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Maria Placht is an advisor and in-house specialist in collaboration and community outreach at the Conflict Resolution and Public Participation Center of Expertise, Institute for Water Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She focuses on the development of this new center and provides technical support to USACE headquarters and field districts in the areas of conflict resolution and public participation. Types of support Maria provides include public involvement mechanisms and strategies, training, coaching, situation assessments, process design, facilitation, and mediation. She is knowledgeable of various federal agencies' conflict resolution and public participation programs, as well as the laws and regulations related to engaging in these types of efforts.

Maria Placht joined the Army Corps as a Presidential Management Fellow in 2008. As part of her two-year fellowship she completed details at the State Department's Office of Air and Water and the U.S. Institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution. Prior to joining the Corps, Maria focused on resolving international water conflicts at UNESCO's International Hydrologic Program, part of a fellowship with Harvard University's Program on Negotiation. She has also worked at the Environmental Law Institute, facilitating EPA stakeholder forums on wetlands mitigation and focusing on public participation techniques in transboundary river basins, and at The Nature Conservancy, Yunnan, China office, where she translated Chinese scientific articles and prepared material for a nascent ecotourism program.

Maria currently serves as a mediator on the Department of Defense Roster of Neutrals and on the Leadership Committee for the Association for Conflict Resolution Environment and Public Policy section. She received her Master's degree in 2008 from The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution and Water Resource Policy. Her master's thesis focused on the role of collaborative models in resolving water conflicts. She lives and works in Alexandria, VA.