief of Engineers, as needed.

8. Pre-Milestone Submittals (Table 1) will be provided to the appropriate RIT member. The purpose of read ahead material for the Alternative, Tentatively Selected Plan, and Agency Decision Milestones is to inform the vertical team; they are not intended to be submitted for a comment and response review. All significant decisions, identified at a milestone meeting or otherwise requiring vertical team input will be recorded in the Decision Log. Pre-Milestone Submittals include:

a. Report Synopsis. The Report Synopsis describes the important elements of the planning work completed to this point of the study. The synopsis highlights key areas of uncertainty and

how it has been addressed in order to manage study risks. The synopsis documents the rationale for PDT decisions and is a living document intended to follow the study through the duration of the planning process. Studies early in development will not have enough information to complete each section. (Ref. SMART Guide, <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=8&Part=6>)

b. Decision Management Plan: The Decision Management Plan is a strategic document that describes the work that will be done by the PDT in reaching the next significant planning decision. Vertical team concurrence is vital on the DMPs. Each DMP clearly describes how decision information will be used in the planning process, before the work is actually completed. (Ref. SMART Guide, <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=8&Part=5>)

c. Risk Register: The Risk Register is an important tool for identifying and managing risks. The risk register is used to assess risks in the specific strategy outlined in the DMP, so that the vertical team can make decisions on how those risks are to be managed, during the study and throughout the project life-cycle. The risk register should be used as a guide for decision-making in a timely manner, making and accepting decisions based on information available to the PDT at that time. (Ref. SMART Guide, <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=8&Part=4>)

d. Decision Log: The decision log is a way for the PDT to document the decisions made to reduce the chances of a dispute arising from unknown decisions and to easily identify decisions that may need to be reevaluated. VT members must sign or initial the Decision Log before an IPR or Milestone is concluded. (Ref. SMART Guide, <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/smart.cfm?Section=8&Part=2>)

9. After each milestone, a Memorandum for Record (MFR) will be prepared by the PDT and submitted through the MSC Commander to the RIT. The purpose of the MFR is to document and summarize the outcome of the milestone.

10. Supersedence: Specific sections of ER 1105-2-100 that contain superseded guidance include: Appendix G section G-9, Appendix H sections H-4, H-5, and Appendix H exhibits H-3, H-4, H-5, H-11.

Table 1: Pre-Milestone Submittals

Milestone	Milestone Purpose	To Be Completed Prior to the Milestone	Pre-Milestone Submittals
1. Alternatives	Vertical team concurrence on evaluation criteria and focused array of alternatives.	Study Scope	Report Synopsis
		NEPA Scoping	Decision Management Plan
		Publish NOI <sup>1</sup>	Risk Register
			Decision Log
2. TSP	Vertical team concurrence on the TSP/LPP; Chief, Planning and Policy endorsement of TSP/LPP and path forward.	IEPR Exclusion request <sup>1</sup>	Report Synopsis
		DQC of Draft Report	Decision Management Plan
		LPP Waiver <sup>1</sup>	Risk Register
			Decision Log
3. Agency Decision	DCG-CEO and Senior HQUSACE leaders endorsement of the recommended plan that will be the focus of an increased level of design	ATR of Draft Report	Report Synopsis
		Public/Agency Review of Draft Report	Decision Management Plan
		District Legal Certification of Draft Report	Risk Register
		Policy Compliance Review of Draft Report	Decision Log
		IEPR of Draft Report <sup>2</sup>	Briefing Presentation
4. Final Report	DE submittal of final report package	Final Integrated Report with Appendices and Supporting Documentation	Final Report Submittal Package
			Decision Log
			Project Study Issue Checklist
			Briefing Presentation
5. Chief's Report	Chief of Engineers approval of Final Report and signature of Chief's Report.	CWRB	Final Integrated Report with Appendices and Supporting Documentation
		State & Agency Review	Chief's Report Submittal Package
		Final NEPA Review	
		OWPR Documentation of Review Findings	
		Final HQUSACE Legal Certification	
		Final Policy Compliance Review	
		Chief's Responses to IEPR Comments <sup>1</sup>	

Notes

1. If applicable.
2. The IEPR panel has up to 60 days after the end of the public review of the draft to submit its report, and longer at the discretion of the Chief. IEPR may not be completed yet.

11. For questions about SMART Planning Milestones, please contact your Regional Integration Team to coordinate with the Planning Community of Practice.



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