

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

TOWARDS A MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND EQUITABLE EVALUATION OF BENEFITS

NOVEMBER 30, 2022 | WASHINGTON DC
2101 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NW: ROOM 120

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THE CHALLENGE

The economic benefits associated with water resources projects has been the focus of federal investment decisions for decades. However, the science of quantifying and evaluating the diverse environmental, social, as well as economic benefits and costs of water resources projects has advanced significantly in recent years.

Many public and private organizations are working toward integrating multiple objectives, applying improved methods, and conducting a more comprehensive and equitable assessment of project investments—including projects that integrate Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)—in order to create enduring value and a more resilient and sustainable future for communities across the nation.

The USACE Engineering With Nature® (EWN) Program is working to integrate NBS as a part of infrastructure systems. In 2021, USACE engaged The Water Institute of the Gulf to consider how to best quantify the broader set of economic, environmental, and social benefits and costs that integrated water resource projects can provide. While projects that include NBS are central to this effort, progress made in documenting the comprehensive array of benefits produced through infrastructure investment is relevant to a broad range of contexts and purposes. This two-year applied policy research effort will culminate in the Measuring What Matters Summit scheduled for November 30, 2022, where public and private organizations from across the country will come together to share their perspectives, work, and experience regarding comprehensive benefits evaluation.

THE STUDY APPROACH

The purpose of the study titled *Enhancing Benefits Evaluation for Water Resources Projects: Towards a More Comprehensive Approach for Nature-Based Solutions* was to review existing benefits evaluation approaches and identify practical options for improving federal practice for evaluating comprehensive array of economic, environmental, and social benefits produced by integrated water resources projects.

The study team has worked with USACE to identify and further evaluate six completed USACE planning studies that encompass the navigation, coastal storm risk management, flood risk management, and ecosystem restoration missions within USACE to assess methods for evaluating NBS and the comprehensive benefits expected from water resources projects.

The study team is organizing this Summit in Washington, D.C. to bring together government, nonprofit, academic, and private sector collaborators to share recent progress and identify key next steps for evaluation and planning. The Summit will provide an opportunity to share the results of the Study while fostering dialogue across organizations and sectors.





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OUTCOMES

The Measuring What Matters Summit seeks to provide a venue for open exchange and discussion. Participants will have the opportunity to hear from senior administration personnel on the importance of considering and valuing a comprehensive range of economic, environmental, and social benefits in support of the President's priorities, including the Justice40 Initiative and EO 14072. Ultimately, the feedback and perspectives shared in this Summit are intended to provide USACE and other interested government agencies with actionable and practical guidance on how to best formulate, evaluate, and deliver integrated water resources projects.

This Summit builds on the May 2022 [NASEM Workshop](#) related to the benefits, applications, and opportunities of natural infrastructure which explored the efficacy of Nature Based Solutions in areas such as natural hazard resilience, climate change adaptation, and sustainable, multi-purpose infrastructure.

PARTICIPANTS

- Federal personnel working with benefit-cost analysis in water resources planning, grantmaking, and regulatory contexts
- Academic, NGO, and other applied researchers working at the nexus of ecosystem

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01 KEYNOTE & OPENING COMMENTS, 08:30-9:30

- Welcome from NAS President Marcia McNutt (10 min)
- Welcome and Opening Remarks from Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Michael L. Connor (20 min)
- Fireside Chat with White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Mallory and NOAA Administrator Spinrad, facilitated by [Name] (30 min)

02 BENEFITS EVALUATION RESEARCH, 09:30-10:30

- Opening Comments from Engineering With Nature Leadership, Dr. Todd Bridges (5 min)
- Comments from NAS Natural Infrastructure Committee Chair, Dr. Hussam Mahmoud (10 min)
- Reflections on the Origins of Comprehensive Benefits Analysis at the US Army Corps of Engineers, Brigadier General Gerald Galloway (10 min)
- Presentation on Policy Research from the Water Institute of the Gulf, Dr. Jordan Fischbach (20 min)
- Q&A with EBN, WIG, and RAND, Dr. Todd Bridges, Dr. Jordan Fischbach, Dr. Craig Bond (15 min)

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- **State and Local Agency Panel (13:00-14:00)**
 - o Dale Morris, Chief Resilience Officer, City of Charleston, South Carolina
 - o Kristopher Tjernell, Deputy Director, Integrated Water Management, California Department of Water Resources
 - o Jennifer Shanahan, Senior Planner, City of Ft. Collins, Colorado

04 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION, 15:30 16:30

- Participants answer questions to prompt discussion around best practices and common challenges across federal agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector.

05 CLOSING COMMENTS, 16:30 17:00

06 INFORMAL/OPTIONAL RECEPTION, 17:00 18:00

**BRINGING TOGETHER GOVERNMENT, NONPROFIT,
ACADEMIC, AND PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATORS TO
SHARE RECENT PROGRESS AND IDENTIFY KEY NEXT STEPS
FOR EVALUATION AND PLANNING OF INTEGRATED WATER
RESOURCES PROJECTS.**