

WFPO Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) Overview

Updated 5-11-2021

Why

The purpose of the Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) is to provide reasonable assurance that a feasible plan can be developed that addresses a Public Law 83-566 purpose and that there are no apparent insurmountable obstacles. The PIFR is the justification document for the State Conservationist (STC) to request Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) funding.

What

An environmental evaluation (EE) using an interdisciplinary science-based approach will be conducted as a part of the PIFR. The EE will assist the RFO to determine whether a Plan-EA or Plan-EIS should be prepared or whether the proposed actions are covered by categorical exclusions. The PIFR:

- is a brief study, using existing data and field information
- will determine if the proposed project meets the program criteria
- will consider all locally identified rural development needs of the communities in the watershed
- is a summary of the results of planning done to date
- should include the extent and magnitude of problems, goals, alternatives for solving the identified problems, the estimated cost, and any effects of proposed alternatives
- will have enough detailed information for the potential sponsor to understand the merits of the project
- will indicate if it is possible for any unresolved conflicts can be resolved in the watershed project plan development phase
- will address the maximum watershed or subwatershed area to not exceed 250,000 acres
- will address no structure providing more than 12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity or more than 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity

Eligible Project Purposes

(i) Flood Prevention (Flood Damage Reduction)

Flood prevention or flood damage reduction measures are installed to prevent or reduce damages caused by floodwater. Mitigation measures reduce or prevent floodwater damages by reducing runoff, erosion, and sediment; modifying the susceptibility of improvements in the floodplain to damage; removing damageable property from the floodplain; or reducing the frequency, depth, or velocity of flooding. Measures may also include actions that prevent encroachment into the floodplain.

(ii) Watershed Protection

Watershed protection consists of onsite treatment of watershed natural resources concerns for the primary purpose of reducing offsite floodwater, erosion, sediment, and agriculture-related pollutants. Watershed protection plans may include ecosystem restoration type activities. Any practice or combination of practices listed in Title 450, National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP), may be considered for inclusion in the systems of practices included in a watershed protection project plan. Project measures for watershed protection include land treatment practices installed by land users to conserve and develop soil, water quality and quantity, woodland, fish and wildlife habitats, energy, or recreation and scenic resources

Public Law 83-566 requires that the SLO must “obtain agreements to carry out recommended soil conservation measures and proper farm (conservation) plans from owners of not less than 50 percent of the lands situated in the drainage area above each retention reservoir to be installed with Federal assistance.” USDA policy requires

installation of land treatment practices necessary to ensure that at least 50 percent of the land upstream from any retention reservoir is adequately protected before beginning construction of the retention reservoir.

(iii) Public Recreation

Public recreation developments may be included in a watershed project plan when the SLO agrees to operate and maintain a reservoir or other area for public recreation. Project measures must include only minimum basic facilities needed for public health and safety and access to and use of the area. Minimum basic facilities may include picnic areas, sanitary facilities, fishing piers, shelters, cooking grills, parking areas, swimming beaches, access roads, water, and trails. Also included are practices to provide needed access, water, and power.

(iv) Public Fish and Wildlife

Fish and wildlife development areas may be included in a watershed project plan when the SLO agrees to operate and maintain a reservoir or other area for public fish and wildlife access. Measures installed for public use of areas developed to improve the habitat or the environment for the breeding, growth, and development of fish and wildlife may be included in a watershed project plan.

(v) Agricultural Water Management

Agricultural water management includes drainage, ground water recharge, irrigation, water conservation, water quality improvement, and agricultural (including rural communities) water supply.

(vi) Municipal and Industrial Water Supply

Municipal and industrial (M&I) water supply includes measures necessary to provide storage capacity in reservoirs to increase the availability of water for present and future municipal and industrial use. Needed outlet works and pipelines to convey water from the reservoir to the existing or proposed treatment facilities or water system are also considered project measures.

(vii) Water Quality Management

Water quality management measures provide water storage capacity in reservoirs for regulation of stream flow to improve water quality in streams.

(viii) Watershed Structure Rehabilitation

Watershed structure rehabilitation authorizes financial assistance to local organizations to cover a portion of the costs of rehabilitating dams originally constructed as part of a project carried out under any of the following four authorities—Public Law 83-566, Public Law 78-534, the pilot watershed program authorized under the Department of Agriculture Appropriation Act of 1954, or the Resource Conservation and Development Program authorized by the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981.

Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report Outline

- Summary
- Applicable Agency Authority and Authorized Purposes
- Potential for 20% Agricultural (Rural) Benefits
- Project Overview
- Resource Information
- Proposed Project Purpose and Need Statement
- Resource Concerns and Opportunities
- State, Tribal, Federal Stakeholder Engagement
- Potential Alternatives
- Facilitating Factors
- Obstructing Factors
- Environmental Document
- Sponsors
- Potential Cooperating Agencies
- Potential Stakeholders
- Recommendation