

# COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS



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US Army Corps  
of Engineers®



# What is a Cooperative Agreement?



- A legal nonprocurement assistance instrument as described by 31 USC 63, the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act (FGCA)
- Where funds (or a thing of value) are being transferred to a partner,
- Where substantial involvement is expected between the Corps and the partner when carrying out the activities within the agreement.
  - Substantial USACE involvement could mean, for example, having the option to halt an activity if specifications aren't met, requiring approval of one phase before allowing the next to start, or monitoring performance to provide specific direction of the work.
  - It wouldn't be considered substantial involvement if our role was just to approve plans before award, ensure terms and conditions are met, or provide advice.



# What is a Cooperative Agreement?



- In contrast, contracts are used where the primary purpose is to procure things, supplies or services (including construction) through the expenditure of appropriated funds for direct benefit or use of the Federal government.
- Cooperative agreements must be executed by a certified grants officer.
- Cost is not the main determining factor when selecting the awardee. (Does not have to be low bid)



# USACE Cooperative Agreements Related to NRM



**Note:** USACE authority for cooperative agreements related to the recreation and environmental stewardship is limited to specific types/purposes:



- Educational and training activities
- Research and development – Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU)
- Management of undesirable plants on Federal lands
- Fish, wildlife, water quality, cultural resource management with Indian Tribes



# Overarching Authority for Cooperative Agreements - FGCA



**41 USC 501, Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977** (Amended by 31 USC 6301-08 Using Procurement Contracts and Grant and Cooperative Agreements)

- Requires federal agencies characterize the relationship between a federal and non-federal party as:
  - Procurement Contract **or**
  - Federal Financial Assistance

This act set forth requirements to use cooperative agreements and grants to transfer funds to non-Federal entities but did not provide authority by itself to enter into an agreement. There must be specific authority for the type of work being done.



# Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 (cont.)



## 31 USC 6301-08, Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 (Continued)

If authority is present => Must determine whether the proper instrument for the activity is a contract, cooperative agreement, or grant.

**Contract:** If the principal purpose is to provide something for the direct benefit or use of the Federal government

**Assistance agreement (Cooperative agreement):** If the purpose is to carry out a public purpose of support, or stimulate activities that are not for the direct benefit or use of the Federal government



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# Noxious Weed Cooperative Agreements



## 7 USC 2814: Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974 (Management of undesirable plants on Federal lands)

- Agreements with State agencies (or their political subdivisions) to establish integrated management systems to control or contain undesirable plant species
- The cooperative agreement will:
  - prioritize and target undesirable plant species to be controlled
  - describe the integrated management system
  - define the duties of the Federal agency and the State agency
  - establish a timeframe
- Integrated management system can include:
  - Education
  - Preventative measures
  - Physical, mechanical methods, or biological methods
  - Cultural methods
  - Land management such as livestock/wildlife grazing

\*CFDA #12.012 published Nov 2020. Delegation authority from ASA(CW) approved 4 Aug 2023



# Noxious Weed Cooperative Agreements



- The HQUSACE Project Manager (PM) for Land Use and Natural Resources may delegate signature authority for cooperative agreements to USACE District Commanders after reviewing and approving a draft scope of work and draft cooperative agreement.
- The PM for Land Use and Natural Resources shall review all cooperative agreements every five years from the date of issuance to determine if the cooperative agreements are still appropriate and relevant to the execution of the Federal Noxious Weed Act authorities.
- District Commanders wishing to execute a cooperative agreement under this authority shall submit a request via concurrence memo to the PM for Land Use and Natural Resources which includes:
  - A draft scope of work
  - A draft cooperative agreement

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/coopagree/coopagree.cfm>





# Training and Education Cooperative Agreements



## 33 USC 2339, WRDA 2000, Section 213a: Assistance Programs

- To further training and educational opportunities about water resources development projects
- May enter into cooperative agreements with non-Federal public and nonprofit entities
- For services relating to natural resources conservation or recreation
  - Delegation of authority provided down to District Commanders in spring 2015
  - Allows district grants officers to enter into local cooperative agreements under this authority
  - Similar to a contract, but provides more flexibility in the scope of work that often results in more getting done than through a contract
  - Career pipeline to participants, more diversity of employees



# National Student Conservation Association (SCA) Cooperative Agreement

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- National cooperative agreement administered by Fort Worth District, signed February 1, 2021. (1 year plus 3 options years, valid through January 31, 2025)
- USACE pays for crews and interns in a fee-for-service cost share, transferring funds via repositioning to SWF
- Corps provides training, equipment, on-the-job transportation
- SCA provides round-trip travel and living allowance, housing, liability/health insurance, \*AmeriCorps education awards  
\*(when available)





# About Conservation Corps



- More than 130 organizations around the country that are part of the Corps Network <http://www.corpsnetwork.org/>
- 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations
- Comprehensive youth development programs that engage young people, ages 16 - 25 and returning veterans up to age 35, in service to their communities and the environment
- Corps members receive
  - Job training/hands-on work experience
  - Academic programming
  - Support services
  - Leadership skills
  - Stipend based on living wage





# NC Youth Conservation Corps

- Regional agreement administered by Jacksonville District grants officer. Currently at Falls Lake, Jordan Lake, and Philpott Lake in the Wilmington District in VA and NC (SAW).
- Comprehensive youth development program using nature to teach:
  - Job and leadership skills
  - Community service
  - Environmental stewardship
  - Personal responsibility





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# Northwest Youth Corps



- Cooperative Agreements in NWP and NWS
- Extensive trail work at Chief Joseph Dam, WA





# Cooperative Agreements with Tribes



## **WRRDA 2014, Sec 1031(b), Cooperative Agreements with Indian Tribes**

- Authorizes Indian Tribes or a designated representative of an Indian tribe to carry out authorized activities of the Corps of Engineers to protect fish, wildlife, water quality, and cultural resources.
- Agreements will allow Tribes to build economic capacity while working on infrastructure and natural and cultural resources of mutual interest with USACE, especially in Indian Country.
- Allows resource sharing on a Government-to-Government basis.
- District sets up MOA with each Tribe as the overarching agreement to establish purpose and procedural steps for the two governments
- Cooperative agreement to transfer funds for specific work
- Delegation memo from Assistant Secretary of the Arm (ASA) to Director of Civil Works (DCW)  
June 9, 2016



# Research and Development Cooperative Agreements – CESU Program



- A national network of federal agencies, universities, tribes, state/ local governments working together to provide technical, scientific, and educational support for natural/cultural resource management
- Organized in 17 geographic units with >475 partners
- MOU between agencies. Specific projects set up by cooperative agreements.







# Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units



- Corps agreements coordinated primarily by Chelsea Whitten, Carolyn Pettway, and Sherry Whitaker at ERDC (*\*\*but some district Grants Officers have also processed CESU agreements*)
- Host universities coordinate admin support and access to staff/students
- Projects for education, research, technical assistance
- Facilitates collaboration across agencies/non-fed partners
- Provides a pathway for federal agencies to fund projects at partner institutions with defined overhead (17.5%) and cost-sharing (average overhead rate outside of CESU network is 51%)
- Cooperative agreement can be issued for 5 years (using options)
- <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>
- Procedures to initiate a CESU project on Gateway



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## Corps CESU Project: Libby Dam, MT (NWS)

### \* *Study 1 - Didymosphenia geminata* in the Intermountain Northwest and Long-term Management Strategies for Nuisance Mats

- Growing issue in the Kootenai River since 2001 with major implications for ecosystem
- Native, but invasive
- Little known about Didymo
- Libby Dam becoming a worldwide research hub



**\*Study 2: Experimental determination of the role of Fe on the growth of *Didymosphenia geminata* in the Kootenai River, Montana, downstream from Libby Dam**





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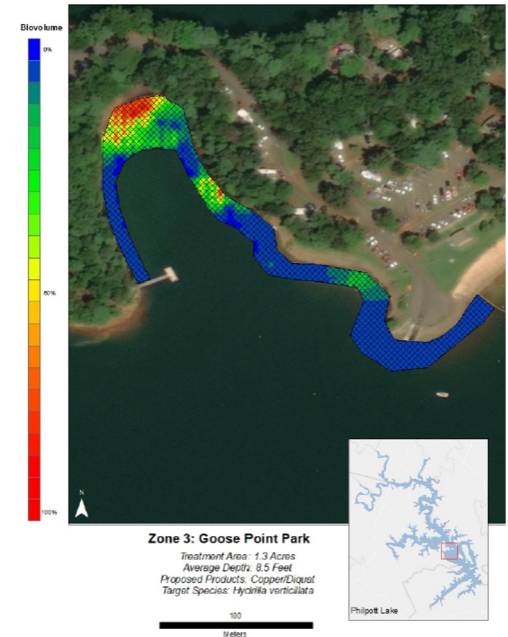
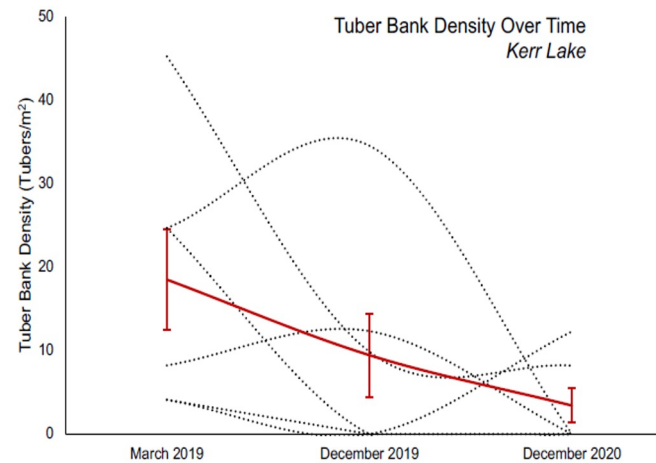
# Corps CESU Project: SAW Lakes, NC



CESU Agreement b/w USACE and NC State University for Invasive Species Research

### Objectives:

- Invasive species surveys and mapping
- Evaluate effects of herbicide treatments
- Evaluate effects of grass carp treatments
- Plant and evaluate native aquatic plant vegetation
- Draft invasive species management plans



Above: Biovolume of hydrilla at a cove in Philpott Lake



# Resources: NRM Gateway

<https://corpslakes.erdcdren.mil/partners/cesu/cesu.cfm>



## Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) Network and the Corps Civil Works Program

On 21 June 2005, Mr. Steve Stockton, Deputy Director, Civil Works signed an [MOU](#) authorizing the US Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program to join the [CESU Network](#). This gave the Corps the ability to join the 17 individual units of the CESU Network.

The CESU Network provides opportunities for federal agencies, NGO's and Universities to collaborate on research, technical assistance and education in the biological, physical, social and cultural sciences needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context.

Each CESU is composed of federal agencies, a host university, and partner institutions. CESU agreements allow each of the participating federal agencies to efficiently transfer funds and duty station employees to university partners through cooperative agreements while maintaining responsibility for agency-sponsored activities within CESU's. CESU's are organized around biogeographic areas and linked together in the CESU network.

To date the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) has joined 16 CESU's on behalf of the Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program under the authority of [Title 10 U.S.C. 2358](#). A list of CESU's ERDC has joined is provided below.

Any Corps office, with the appropriate authority, can participate in CESU activities and have work performed under a cooperative agreement by the four CESU's for which the Corps is a member. See the FAQ's for more information on how Corps offices outside ERDC can participate. The process for ERDC offices to initiate work with CESU's is found under the "policy and procedures" button below.

- [Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Program Summary](#)
- [CESU Summaries](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [District Process to Initiate CESU](#)
- [CESU Network Map](#)
- [Agreements](#)

### List of CESU's ERDC has joined

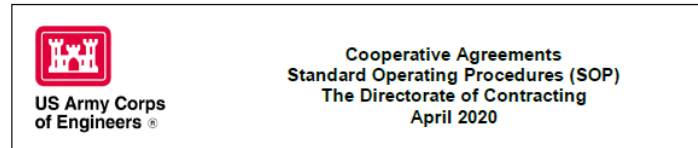




# Cooperative Agreement Process



- National Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) published on Contracting Policy page and updated April 2020
- Provides step by step instruction to set up a cooperative agreement.
- Collaborative process between Operations, Contracting (Grants Officer/Specialist), and Counsel from pre-award through closeout.



### Table of Contents

1.0 Purpose.....	2
2.0 Applicability.....	2
3.0 References.....	2
4.0 Definitions.....	3
5.0 Roles and Responsibilities.....	6
6.0 Regulatory Requirements.....	11
7.0 Pre-award Procedures.....	11
8.0 Post-award Procedures.....	22
9.0 Close-out Procedures.....	27
10.0 Appendices of Required Documents and Sample Templates.....	29

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Date: 2020.04.27 11:50:32  
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**JILL E. STIGLICH**  
Director of Contracting



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# District Grants/ Agreements Officers



Division	District	Point of Contact First Name	Point of Contact Last Name	Email	Phone	Grants Officer or Specialist
LRD	LRB	Jeff	Ernest	jeffrey.g.ernest@usace.army.mil	716-879-4173	Officer
	LRC	None				
	LRE					
	LRH					
	LRL					
	LRN					
	LRP					
MVD	MVK	Derek	Howard	Derek.A.Howard@usace.army.mil	601-634-3310	Officer
	MVP					
	MVR					
	MVS					
NAD	NAB	Jeff	May	Jeffrey.B.May@usace.army.mil	410-962-5617	Officer
	NAE	None				
	NAP	None				
NWD	NWK	Kris	Huber	Kris.a.huber@usace.army.mil	(816) 389-3766	Officer
		Lacy	Kay	lacy.kay@usace.army.mil	816-389-3509	Officer
	NWO	Lee	McCormick	lee.m.mccormick@usace.army.mil	402-995-2084	Officer
		Stephanie	Rostermundt	stephanie.a.rostermundt@usace.army.mil	402-995-2083	Officer
		Lisa	Sirois	lisa.a.sirois@usace.army.mil	402-995-2072	Officer
	NWP	Patrick	Collins	patrick.p.collins@usace.army.mil	503-808-4594	Officer
	NWS	R. David	Williams	roger.d.williams@usace.army.mil	206-764-3772	Officer
		Cam	Allen	camilla.allen@usace.army.mil	206-764-4481	Officer
	NWW	Sara	Edwards	Sara.Edwards@usace.army.mil	(509) 527-7216	Specialist
		Brooke	Moore	brooke.n.moore@usace.army.mil	(509) 527-7913	Officer
POD	POA	Michelle	Mandel	Michelle.R.Mandel@usace.army.mil	(907) 753-2502	Officer
		Sandy	Hutchins	Casandra.A.Hutchins@usace.army.mil	(907) 356-6709	Specialist
	POH	None				



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# District Grants/ Agreements Officers



SAD	SAJ	Griselle	Gonzalez-Aquino	Griselle.Gonzalez@usace.army.mil	(904) 232-3972	Officer
	SAM	None				
	SAS	None				
	SAW	Ed	Boddie	edward.a.boddie@usace.army.mil	910-251-4804	Officer
SPD	SPA	None				
	SPK	None				
	SPL	None				
	SPN	None				
SWD	SWF	Paige	Poorman	paige.e.poorman@usace.army.mil	(817) 886-1124	Officer
		Robin	Prince	robin.g.prince2@usace.army.mil	817-357-7073	Officer
	SWG	Traci	Robicheaux	traci.d.robicheaux@usace.army.mil	409-766-6306	Officer
		Maria	Rodriguez	maria.e.rodriguez@usace.army.mil	409-443-6810	Officer
	SWL	None				
	SWT	None				
ERDC	ERDC	Davita	Baloue	davita.s.baloue@usace.army.mil	601-634-1748	Officer
		Tim	Black	timothy.d.black@usace.army.mil	601-634-3296	Officer
		Andrea	Thomas	andrea.j.thomas@usace.army.mil	217-373-6746	Officer
HNC	HNC	Katrena	Winchester	Katrena.H.Winchester@usace.army.mil	(256) 895-1145	Specialist
		Eric	Horcick	Eric.S.Horcick@usace.army.mil	(256) 895-8247	Officer
Updated Sep 2023						



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# Resources: NRM Gateway

<https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/employees/coopagree/coopagree.cf>



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## Natural Resources Management Gateway

to the future . . .

- Home
- Visitors
- Lake Discovery
- Recreation
- Env Compliance
- Env Stewardship
- Partners
- News/Events
- People
- Forums
- Learning
- GETS
- Tools
- New Postings
- Submit
- Index/Search

### Cooperative Agreement

#### [Headquarters POC](#)

The [Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 \(FGCAA\)](#) sets forth the requirements for using cooperative agreements and grants to transfer funds to non-federal entities. However, use of cooperative agreements must be specifically authorized, and the FGCAA does **not** provide such authority. There is no general authority for the Corps to use cooperative agreements.

A cooperative agreement is a legal instrument as described by 31 USC 63, the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act where funds are being transferred to a partner, which is used to enter into the same kind of relationship as a grant, except that substantial involvement is expected between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the partner when carrying out the activities within the agreement. Substantial involvement may include collaboration, participation, or intervention in the program or activity to be performed under the cooperative agreement. These agreements must be executed by a certified grants officer. Procedures for administering these agreements must comply with Department of Defense Directive 3210.06 (Defense Grant and Agreement Regulatory System (DGARS)).

USACE authority for cooperative agreements is limited to the following specific types/purposes:

- Management of Undesirable Plants
- Educational and training activities
- Research and development
- Agreements with Indian Tribes
- Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU)

- [Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Authorized Cooperative Agreement Types](#)
- [Cooperative Agreement Forms and Templates](#)
- [News / Current Issues](#)
- [Existing Cooperative Agreements](#)
- [District Grants and Agreements Officers](#)

Cooperative Agreement Task Force





# Recap Questions

TRUE of FALSE

Only a Grants Officer may sign a Cooperative Agreement.

TRUE



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# Questions?

