
Juggling Resources to Maintain and Improve Engineering Excellence

Vaughn Stokes
Director of Engineering
Washington Office

We continue to be impressed with the quantity and quality of work that is performed by all of you. Despite diverting funds to support fire needs, we made significant progress in completing our workloads. We must all recognize that the fire effort is a vital part of our jobs. Engineering reallocated our construction and Working Capital Fund (WCF) resources to help the Agency avoid violation of the Antideficiency Act. Breaking any law is not an option for any of us.

In this issue, we recognize more quality workmanship by announcing the award winners for the three best *Engineering Field Notes* (EFN) articles from 2001. Readers voted for a wide array of articles so the competition was especially tough.

To further improve the quality and efficiency of Federal agencies, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandated an A-76 process review of the potential to contract for work that is currently performed inhouse. Federal agencies must complete public/private competition studies or direct conversion on at least 5 percent of the full-time equivalents (FTE) reported according to their approved Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act reports by the end of fiscal year 2003.

We are committed to providing public service that is efficient, effective, and affordable. The A-76 process will help us focus on this commitment. I believe we have very good people that provide quality public service, however, this process requires us to ensure that we have the most efficient organization and are doing inherently Government activities. The A-76 process recognizes the need to maintain core competencies and to retain individuals with valuable skills and experience in the organization. Implementing the A-76 process is our opportunity to proactively seek solutions, not to quietly avoid participation or passively await changes.

Another aspect of the day-to-day process was repeatedly emphasized in a recent meeting with the Chief—process predicament or process gridlock. Line officers rely on Engineering to be actively involved in the planning and decisionmaking process. Engineering possesses the training and the skills to equip line officers with information to make scientifically sound decisions. I encourage you to actively participate in the planning process for projects and for forest planning.

To improve our information exchange and to better equip each of you to actively participate in project planning throughout Engineering, EFN will be

posted electronically for the January-June 2003 issue and future issues. This issue will be our last printed, paper version. We will continue to rely on your support in providing worthwhile articles to share engineering information and insights.

In providing efficient and effective public service, we must remember that safety is a key component of our jobs—it cannot be taken for granted. Recent accidents within the Agency have reminded us that we must re-emphasize seatbelt use in all Government vehicles. We urge you to establish good safety habits in and out of the workplace—including the use of safety belts in your personal vehicles.