

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Building Water Infrastructure

The corps is a military-run federal agency that constructs huge public works projects, building dams for electricity, dredging rivers for barge navigation and building dikes and levees for flood control. The corps also constructs and supports military facilities, builds and maintains other large water projects and issues permits for developers to drain and fill wetlands.

Economic and Environmental Impacts

The impact that corps projects have on our environment rival that of any other federal agency or private company. Corps projects are typically massive, costing millions of dollars, and typically work against natural systems, rather than with them, damaging wetlands, rivers and streams that support our ecosystem.

Pork-Barrel Politics Determine Corps Projects

Congress must pass legislation 'authorizing' corps projects before the projects can move forward. Members of Congress often agree to vote for projects in exchange for votes on other issues, and often support projects to bring federal dollars to their districts. This buddy-buddy and pork-barrel system places too little value on project merits or watershed impacts, resulting in flawed projects that disrupt natural water flow and harm entire watersheds.

'Permitting' Development in Sensitive Wetlands

The corps also administers the federal Clean Water Act's program aimed at protecting wetlands. When private/commercial projects will fill-in or drain wetlands, developers must get a '404' permit from the corps, which typically requires public comment and environmental review. The corps usually approves permits without doing the necessary environmental reviews. This allows oil companies, developers and others to fill wetlands, contributing to our declining environment.

From Construction to Restoration

Growing demand for a healthy environment is shifting some corps projects towards restoring natural systems. In recent years, the corps has designed and constructed a variety of restoration projects to restore lost wetlands, construct fish ladders and remove unwanted dams. But at the same time restoration is growing, the corps continues to operate existing projects that work against nature and is planning a host of new flawed projects that would have massive consequences.

Corps Reform In Demand

People have come together to stop corps projects that threaten the environment, and in Nov. 2007, Congress passed legislation that requires the Corps to revise and modernize its project planning, strengthen its wetlands mitigation, and independently review certain projects. However, missing from these reforms is a system to *prioritize* corps projects to ensure that projects are sustainable, promote ecosystem health, and reflect our nation's priorities.

*For more information, please contact: George Sorvalis, Corps Reform Network, 202-797-6617,
sorvalisg@CorpsReform.org*