

## **Special Project Authorities Associated with Ecosystem Restoration and Environmental Justice**

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Working directly with communities and their specific needs can create the foundation and piecemeal for large impacts. Disadvantaged communities often cannot participate in large studies due to budgeting constraints. Smaller scale restoration efforts can be the most feasible first step towards recovery of a degraded area. These projects can allow economically disadvantaged communities to utilize federal resources for expert assessments, recommendations of solutions, and quicker response to construction. These efforts are especially important in vulnerable environments notably those with underserved residents.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has many ecosystem restoration-based or inclusive authorities. These authorities can be environmental justice focused and require consideration of natural and nature-based feature measures, including resilient and climate change strategized solutions. The Silver Jackets Program is a state-led interagency team which facilitates collaborative solutions to flood risk areas.

Ongoing projects at the USACE Jacksonville District include studies that will assess gray, green, and non-structural options for the betterment of the systems. For example, a Continuing Authorities Program 206 study aimed to restore flows into the Indian River Lagoon which has experienced fish die-off events, manatee mortality, and other environmental changes.

Another example is the FY23 Natural and Nature-Based Features Silver Jacket Team project. This project hones international guidelines into a resource driven educational website for access by homeowners to legislators. Other Silver Jackets projects within the USACE Jacksonville District include establishing framework for incorporating coral reef systems into flood risk management strategies, examining how to integrate green spaces into roadway designs ,and developing hazard education workshops for Puerto Rico.

These examples, among others, demonstrate some of the various options within the USACE congressional authorities for the utilization by environmental justice, natural and nature-based solutions, and resiliency focused communities. Awareness of eligibility for these programs is a USACE prerogative.

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