

Mr. J.P. Woodley,
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

September 24, 2003

Dear Mr. Woodley:

I am writing to you on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to call your attention to an imminent reorganization of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that we believe merits your attention.

This plan, labeled USACE 2012 (<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/stakeholders/>) denoting that it is supposed to remain in effect for nine years until 2012, is slated to go into effect this October 1. PEER believes this plan violates Corps regulatory guidance, breaks Congressional commitments and contradicts Administration policies. Enclosed is a short analysis outlining problems with the principal features of this plan. Among the issues highlighted in this analysis are changes that —

- Position the Corps as a provider of “business lines” of services in violation of regulatory guidance that the agency should be “an honest broker” and not a “project advocate;”
- Propose a number of changes affecting Congressional oversight and relations, including eliminating line-item funding for Corps projects, giving the Corps sole discretion to determine which projects should receive reconnaissance studies and collapsing the authorization and the appropriations process; and
- Urge the elimination of local cost sharing for project feasibility studies in contradiction of Administration policies promoting greater financial responsibility for project sponsors.

Significantly, USACE 2012 does not acknowledge the oversight and management roles of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works or the President’s Office of Management and Budget. The plan appears to commit the Corps to its own unique water resources policy and doctrine requiring only limited “interfacing” with civilian superiors on annual legislative matters.

By this letter, PEER is asking you to intercede in this pending reorganization by suspending its October 1, 2003 effective date. PEER urges you to thoroughly examine both the substance and the implications of USACE 2012 before it is allowed to become operational.

Should you desire more information about the nature of PEER's concerns about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jeff Ruch
Executive Director

Enclosure.