

## **Planning Associates Program**

### **Class of 2006 Team Pathfinders**

#### **Critical Think Piece - Executive Summary**

Throughout Corps' history, normal project justifications have been based heavily on the NED (National Economic Development) account. This account alone does not wholly recognize the real-life values involved with these projects (i.e. recreation benefits). Events like Katrina have demonstrated the inadequacy of a pure NED evaluation. The NED is not regional; it does not account for the costs in terms of human quality of life, social disruption, and human suffering, which are real expenses to the nation. Each of the Corps' other business line accounts, which supplement the NED account and should outline all benefits and costs, don't always succeed in recognizing them. Even when they do, they often lack the "weight" to truly factor in project justification and the decision making process.

Team Pathfinder's Critical Think Piece addresses the possibility of fully considering the Human Cost of Flooding (HCoF) as an addition to NED benefits. If human costs were included in Corps analysis, then recommendations may provide for projects with a more robust design level and/or projects relocating population centers away from high flood risk areas resulting in a reduction in the magnitude of disasters such as that wrought by Katrina. The purpose of this discussion paper is to discuss past Corps policy on justification of flood damage reduction projects, the concept of the human cost of flooding, and examine potential alternatives to account for the human cost of flooding in project justification and benefit/cost analysis.