

# **Peer Review Plan**

**Dismal Swamp Canal Ecosystem Restoration**

**Chesapeake, Virginia**

**Feasibility Report**

**April 2007**

**Dismal Swamp Canal Ecosystem Restoration, Chesapeake, Virginia**

# **Feasibility Report**

## **Peer Review Plan**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this peer review plan (PRP) is to describe the process for ensuring the accomplishment of a quality and timely Feasibility Report for the Dismal Swamp Canal, Chesapeake, Virginia, Ecosystem Restoration Project. The purpose of this Feasibility Report is to study and analyze the potential for ecosystem restoration in the Deep Creek and New Mill Creek areas of the City of Chesapeake and to provide a recommendation based on the results. This PRP will govern a formal review process for the technical and policy compliance of the results of the Feasibility Report with the goal of producing a high quality product that is completed on time and within budget. The focus of the PRP is to describe this review process with particular emphasis on the conduct of the review and the documentation of the technical review activities that are accomplished throughout the study process. The technical review ensures compliance with established policy, principles, and procedures and the presentation of assumptions, methodology, appropriateness of data used, reasonableness of results, and ability of the plan to meet the needs of the community, region, and Nation. The PRP indicates the methods necessary for this study to adequately address the peer review and external technical review needs including the identification of study team and technical review team members. This PRP has been prepared in accordance with appropriate Corps guidance EC 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision Documents.

2. The Planning Center of Expertise (PCX) is the manager of the EITR for all new feasibility studies, including external peer review for complex projects. Pertinent to the decision to conduct EITR was the recognition that the risk and magnitude of the project are not such that a critical examination by a qualified person or team outside of the Corps and not involved in the day-to-day production of a technical product is necessary. Additionally, there are no novel methods being employed for this Feasibility Report. There are no complex challenges for interpretation and any conclusions that will be made are likely to affect changes to prevailing practices or to affect policy decisions that have a significant impact. Furthermore, there are no precedent-setting models being used in this Feasibility Report. All the models in use for this Feasibility Report have been used before and are being used on other projects at this time.

### **EITR PROCESS**

3. The EITR process for the Feasibility Report will be managed by the PCX. The following is a description of that process as related to the conduct of the Feasibility Report.

a. External Independent Technical Review -- The Wilmington District was selected to manage the EITR and the review team is comprised of members from the Wilmington District. The EITR team is responsible for ensuring that all technical products of the study team meet Corps regulations, standards, and current guidance. The EITR team's review will focus on the

underlying assumptions, conclusions, recommendations, models, and analyses in the context of established policy and guidance. The technical review for this study will be fully documented and documentation and certification of technical/legal review will accompany the report(s) that are submitted for policy review. As previously discussed, technical review is the process that confirms the proper selection and application of established criteria, regulations, laws, codes, principles, and professional procedures to ensure a quality product. Technical review also confirms the constructability and effectiveness of the product and the utilization of clearly justified and valid assumptions and methodologies. Early identification of technical issues facilitates efficient resolution, minimizes policy review comments, and increases the likelihood of approval of worthy projects.

There has been an individual in Wilmington District who has been selected to lead the EITR Team. It should be noted that the EITR team has been briefed on the extent of their duties, and they understand that the review team's involvement in the study process is on-going and continuous. The EITR team leader, in coordination with the EITR team, will be responsible for the following activities:

- (1) Lead and manage the EITR.
- (2) Coordinate the assembly of an appropriate EITR team.
- (3) Attend all milestones meetings, including IRC's and other vertical team meetings.
- (4) Conduct external technical review meetings with the PDT, as necessary, to resolve identified issues early on.
- (5) Maintain ongoing and continuous review of distinct products as they are completed such as problems, needs, and opportunities; assumptions, constraints, evaluation criteria, and forecasting methods; without project condition; possible solutions and initial screening of alternative plans; evaluation of detailed plans (benefit analysis, designs, cost estimates, environmental and cultural impacts, real estate requirements, etc; and plan selection (NED, NER, Locally Preferred Plan)).
- (6) In addition, conduct reviews and provide written comments with coordinated responses of major products and draft and final report including environmental documentation. A memorandum for the record (MFR) will be the basis of accountability for the review of major products, including the draft and final Feasibility Report. A review team member will prepare the MFR and it will become part of the review team's records. Specific issues raised in the review will be documented in a comment, response, action required, and action taken format. Minor grammatical or editorial comments should NOT be included as part of the MFR, but sent to the PDT separately.
- (7) Maintain a file on all external technical review documentation.
- (9) Prepare a quality control report to document and certify the results of ITR.

b. Use of Checklists. Checklists may be used to guide the technical review and ensure that critical items are not overlooked (see Attachment I in the SOP for the Planning and Policy Community of Practice, Appendix 4, for an example). Checklists may be used to simplify the documentation of the review. Checklists may also be used to track outstanding action items for a particular study. The use of checklists shall not, however, eliminate the requirement to respond to specific comments.

c. Quality Control Report – The EITR team will prepare a quality control report (QCR) for the draft and final report to include how the quality control process was performed, summary of issues and detailed comments, how they were resolved, minutes of technical review meetings, and other documentation supporting technical review and formal certification of technical review and legal sufficiency. The QCR will accompany submission of the draft and final report to NAD and HQUSACE.

d. Conflict/Dispute Resolution -- The general process for resolving technical and policy issues identified during the ITR is summarized in the Standard Operating Procedures for the Planning and Policy Community of Practice, Appendix 4, Quality Management, dated 12 May 2005. Unresolved differences between the PDT and review team shall be documented. The EITR review team leader is responsible for identifying any contradictory recommendations, or outright disagreements, among members of the review team and/or the PDT. If these differences cannot be resolved, the functional chiefs in the originating district (NAO) will make the ultimate decision regarding the resolution of these ITR comments. These significant issues shall be documented in the quality control report accompanying the appropriate documents submitted. The originating districts will request the NAD Planning Community of Practice Leader to assist in the resolution of complex technical and policy issues.

e. Public Review – The public will be able to review the document during the public review period. The Office of Water Policy Review will determine if an expedited review is warranted or if the review will take place after higher authority review the draft Feasibility Report. All comments received from the public will be given the same consideration as those received from the EITR team. The EITR team will likely be conducting their review at the same time the public review is on going. However, the EITR will be made aware of the review comments received from the public and have an additional opportunity to comment.

### **PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM**

4. The PDT for this effort was selected based on the expertise necessary to provide the technical input required to address the scope of work as detailed in the project management plan. The PDT consists of a project manager, study team leader, core team members, extended technical resource team members, including supervisory oversight/resource availability team members and management oversight team members. During the course of the study, PDT members may change because of workload, study priorities, turnover, etc. Appropriate replacements will be provided, as necessary, by the oversight/resource availability team members.

### **EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT REVIEW TEAM**

7. An external independent technical review (EITR) team led by Wilmington District personnel has been established representing all technical elements providing significant input to the study. The technical review team has the credentials and experience necessary to provide a comprehensive review relating to specific study disciplines as the team members provide input in their principal areas of expertise. The external independent review team members are not involved in the specific technical products under their review. In addition, the external independent review team can be augmented, as needed, with members from other external Corps offices, Centers of Expertise, labs, academia, or other sources of external peer review as determined necessary for a quality review.

**STUDY MILESTONE SCHEDULE**

8. The overall accomplishment of the appropriate independent technical review process for the Dismal Swamp Canal Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Report is the responsibility of the project manager in coordination with the study team leader and PDT. As previously discussed, the Wilmington District has been employed to conduct the required ITR. It is important to ensure that technical review is ongoing and as issues are identified, meetings are scheduled to resolve those issues and proper documentation of the resolution of the issues is prepared, filed, and coordinated, as appropriate. Milestone meetings that include higher authority, local interests, and District personnel will be scheduled as required to discuss the scope of the study, study process and progress, study direction, and any pertinent issues that require such a meeting. All issue meetings are documented for the technical review files. The following table presents the major milestones that are scheduled or have already been conducted. In addition, technical review meetings, in-progress review meetings, project review board meetings, and issue resolution conferences will be held, as needed, and documented for the ITR files.

**Schedule for the Feasibility Study**

Execute Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement	
Initiate General Investigations	
Initial Meeting between Norfolk District Staff and City Staff	
Plan Formulation Process Completed	Nov 07
Draft Formulation Analysis Notebook Completed	Feb 08
Draft Formulation Analysis Notebook Submitted for External Independent Technical Review	Feb 08
Formulation Analysis Notebook Read-Ahead Forwarded to Higher HQ	Mar 08
Alternatives Formulation Briefing Conducted	May 08
Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment Submitted for Concurrent Review to Higher HQ and Agencies	Sept 08
Final Feasibility Report Submitted	Jan 09
Civil Works Review Board Conducted	Feb 09
Final Feasibility Report (FFR) Distributed for State and Agency Review	Mar 09
Comments Due	Apr 09
FFR, Signed Chief’s Report, and Signed Record of Decision (If Needed) Submitted to ASA	Jun 09

FFR, Signed Chief's Report, and Signed Record of Decision (If Needed) Submitted to OMB	Dec 09
FFR, Signed Chief's Report, and Signed Record of Decision (If Needed) Submitted to Congress	Feb 10

## **SUMMARY**

9. In summary, conduct and documentation of the technical review for the Dismal Swamp Canal, Chesapeake, Virginia, Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Report is an ongoing process that will provide assurance that a comprehensive and independent review has been conducted in accordance with the principles and guidelines established. The external independent technical review team leader, working through the project manager and technical team leader, will ensure that the above is accomplished. In addition, District Commanders, District functional chiefs, the DST, Planning COP, and RIT share the responsibility of ensuring a quality product. In this context, quality control is everybody's business.