

Natural Resources and Environment: Corps of Engineers Flood Control Projects Could Be Completed Faster Through Legislative and Managerial Changes: Ced

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As part of its responsibility for prevention of flood damage, the Corps of Engineers studies, designs, and constructs flood-control projects. Concerns have been expressed about the length of time being taken to complete these projects.

The survey investigation and advanced engineering and design phases accounted for 60% to 80% of the time spent to complete the projects. Survey-phase studies ranged from 4.5 years to 40 years, and design phase projects ranged from 2.2 to 25 years. Only about half the time was used for actual survey and design work, with most of the remaining time being used in waiting for authorization or appropriation of funds. An average of about 3 years was used for review of survey reports. Delays in preconstruction work have been attributed to procedures followed to obtain authorizations and appropriations and to a legislative requirement for a written cooperative agreement between the Federal government and non-Federal participating interests. This requirement causes delays in States with constitutions which prohibit the future obligation of State appropriations. In four projects reviewed by GAO, factors cited by the Corps (personnel shortages, new evaluation criteria, and local opposition) did not cause significant delays. The Corps did not use its management information system effectively to identify project delays. Alternatives to the current authorization and appropriation process were presented which would reduce the time between authorization and contract award.

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