

Project Planning – Development and Conservation for the American People

Program Overview

The Service's Project Planning Program provides our federal, state, and local partners with on-the-ground biological expertise to support many different types of development and environmental projects across the country. In 2005, Project Planning will continue to focus on helping streamline environmental reviews and conserve natural resources related to important transportation and energy projects. The technical assistance we provide to our partners supports the Department of the Interior's Strategic Plan goals to Improve the Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources; Sustain Biological Communities; and Provide for the Use of Resources in an Environmentally Responsible and Cost Efficient Manner. In particular, Project Planning's technical expertise helps "Expand the Science Base," ensuring our partners have the information they need to implement projects and conserve natural resources at the same time. Three fundamental activities help Project Planning support these goals: (I) advanced planning on federal projects, (II) permitting development in waterways, and (III) hydropower licensing.

In support of the Department's Strategic Plan, Project Planning has worked with Department and Service staff over the past 18 months to create and refine new performance measures that more clearly describe the program's on-the-ground contribution to fish and wildlife conservation. Project Planning's new performance measures will provide a direct link to the Department's Strategic Plan and show clear results that support the Department's resource goals and outcome measures. The new performance measures will demonstrate greater budget and performance integration in FY 2004 and 2005.

I. Advanced Planning on Federal Projects

Under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and National Environmental Policy Act, the Service consults with federal agencies and local sponsors proposing projects that would affect our nation's waters and other important habitats. Project Planning accomplishes its successes by working

Use of Cost and Performance Information

Project Planning has completed several actions to collect and review cost and performance information, and to make effective management decisions.

- ***White House Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining:*** To advance energy projects and conserve resources at the same time, Project Planning shifted responsibilities of selected Service experts to focus on this streamlining effort. In particular, Project Planning staff from Washington, DC, and Salt Lake City, Utah, have served extended details to assist in this nationwide initiative.
- ***Transfer Funding Partnerships to Streamline Transportation Projects:*** To more efficiently meet the mission of the Service, Project Planning has ramped up its partnership with the Department of Transportation, receiving some transfer funds to hire biologists who can focus exclusively on critical transportation projects, in concert with the President's Executive Order on Transportation Streamlining. For example, Project Planning's Washington, DC, office has a National Transportation Coordinator funded by DOT to foster close collaboration and efficient natural resource reviews.
- ***New Performance Measures—Collecting Baseline Data in FY 2004:*** Project Planning staff in Washington, DC, the Regions, and the field created new performance measures that tie our work into the Department's Strategic Plan and more clearly describe the results of our technical assistance. Data for the new measures will be collected in FY 2004 for use in evaluating future management and budgetary decisions.
- ***Activity Based Costing:*** Activity Based Costing will be implemented throughout the Service beginning in FY 2004. This program will help managers match

cooperatively with project applicants to ensure that economic development projects (e.g., energy production and transmission, transportation infrastructure, navigation, flood control, housing) can proceed in a timely manner with minimal environmental impacts. Experience has shown that by being an active partner early in the planning stage, we can help minimize adverse impacts to fish and wildlife and avoid problems later in the planning process.

Through Advanced Planning, the Service helps protect natural resources by:

- 1) Participating on interagency and multi-stakeholder ecosystem and watershed planning teams;
- 2) Leveraging federal funds to address ecological needs;
- 3) Promoting sustainable ecological development; and
- 4) Eliminating the need for lengthy fish and wildlife review, which shortens and streamlines the project approval process.

II. Permitting Development in Waterways

Project Planning's consultation activities under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act help fulfill the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' statutory responsibility to consult with resource agencies before it issues dredge and fill permits in navigable waters. Our pre-development consultation with permit applicants and the Corps is a cornerstone of wetland conservation and protection; it helps avoid and minimize impacts when possible, allowing development to move forward in a positive way. To help avoid and minimize wetland impacts, Project Planning staff visit sites and assess habitat in consultation with our partners, review proposed permits and public notices, analyze potential impacts, and offer technical recommendations for mitigation measures.

III. Hydropower Licensing

In keeping with the Department's Strategic Plan and National Energy Policy, Project Planning staff collaborate with hydropower license applicants, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, states, industry organizations, and other stakeholders to provide affordable energy produced in a way that helps conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats. Many of the projects we assist have multiple facilities, such as dams, reservoirs, generating stations, transmission facilities, and power canals. The Service's consultation role is required by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Clean Water Act, and Federal Power Act. Service biologists and engineers provide technical information and recommendations to conserve migratory fish and other wildlife and their habitats, while protecting tribal treaty rights and resources.

2003 Program Performance Accomplishments

In 2003, Project Planning focused its efforts on critical activities that support the Resource Protection and Resource Use goals within the Department's Strategic plan. Over the past year, resources and staff were dedicated toward creating new performance measures that tie closely to the Department's Strategic Plan. Revised performance measures for Project Planning were piloted in selected field offices across the country early in the fiscal year, and the program finalized new performance measures for FY 2003 in April. In late September, Regional and field offices reported end-of-year data on the new performance measures for the second half of FY 2003, in addition to select workload data collected in the past.

I. Advanced Planning on Federal Projects

In 2003, Project Planning continued its focus on energy projects, providing technical assistance on over 750 coal and mineral-related actions, and nearly 650 oil and gas actions. The coal and mineral-related actions were particularly notable in Western, Midwestern, and Northeastern States. Predevelopment consultations, which occur early in the planning phase and therefore help streamline implementation,

comprised a significant proportion of Project Planning's technical assistance. In total, we provided more than 23,650 pre-development consultations in support of permits and licenses, and federal, state, and local government projects. Table 1 lists actions completed to support *Advanced Planning on Federal Projects*. A few examples of successes achieved in part through our technical assistance follow the table.

Table 1: Advanced Planning Resource Protection Actions in FY 2003

Project/Review	Technical Assistance Completed
Number of Coal and Mineral Related Actions	755
Number of Oil and Gas Related Actions	646
Number of Pre-Development Consultations in Support of Permits and Licenses (Including Pipeline Certificates)	13,317
Number of Pre-Development Consultations in Support of Federal, State, and Local Government Project Investigations	10,336
Number of Agency Actions Related to other Federal Agency Construction Related to Grants or Loans	6,013
Number of Environmental Reviews Received (NEPA)	2,669
Number of Environmental Reviews Completed (NEPA)	1,666

Early Consultation for Transportation in Oklahoma: Early consultation and advanced planning with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) on a bridge replacement project were key in conserving a cave historically used by the endangered gray bat. The cave entrances will be extended outside of the project area through installation of culverts of appropriate length and width to provide adequate flight space for the species.

Restoring the Everglades: The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is a regional-scale program of 68 integrated water management components affecting more than 13 million acres in south Florida. Approximately 30 CERP projects and feasibility studies were underway during FY 2003. Projects ranged from small constructed wetlands, to large scale plans for restoring flows to Everglades National Park (ENP), to regional scale studies for improving habitat that has been degraded from past water diversions.

Energy Development and Resource Conservation in Montana: Through early consultations, Project Planning biologists developed a programmatic approach that reduced negative resource impacts from coal bed methane development in 16 counties in Montana. Coordination with the Bureau of Land Management, state agencies, and industry resulted in the development of a *Coal Bed Methane Programmatic Wildlife Monitoring and Protection Plan*, and additional mitigation and conservation measures were incorporated into statewide and related regional energy plans. Environmental review and consultation were expedited for an area exceeding 25 million acres, including over 5 million acres of mineral-rich federal lands.

II. Permitting Development in Waterways

In FY 2003, Project Planning staff worked with the Corps of Engineers and project applicants to review more than 8,900 Public Notices, and almost 9,300 Nationwide Permits. The workload associated with these actions was particularly notable in Southeastern and Midwestern States. In addition, we provided technical assistance on over 1,900 mitigation bank-related issues. Table 2 lists the technical assistance Project Planning provided for wetlands permitting in FY 2003. The example of mitigation banking provided after the table illustrates how Project Planning's technical assistance helps conserve valuable wetland habitats.

Table 2: Wetlands Permitting and Protection Actions in FY 2003

Wetlands Projects	Technical Assistance Completed
Number of Public Notices (Section 10/404) Issued by the Corps of Engineers	8,909
Number of Nationwide Permit Reviews	9,288
Number of Mitigation Plan Document Reviews	1,548
Number of Mitigation Banks Developed/Reviewed	388

Protecting Habitat through Mitigation Banking in Georgia: The Service worked with the Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources on a mitigation banking review team for 54 stream and/or wetland mitigation banks in Georgia. Twenty-one approved banks protected or restored 9,000 acres of wetlands and associated upland buffers, and 24 miles of stream and riparian habitat. Thirty-three new banks still under development would protect or restore an additional 9,340 acres and more than 70 miles of stream habitat. Three of the new banks would restore riparian buffers on several miles of the Etowah and Conasauga Rivers in reaches with known populations of federally listed fish.

III. Hydropower Licensing

In FY 2003, Project Planning staff provided extensive consultation and coordination on 134 new FERC licenses, and 191 relicenses. Table 3 lists the technical assistance Project Planning provided on FERC hydropower projects in FY 2003. These licensing activities were distributed fairly evenly across Pacific, Rocky Mountain, Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southeastern States, with generally fewer activities in the Southeast and Alaska. In addition, we provided technical guidance on nearly 1,500 post-licensing proceedings, which involves continued long-term involvement with project applicants over the course of the 30-50 year licensing period as license terms, conditions, and mitigation requirements are implemented. An example of how these partnership efforts helped restore habitat in California is described below.

Table 3: FERC Hydropower Licensing Technical Assistance in FY 2003

Hydropower Projects	Technical Assistance Completed
Number of New Hydropower Projects	
<i>Traditional Licensing Process</i>	122
<i>Alternative Licensing Process</i>	12
Number of Exemption Hydropower Projects	17
Number of Relicenses for Hydropower Projects	
<i>Traditional Licensing Process</i>	141
<i>Alternative Licensing Process</i>	50
Number of Post Proceedings for Hydropower Projects	1,481

Habitat Restoration in California: The Service worked with partners on the Tuolumne River, California, to complete 10 restoration projects associated with the New Don Pedro Hydroelectric Project District. Approximately 2.6 miles of instream habitat were restored and 30 acres of new floodplain habitat for salmon were created. Listed steelhead trout and fall-run Chinook salmon were a focus; however, other fish and wildlife species such as riparian songbirds, birds of prey, mammals, and other native fish species also benefited.

2004 Planned Program Performance

I. Advanced Planning on Federal Projects

In FY 2004, the Project Planning program will continue to refine and improve performance measures to provide a direct link to accomplishing the Department's Strategic Plan goals. Project Planning's goal in FY 2004 is to establish firm baseline data by the end of the fiscal year that address the "Expand Science Base" strategy within the Improve the Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources section of the plan. In addition, we will be translating technical assistance into on-the-ground habitat and species benefits, which will feed into several measures found within the Improve the Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources, Sustain Biological Communities, and Resource Use sections of the plan.

In 2004, Project Planning will continue to focus on helping streamline environmental reviews for energy projects. In particular, we expect to provide technical assistance on over 900 coal and mineral-related actions, and nearly 1,300 oil and gas actions. Pre-development streamlining consultations will again comprise a significant proportion of Project Planning's technical assistance. We expect to provide more than 25,000 predevelopment consultations in support of permits and licenses, and federal, state, and local government projects. Table 4 lists FY 2004 targets for *Advanced Planning on Federal Projects*, and a few examples of this year's projects follow.

Table 4: Advanced Planning Resource Protection Actions in FY 2004

Project/Review	2003 Actual	2004 President's Budget	2004 Plan	2004 Plan v. 2004 Budget	2004 Plan v. 2003 Actual
Number of Coal and Mineral Related Actions	755	928	928	Same	+173
Number of Oil and Gas Related Actions	646	1,264	1,264	Same	+618
Number of Pre-Development Consultations in Support of Permits and Licenses (Including Pipeline Certificates)	13,317	14,732	14,732	Same	+1,415
Number of Pre-Development Consultations in Support of Federal, State, and Local Government Project Investigations)	10,336	11,318	11,318	Same	+982
Number of Agency Actions Related to other Federal Agency Construction Related to Grants or Loans	6,013	6,375	6,375	Same	+362
Number of Environmental Reviews Received (NEPA)	2,669	2,862	2,862	Same	+193
Number of Environmental Reviews Completed (NEPA)	1,666	1,838	1,838	Same	+172

Windpower in the Northeast: In FY 2004, Project Planning biologists will be active partners in planning for the Cape Wind windpower project, a significant energy project that would occupy 28 square miles of Nantucket Sound in Massachusetts. Service staff will help develop conservation measures to minimize impacts on migratory birds, both from collisions and habitat fragmentation.

Navigation on the Upper Mississippi: The Service is in its 12th year of providing technical assistance to the Corps of Engineers regarding its Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers Navigation Study. As a result of this partnership, the Navigation Study has enhanced the environmental restoration component of the project, which is likely to lead to conservation and restoration of both public and private lands spanning over 1,200 miles of floodplain habitats. In addition, it will help mitigate impacts from commercial navigation traffic on over 280,000 acres of National Wildlife Refuge System lands, as well as on habitat

used by interjurisdictional fish (paddlefish and pallid sturgeon), migratory birds, and federally listed endangered mussels.

River Restoration in California: The Service is working with the Corps of Engineers on a study to restore Matilija Creek by removing Matilija Dam, a project that has outlived its utility. The footprint of this project includes about 2,000 acres, but overall restoration benefits will span habitats throughout the watershed and to the coastline. Species that will benefit include the federally threatened western snowy plover and endangered California least tern. In addition, removing the dam will provide access to more than 20 miles of historic spawning and rearing habitat for the federally endangered southern steelhead.

II. Permitting Development in Waterways

In FY 2004, Project Planning expects wetland permitting to remain a significant workload. Project Planning will review about 10,100 Public Notices, as well as over 10,000 Nationwide Permits. As in FY 2003, this work will be done in every major region of the country, but the workload will be particularly significant in the Midwestern, Southeastern, and Northeastern United States. In addition, we expect to provide technical assistance on about 2,300 mitigation bank-related issues, following the trend toward using banks to compensate for wetlands impacts.

Table 5: Wetlands Permitting and Protection Actions in FY 2004

Project/Review	2003 Actual	2004 President's Budget	2004 Plan	2004 Plan v. 2004 Budget	2004 Plan v. 2003 Actual
Number of Public Notices (Section 10/404) Issued by the Corps	8,909	10,079	10,079	Same	+1,170
Number of NWP Reviews	9,288	10,045	10,045	Same	+757
Number of Mitigation Plan Document Reviews	1,548	1,848	1,848	Same	+300
Number of Mitigation Banks Developed/Reviewed	388	459	459	Same	+71

Protecting Wetlands in South Carolina: The Service is working with the South Carolina Department of Transportation on two significant mitigation banks. The Hunting Creek mitigation bank will serve the Piedmont region of South Carolina and offer over 14,000 linear feet of stream restoration, with more than 170 acres of upland buffers. The second bank, located along Big Pine Tree Creek in Kershaw County, will be used to mitigate roadway impacts of both streams and wetlands in the sandhills region of South Carolina. The bank will provide over 300 acres of wetland enhancement and restoration as well as a stream restoration component.

III. Hydropower Licensing

In FY 2004, Project Planning expects to provide biological technical assistance on 134 new FERC licenses, and 210 relicenses. The greatest number of these technical assistance actions will be distributed across Pacific, Midwestern, and Northeastern States, followed by Rocky Mountain and Southeastern States. In addition, Service biologists will provide key technical assistance for nearly 1,700 post-licensing proceedings related to hydropower activities, the majority of which will be found in Rocky Mountain and Southeastern States.

Table 6: FERC Hydropower Licensing Technical Assistance in FY 2004

Project/Review	2003 Actual	2004 President's Budget	2004 Plan	2004 Plan v. 2004 Budget	2004 Plan v. 2003 Actual
Number of New Hydropower Projects					
<i>Traditional Licensing Process</i>	122	117	117	Same	-5
<i>Alternative Licensing Process</i>	12	17	17	Same	+5
Number of Exemption Hydropower Projects	17	22	22	Same	+5
Number of Relicenses for Hydropower Projects					
<i>Traditional Licensing Process</i>	141	156	156	Same	+15
<i>Alternative Licensing Process</i>	50	54	54	Same	+4
Number of Post Proceedings for Hydropower Projects	1,481	1,667	1,667	Same	+186

Fish Passage on the Shenandoah: Project Planning biologists collaborated with Allegheny Energy to install upstream fish passage facilities for the American eel at the Millville Hydropower Project on the Shenandoah River in West Virginia. The ladder was installed in August 2003, and within two weeks of installation it had been used by almost 400 eels. In total, the project opened over 45 miles of river to fish migration. A monitoring and tagging study is planned for 2004 under a cooperative agreement with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, the Electric Power Research Institute, and West Virginia University. The Millville eel ladder is the first eel passage structure to be installed in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and it marks the beginning of other efforts in the region.

Hydropower Relicensing Across Multiple Watersheds in the Southeast: The Catawba Wateree Project in North and South Carolina and the Coosa River Project in Alabama—two of FERC's largest capacity projects—are being relicensed in the Southeast. Service biologists are active participants in these processes and others; in total, about 30 licenses (approximately 80 dams) will expire from 2000-2010. These projects have a combined reservoir surface area of approximately 300,000 acres across various watersheds. Project Planning is working to address natural resource needs associated with all of these projects, including as instream flows, fish passage, water withdrawals, and shoreline management.

Justification of Program Changes

Subactivity		2005 Budget Request	Program Changes (+/-)
Project Planning	\$(000) FTE	29,130 305	-1,125 0

The FY 2005 budget request for Project Planning is \$29,130,000 and 305 FTEs, a net program decrease of \$1,125,000 and 1 FTE from the 2004 enacted level.

Cedar City, Utah ES Office (-\$99,000)

Funding for the Cedar City, Utah Ecological Services Field Office has been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget request that are necessary to address higher priority needs. The funding has focused on prairie dog recovery throughout southern Utah. In addition to recovery actions, funds were used to implement and administer several Habitat Conservation Plans, including the Iron County HCP and related commitments as well as the development of two Safe Harbor agreements in Garfield County and one in Iron County; translocation of prairie dogs from private, county, and tribal properties to suitable habitat; and enhancement of county properties for prairie dog establishment. To continue activities in this area, the Service will work with its partners on critical prairie dog issues as

other funding allows. Elimination of the Cedar City Office is not directly related to Project Planning's performance goals under the Department's Strategic Plan; therefore, this decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet its strategic goals.

Middle Rio Grande Bosque (-\$543,000)

Funding for this program has been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget request that are necessary to address higher priority needs. The Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative, an interagency effort to restore and manage 180-miles of the Rio Grande River within central New Mexico. To continue activities in this region, the Service will work with partners to help obtain funding from such alternative sources as state and local natural resources agencies, conservation organizations, and various grant programs administered by the federal government. Securing comparable funds from alternative sources will help the program maintain the same level of services and benefits for the local community. The Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative is not directly related to performance goals under the Department's Strategic Plan; therefore, this decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet strategic goals.

Portland Metro Greenspaces (-\$296,000)

Funding for this program in the Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington area has been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget request that are necessary to address higher priority needs. The Portland Metro Greenspaces program assisted the region's efforts to conserve and connect important open spaces and natural areas. To continue these activities in the future, the Service will work closely with program partners to help secure funding from alternative sources, such as state and local natural resources agencies, conservation organizations, and various grant programs administered by the federal government. This program is not directly related to performance goals under the Department's Strategic Plan; therefore, this decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet strategic goals.

General Program Activities (-\$168,000)

General Program Activities will be reduced to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget request that are necessary to address higher priority needs. This decrease will be spread proportionally across all Service regions, causing field offices to focus on higher-priority requests for technical assistance. The decrease will not undermine high-priority issues such as energy and transportation projects, thus continuing Service's ability to provide federal, state, and local partners with the biological expertise to complete projects, and conserve fish and wildlife simultaneously. Although the decrease will result in slight reductions in performance measures related to advanced planning (-320), wetlands permitting (-193), and lower priority FERC licensing (-17), it will reduce the level of service available to federal and local partners for environmental consultations on development projects.

Vehicle Reduction (-\$19,000)

According to recent Office of Management and Budget statistics, among civilian agencies Interior has the third largest motor vehicle fleet. Vehicles are used by Interior employees and authorized volunteers to support multiple mission activities, many in remote areas. In some locations, government vehicles are provided to support service contractors. Over 4,000 vehicles are used seasonally (i.e., only in winter or summer), or for special purposes, such as law enforcement or fire fighting. Nearly 90 percent of the fleet vehicles are trucks, vans, buses and ambulances, and 10 percent are sedans and station wagons.

In 2004, the Department and the bureaus began a collaborative effort to improve the management of vehicle fleets including examination of the infrastructure for fleet management within each bureau, the identification of best practices that could be used Department-wide, and the development of action plans to improve fleet management and realize cost savings.

In anticipation of improved fleet management and the resultant savings, the 2005 budget proposes a reduction in funding. To achieve these savings, the bureau will undertake fleet reductions and cost-savings by: (1) reducing the size of the fleet; (2) employ energy saving practices by fleet operators; (3) acquire more efficient vehicles; (4) acquire the minimum sized vehicle to accomplish the mission; (5) dispose of underutilized vehicles; (6) freeze the acquisition of vehicles from the General Services Administration (GSA) Excess Vehicle program; and (7) explore and develop the use of inter-bureau motor pools.