ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Evaluations of Flood Risk Management Projects Could Benefit from Increased Transparency

What GAO Found

In the eight flood risk management feasibility studies GAO reviewed (see figure), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) followed a six-step planning process consistent with its guidance to, among other things, identify and evaluate the beneficial and adverse effects of alternative plans for proposed projects. In doing so, the Corps used economic analyses to evaluate project-specific categories of potential monetary benefits and costs of alternative plans, such as flood damage reduction benefits and project construction costs. The studies also used separate analyses to evaluate other effects, such as on wildlife habitat and the health and safety of communities.

Selected U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Flood Risk Management Feasibility Studies Completed by Eight District Offices

In the eight studies GAO reviewed, the Corps typically recommended the alternative plan with the greatest net benefit, but also relied on other analyses in certain cases, as allowed under Corps guidance. Corps officials said they relied on other analyses to determine the best project design, help make decisions, or respond to local sponsors’ preferences. For example, in one study, the Corps recommended a plan that provided a levee 3 feet higher than the plan with the greatest net benefits, in response to the nonfederal sponsor’s request.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Corps strengthen its feasibility study review process by including steps to ensure consistency with transparency best practices. The agency concurred with the recommendation.

View GAO-20-43. For more information, contact Anne-Marie Fennell at (202) 512-3841 or fennella@gao.gov.

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