

# NRM STRATEGIC PLAN BIANNUAL REPORT (1) 2023

**INTRODUCTION.** The 2021-2031 Natural Resources Management (NRM) Strategic Plan was developed to establish a foundational framework to shape and chart the course for the NRM Program over the next decade. The Recreation and Stewardship Leadership Advisory Teams (RLAT/SAT) were charged with implementing and monitoring the plan to include a biannual report. This document serves as the first biannual report to document the achievement of the strategic goals and adapt the strategy to be inclusive of changes in business practices, federal policy, and national initiatives since the plan's development.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.** The strategic priorities of the plan focused on four goal areas: Workforce, Communication, Resourcing, and Program Delivery.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

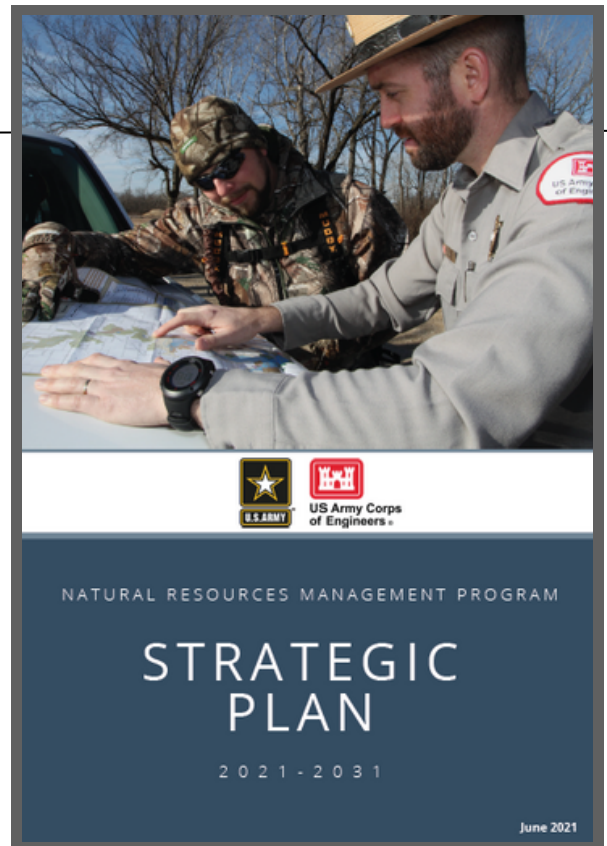
The infographic displays four strategic priorities in a 2x2 grid. Each priority is represented by an icon, a vertical label, a title, and a description.

- PEOPLE (Workforce):** Build and cultivate a world-class team equipped to deliver high quality solutions.
- ENHANCE (Communication):** Effectively communicate the NRM mission to enhance understanding, support, and appreciation of the program by internal and external audiences.
- READINESS (Resourcing):** Apply consistently informed decision making practices, adaptive approaches, and efficient use of available resources to deliver a quality Natural Resources Management Program.
- PARTNERSHIPS (Program Delivery):** Support and deliver innovations that sustain the NRM Program to meet current demands and future challenges.

**GOAL A: WORKFORCE.** The Workforce Goal is to build and cultivate a world-class team equipped to deliver high quality solutions. This goal is comprised of four objectives, each with supporting strategies and current/future action items.

- **Objective 1: Recruitment.** Enhance the recruitment of diverse professionals.
- **Objective 2: Development.** Endorse employee development, advancement, and enrichment.
- **Objective 3: Knowledge management.** Connect via knowledge management and foster intra-agency and partner collaboration.
- **Objective 4: Professional satisfaction.** Encourage excellence.

Table 1 provides a summary of the status related to each action item associated with the Workforce Goal. Considerable progress has been made under Objective 2. Action Item #1 calls for modernization of



the NRM Gateway with a link to the USACE Knowledge Management (KM) Portal. The HQ NRM team has focused efforts on providing accurate, relevant information on the NRM pages of the USACE KM portal with links, when appropriate, to the NRM Gateway. Action Item #2 supports the sharing of good news stories through newsletters and timely updates across the enterprise. Each major program area within the NRM program (recreation, environmental stewardship, water safety, partnerships, and sustainability) develop and share newsletters on a monthly, quarterly, or semi-annual basis. Additionally, the HQ NRM team has continued to publish an annual report summarizing notable program achievements of the past year and priorities for the future year. Finally, Action Item #3 calls for the utilization of the national NRM workshop on a 3-year cycle to ensure knowledge transfer and sharing. While this action was initially delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, planning is underway to hold a national NRM workshop in 2025.

**Going Forward.** Efforts to actualize many of the action items under this goal will continue. NRM Leadership remains focused on advancing employee recruitment, development, and knowledge sharing.

Table 1 - Status of Goal A: Workforce.



<b>Objective 1: Recruitment.</b> Enhance the recruitment of diverse professionals.		
Strategy 1	Develop enterprise guidance to Districts regarding the different hiring strategies and various job series available to effectively and efficiently fulfill workforce demands.	
Strategy 2	Attract a new generation of natural resources management leaders by recruiting employees with a wide variety of expertise, skills, ideas, and backgrounds. Increase diversity by expanding career-oriented outreach to underrepresented communities and universities.	
Action 1	Complete USACE-wide job aid to clarify educational and professional requirements for the 0025 and 0400 series. ● <i>Result: Job aid published and distributed.</i>	
Action 2	Prioritize and support expanded outreach through job fairs, STEM interaction, and social media opportunities. ● <i>Result: Examples of successful, expanded outreach shared throughout NRM.</i>	
<b>Objective 2: Development.</b> Endorse employee development, advancement, and enrichment.		
Strategy 1	Provide employees in the NRM community with tools to facilitate and encourage mentorship, cross training, rotational assignments, participation on national teams, and professional development.	
Action 1	Re-establish the Career Steering Committee to guide the development of NRM employees in achieving career goals. ● <i>Status: Efforts in progress to re-establish committee.</i>	
Action 2	Formalize entry level training program and enhance career planning. ● <i>Status: Park Ranger safety and training has been integrated into USACE Risk Management Internal Control Program.</i>	
Action 3	Continue national teams and developmental assignments that support national programs and provide opportunities for participation and leadership at the national level. ● <i>Result: National teams continued with emphasis on revitalization and work projects. Opportunities shared via various communication avenues. Action is complete with sustained effort.</i>	
<b>Objective 3: Knowledge Management.</b> Connect via knowledge management and foster intra-agency and partner collaboration.		
Strategy 1	Increase emphasis on knowledge management by ensuring media platforms are easily updated and relevant.	
Strategy 2	Encourage participation in training opportunities offered by state and local governments, universities, partners, and other organizations.	
Action 1	Modernize NRM Gateway and link it with USACE KM Portal. ● <i>Status: Efforts are re-occurring to ensure current information on the NRM Gateway. The KM Portal NRM pages have been created and are updated for relevancy. Action completed with sustained effort.</i>	
Action 2	Share good news stories through newsletters and updates across the enterprise. ● <i>Result: Regular, re-occurring newsletters have been established for each major program area. Newsletters are shared through various communication avenues. Action complete with sustained effort.</i>	
Action 3	Utilize the national NRM workshop on a 3-year cycle to ensure knowledge transfer and sharing. ● <i>Status: Workshop planning was delayed due to the pandemic. A workshop is currently being planned for 2025.</i>	
<b>Objective 4: Professional Satisfaction.</b> Encourage excellence.		
Strategy 1	Accurately communicate the roles and cross-cutting responsibilities of today's USACE Park Ranger and Natural Resources Management Specialist.	
Strategy 2	Maintain a motivated, productive workforce by recognizing stellar performers and offering incentives for significant accomplishments.	
Strategy 3	Promote a healthy professional and personal balance.	
Strategy 4	Be responsive to key priorities and concerns within the NRM workforce to maintain morale.	
Action 1	Re-evaluate the national NRM awards program to include a formal program at the MSC and National level.	
Action 2	Explore additional or improved incentive programs and opportunities for scheduling flexibilities.	
Action 3	Issue an annual report based on the park ranger survey with recommendations and actions to address recognized challenges. ● <i>Result: Park Ranger survey efforts along with actions are summarized and distributed to field members, as well as summarized in the Recreation Newsletter and NRM Annual Report. Action is complete with a sustained effort.</i>	

No Longer Required    
 Not Yet Started    
 Action Delayed    
 Action In-Progress    
 Completed with Sustained Effort    
 Completed

**GOAL B: COMMUNICATION.** The Communication Goal is to effectively communicate the NRM mission to enhance understanding, support, and appreciation of the program by internal and external audiences. This goal is comprised of three objectives, each with supporting strategies and current/future action items.

- **Objective 1: Communication messages.** Develop communication messages that resonate with target audiences.
- **Objective 2: Communication products and methods.** Research and develop communication strategies and products that promote the NRM program.
- **Objective 3: Communication tools.** Leverage new and available tools to promote the NRM program.

Table 2 provides a summary of the status related to each action item associated with the Communication Goal. Notable progress has been made under each of the objectives. In particular, as part of Objective 2, a series of videos are being produced that depict the picturesque lands and waters that USACE manages through the NRM program. The products will include two videos three minutes in length explaining the NRM mission and its importance to the nation and multiple short videos for recruiting a talented, diverse workforce. Additionally, as part of the Recreation Task Force (WRDA 2020) the NRM Program initiated and developed communication with recreation industry stakeholders. Action Item #3 under Objective 1 is to revise Title 36 and communicate changes to the public. While this action was initially delayed, USACE has allocated Guidance Update and Modification Program (GUMP) funds to begin the revision process. The Park Ranger CoP has been tasked with this effort.


**Going Forward.** USACE needs to continue using innovative strategies to communicate the NRM mission to our target audiences including the USACE NRM CoP. There is growing interest in protecting and enhancing natural resources. The goal to communicate the scope and footprint of the USACE NRM mission has been successful. The USACE NRM Program needs to communicate the increasing challenges impacting the NRM mission and discover ways our target audiences can assist in managing 12 million acres of public lands and waters.

**GOAL C: RESOURCING.** The Resourcing Goal is to apply consistently informed decision-making practices, adaptive approaches, and efficient use of available resources to deliver a quality NRM program. This goal is comprised of three objectives, each with supporting strategies and current/future action items.




- **Objective 1: Informed decision making.** Revolutionize data systems to create a streamlined, holistic approach for informed, risk-based decisions.
- **Objective 2: Adaptive approaches.** Utilize multiple methods to ensure funding decisions are consistently and appropriately applied in a manner that meets the program's identified priorities for land use management.
- **Objective 3: Leveraging opportunities.** Improve partnering authorities, contracting mechanisms, and regional approaches to gain efficiencies with NRM program resources.

Table 3 provides a summary of the status related to each action item associated with the Resourcing Goal. Successful implementation of many of the action items is dependent upon the work progress of other established PDTs and USACE elements. For example, Objective 2, Action Item #1 is the completion of S3 (Similar Costs for Similar Activities at Similar Projects), a USACE-wide effort. Both the Recreation and Environmental Stewardship Business Lines continue to make progress in the development of S3. Action #1 under Objective 3 explores opportunities for changes to legislation that align USACE authorities with those used by other federal land management agencies. USACE is actively monitoring the recently introduced LAKES Act, as this language would include authority for USACE to retain a minimum of 80% of recreation use fees that can then be reinvested directly to the USACE project where the fees were collected.

**Going Forward.** This Goal has many efforts that are currently being worked by NRM leadership and others in USACE. The RLAT/SAT will continue to coordinate with other POCs throughout USACE to ensure NRM's requirements are being included as regulations/policies are developed. New objectives may be added to this team as legislation is developed or policies change.

Table 2 - Status of Goal B: Communication. 



**Objective 1: Communication Message.** Develop communication messages that resonate with target audiences.

Strategy 1	Develop and implement an effective communication plan for the NRM Program that reaches internal and external audiences at multiple levels with a consistent message.	
Strategy 2	Encourage Division and Districts to incorporate national-level messaging into project-specific communications with local audiences.	
Action 1	Develop national-level NRM program specific messages that highlight the importance of outdoor recreation, public safety, land use management, and the NRM role in protection of project purposes. ● <i>Status: Efforts in progress on specific messaging and are supported by video production.</i>	
Action 2	Expand the use of uCoP visual online operating tolls to communicate performance, visitation, and challenges. ● <i>Status: The focus of the action remains the same and expansion on the use of UCOP will be explored; the NRM team has utilized Power BI and Qlik-type dashboards to visually communicate NRM program areas. Dashboards are utilized and widely shared for Environmental Stewardship, Partnerships, Water Safety, and Visitation.</i>	
Action 3	Revise Title 36 and communicate change to the public. ● <i>Status: This action was initially delayed. USACE has allocated Guidance Update and Modification Program (GUMP) funds to begin the revision process. The Park Ranger CoP is assisting with this effort.</i>	

**Objective 2: Communication Products and Methods.** Research and develop communication strategies and products that promote the NRM program.

Strategy 1	Explore new avenues and opportunities for outreach and engagement that involve current and future USACE leaders at NRM events or activities.	
Strategy 2	Engage stakeholders, elected officials, partners, and local communities, at all levels, to build awareness of the NRM program and achieve win-win opportunities.	
Action 1	Design template fact sheets and graphics that include key messaging and objectives. ● <i>Status: Work associated with this task has been initiated.</i>	
Action 2	Provide the authority and technical training for field staff to maintain quality webpages and social media presence. Increase the use of internet and social media platforms to deliver messaging to target audiences. Provide training on using the available resources (NRM Gateway). ● <i>Status: Effort initiated. NRM efforts are being amplified by HQ USACE when appropriate.</i>	
Action 3	Develop regular national communication with recreation industry stakeholders. ● <i>Status: Recreation Program leaders are engaged with non-federal entities. Outreach meetings were held as part of the Recreation Task Force. USACE is included in FICOR MOU with other Federal land management agencies.</i>	

**Objective 3: Communication Tools.** Leverage new and available tools to promote the NRM program.

Strategy 1	Equip employees with the skills and resources to effectively communicate the NRM program.	
Strategy 2	Enhance relationships with local elected officials and congressional members to develop a better understanding of the NRM program.	
Strategy 3	Encourage engagement across districts to share communication strategies, methods, resources, and products.	
Action 1	Create training materials that identify appropriate methods to leverage project site visits and events.	
Action 2	Develop a single repository for sharing communication products, resources, and ideas. ● <i>Status: Action in progress with the development of a communication repository on the NRM Gateway.</i>	










 No Longer Required    
  Not Yet Started    
  Action Delayed    
  Action In-Progress    
  Completed with Sustained Effort    
  Completed








Table 3 - Status of Goal C: Resourcing. 




**Objective 1: Informed Decision Making.** Revolutionize data systems to create a streamlined, holistic approach for informed risk-based decisions.



Strategy 1	Improve functionality and interface of data systems to facilitate agile, accurate, and consistent risk informed, data driven decision making practices.	
Strategy 2	Refine NRM metrics to articulate the program's alignment with USACE missions.	
Action 1	Incorporate risk inputs into the budget framework for decision making for NRM investments. ● <i>Result: Risk has been incorporated into various aspects of both the Recreation Business Line and Environmental Stewardship Business Line. Action is complete with a sustained effort to modify risk input as needed.</i>	
Action 2	Replace current CW strategic plan metrics for REC/ENS with metrics that reflect gains in efficiencies and risk reduction. ● <i>Status: Evaluation of metrics by workgroups in RLAT/SAT underway.</i>	

**Objective 2: Adaptive Approaches.** Utilize multiple methods to ensure funding decisions are consistently and appropriately applied in a manner that meets the program's identified priorities for land use management.

Strategy 1	Seek opportunities to actively engage and contribute to budget framework and development processes.	
Strategy 2	Promote the incorporation of asset management principals in the budget process.	
Strategy 3	Advance the utilization of appropriate charging practices for work completed that supports other business lines.	
Action 1	Complete development of S3 and implement initial results into practice. ● <i>Both the Recreation and Environmental Stewardship programs have advanced S3 efforts and included initial parameters into the budget building process.</i>	
Action 2	Prioritize NRM Operation Condition Assessments across the enterprise. ● <i>Operation Condition Assessments have been prioritized within the Recreation Program and implementation has been established across the enterprise. Data resulting from the OCAs are utilized in the budget process.</i>	
Action 3	Work across Operations on establishing improved work category policies that improve expenditure tracking in accordance with EIG findings on recreation costs. ● <i>Progress has been made in implementing EIG findings specifically related to standardized use of work category codes during the budget build process. Further effort is needed to improve expenditure tracking.</i>	
Action 4	Strive to develop a self-sufficient shoreline management program with a fee structure in which the user covers the cost associated with the private exclusive use. ● <i>Program leaders are engaged in prioritizing policy guidance for the Shoreline Management Program. Additionally, Operations staff are engaged with Real Estate division to support their needs in establishing consistency related to fair market value and administrative fees for the program.</i>	
Action 5	Explore sharing costs across business lines that support visitor centers and interpretation of all USACE missions. ● <i>HQ guidance allows for the use of funds from all business lines to support visitor centers. Where appropriate the business line that is being interpreted in the visitor center should fund the correlating share of the O&amp;M costs. Continued effort is needed.</i>	

**Objective 3: Leveraging Opportunities.** Improve partnering authorities, contracting mechanisms, and regional approaches to gain efficiencies with NRM program resources.

Strategy 1	Explore opportunities to broaden partnering authorities and prioritize budget packages that utilize partnership contributions for gained efficiencies.	
Strategy 2	Engage with contracting officers to explore and implement alternative contracting processes to ensure timely delivery of services at a fair and reasonable cost.	
Strategy 3	Promote regional oversight and sharing of staff and resources for common activities.	
Action 1	Explore opportunities for changes to legislation that align USACE authorities with those used by other federal land management agencies. ● <i>USACE joined the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce in reestablishing the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Program leaders continue to meet with stakeholders regarding the Recreation Program and monitor proposed legislation that modifies USACE authorities such as the LAKES Act.</i>	
Action 2	Investigate options to expand use and delegation related to warrants and efficient contract practices.	
Action 3	Investigate regional oversight and sharing of staff and resources for common activities. ● <i>Leadership teams have initiated discussion and are examining courses of action to determine opportunities/options for sharing staff and resources for common activities.</i>	

 No Longer Required    
  Not Yet Started    
  Action Delayed    
  Action In-Progress    
  Completed with Sustained Effort    
  Completed

**GOAL D: PROGRAM DELIVERY.** The Program Delivery Goal is to support and deliver innovations that sustain the NRM program to meet current demands and future challenges. This goal is comprised of three objectives, each with supporting strategies and current/future action items.

- **Objective 1: Foster partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration.** Capitalize on opportunities to work with external entities to achieve common goals and advance the NRM USACE mission.
- **Objective 2: Accelerate modernization.** Empower staff to adopt new and innovative practices and tools that enhance service delivery.
- **Objective 3: Increase efficiency.** Reshape internal procedures and information tools to better serve the NRM program and activities.

Table 4 provides a summary of the status related to each current/future action item associated with the Program Delivery Goal. Notable progress has been made on each of the objectives, particularly within Objectives 1 and 3. Under Objective 1, the Invasive Species Leadership Team (ISLT) has led the effort to collaborate with adjacent federal and state land management agencies for shared invasive species efforts. In 2022, The USACE Invasive Species Policy was revised (also a WRDA 2020 requirement), the ISLT PGMP update was approved, the USACE Invasive Species Strategic Plan (a requirement of the John D. Dingell Jr. Act) has been prepared for submittal to Congress, and delegation for noxious weed agreements along with supporting guidance was completed.

Under Objective 3, two actions items were completed. The Innovations Team was formalized and became an official national team under the NRM program. Additionally, delegation of approval and execution authority for the civilian inmate labor programs at Civil Work Projects was approved in 2020. Division Commanders may further delegate signature authority to a district commander, once an agreement is approved by the division commander.

**Going Forward.** With successful progress on many of the current actions associated with the Program Delivery Goal, moving forward the team is prepared to identify the next series of priority actions for the RLAT and SAT to ensure the needs of the NRM program are met. This is envisioned to be a collaborative effort between the goals teams to ensure overarching issues are addressed.

**Summary.** In addition to efforts associated with the implementation of the NRM Strategic Plan, the NRM program is advancing important and needed initiatives related to environmental justice, equitable access to the outdoors and climate change.

- USACE joined the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce in reestablishing the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- USACE was also part of 10 federal departments that signed the America the Beautiful MOU on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities. This effort focuses on strengthening investments in communities who have been locked out of the benefits nature provides, and to ensure all Americans can benefit from safe parks, natural areas, and waterways where they live, work and play.
- The NRM Program is leading the USACE effort in support of Section 203 of the COMPACT Act, ensuring access to the outdoors for our nation's veterans.
- Both the Recreation and Environmental Stewardship Program received funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in FY22, FY23, and FY24 for much needed recreation facility repairs and infrastructure improvements.

The HQ NRM team has also focused considerable effort to meet the requirements of WRDA 2020, WRDA 2022, and appropriations acts in the preparation and future submittal of several reports centered on the recreation and environmental stewardship programs.

- Sec 206 (WRDA 2020) Report on Corps of Engineer Facilities in Appalachia.
- H.R. Rep. No. 116-449 Recreation Task Force, Year 1 and Year 2 Reports.
- Sec 8209 (WRDA 2022) Recreation and Economic Development at Corps Facilities in Appalachia.
- Sec 8227 (WRDA 2022) Investments for Recreation Areas.
- Sec 8237 (WRDA 2022) Assessment of Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Restoration Services.

Each of the reports provides the opportunity to address specific questions regarding the NRM program and support further understanding of our program.

Table 4 - Status of Goal D: Program Delivery.



<b>Objective 1: Foster Partnerships &amp; Interdisciplinary Collaboration.</b> Capitalize on opportunities to work with external entities to achieve common goals and advance the NRM USACE mission.		
Strategy 1	Implement practices associated with sharing resources and expertise across business lines and among adjacent agencies.	
Strategy 2	Expand and build on partnerships with agencies, tribes, underrepresented groups, universities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and technology groups.	
Action 1	Open lines of communication by seeking knowledge and expertise from, and providing updates to, other business lines to identify areas where resources can be shared. ● <i>Action is complete with a sustained effort to modify risk input as needed.</i>	
Action 2	Collaborate with adjacent federal and state land management agencies for shared invasive species and fire management. ● <i>USACE completed several notable actions focused on invasive species management which include issuance of revised invasive species policy, an updated Invasive Species Leadership Team Program Management Plan, a draft USACE Invasive Species Strategic Plan, and signed delegation for implementation of noxious weed cooperative agreements. USACE program leaders are engaged in fire management strategies. Action is complete with a sustained effort focused on collaboration.</i>	
Action 3	Seek new authorities to partner with adjacent public lands that allow expenditures of appropriated funds for joint management activities. ● <i>USACE is monitoring the introduced and sponsored S.1358, known as the Lake Access Keeping Economies Strong (LAKES) Act which would amend the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 and the Flood Control Act of 1968 to provide for provisions relating to collection and retention of user fees at recreation facilities, and provide opportunities for public-private investments.</i>	
Action 4	Develop new and update existing partnership agreement templates and share best management practices for increased efficiencies. ● <i>NRM Gateway provides partnership agreement templates and best management practices. Action is complete with a sustained effort as new agreements are established.</i>	
Action 5	Sustain capability and continue progress on curation consolidation efforts using the Veterans Curation Program (VCP). ● <i>In progress activity.</i>	
<b>Objective 2: Accelerate Modernization.</b> Empower staff to adopt new and innovative practices and tools that enhance service delivery.		
Strategy 1	Facilitate and fund new and inventive approaches in O&M activity delivery.	
Strategy 2	Integrate new technology and automation upgrades into NRM business practices.	
Action 1	Complete a transition to cashless fee collections and reinstate and expand fee collection where efficiencies in technology make collection feasible. ● <i>Action in progress. Additional guidance on fee collection and remittance process are shared with field as needed. Program leaders have engaged with the finance office regarding remittances and processes.</i>	
Action 2	Formalize the Innovations Team under a national program with HQ direction, oversight, and prioritization. ● <i>Action is complete. The Innovations Teams has been formalized, a charter signed, and HQ proponent assigned.</i>	
<b>Objective 3: Increase Efficiency.</b> Reshape internal procedures and information tools to better serve the NRM program and activities.		
Strategy 1	Expand availability of information tools for use internally and externally.	
Strategy 2	Explore ability to streamline processes and provide the training necessary to delegate authority to the lowest appropriate level to enable staff to have the latitude to perform their job as efficiently as possible.	
Strategy 3	Pursue opportunities to implement sustainable business practices and cost saving measures.	
Strategy 4	Prepare NRM employees for ever-changing technology to facilitate new and original approaches to NRM.	
Action 1	Expand access to tools such as UCOP for improved access to data and information. ● <i>The NRM program has developed dashboards for visualizations of data related to partnerships, volunteers, environmental stewardship, volunteers, and water safety. Additionally, NRM has developed pages on the Civil Works Knowledge Management Portal for each major program area and initiative to serve as a single point for locating high level reporting. Action is complete with a sustained effort in maintaining accurate information and ensuring modernization of dashboards as needed.</i>	
Action 2	Receive delegation authority for WRDA 2014 Cooperative Agreements with Indian Tribes from the DCW to MSC and District Commanders. ● <i>Action in progress. NRM program leaders are actively engaged to further use of Cooperative Agreements with Indian Tribes.</i>	
Action 3	Receive delegation authority for Civilian Inmate Labor Program from MSC Commanders to District Commanders. ● <i>Action complete.</i>	