



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Norfolk District

Contact: Gerald Rogers
Phone: (757) 201-7606

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 12, 2005
#05-08

Army Corps of Engineers launches electronic Joint Permit Application

Norfolk, Va. — In March 2005, Norfolk District and the Commonwealth of Virginia became the first Corps district and state to field the new U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' electronic Joint Permit Application (eJPA).

The Norfolk District, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), all have been using the same paper Joint Permit Application form in Virginia, and all provided technical content, review and testing for the eJPA. The agencies also implemented measures to ensure that the receipt and processing of electronic application submittals was consistent with the existing process for paper applications.

Once nationwide fielding is complete, eJPA will allow a permit applicant or consultant to fill out the entire regulatory permit application online, scan project drawings, and submit the whole package electronically to a centralized server that then directs the application to the pertinent Corps district. For the applicant or consultant, eJPA will save postage and the time it takes for the application to be delivered through the mail. Also, eJPA will streamline the Corps process by: 1) allowing various data fields in the eJPA application to automatically populate the data fields in the Corps' Operations Regulatory Module (ORM) database, eliminating the need to transcribe the data; and 2) with the project drawings already in electronic form, eliminate the need for the Corps project manager to scan them to the electronic public notice.

The genesis of the eJPA concept began in 2000, when the Corps Headquarters' Regulatory Branch began an initiative to streamline the wetlands permitting process for applicants and to ease Corps application processing through form automation and electronic data distribution. After a thorough requirements analysis, an Online Permit Application Center was designed and developed. The first phase of the project resulted in development of a web-based system to allow submission of the Corps National Permit Application Form (ENG Form 4345), which is a non-joint permit application form used only by the Corps.

2-2-2-2 eJPA

According to Norfolk District Chief of Regulatory Branch, Bob Hume, eJPA will prove beneficial over the long haul and ultimately replace a significant portion of all the paper applications received throughout the Corps. Hume adds, "What the Norfolk District, VDEQ and VMRC have done (with eJPA) is to demonstrate a concept: an electronic joint permit application process that can be modified and used in other states."

Hume compared the Corps permit initiative to that of America's three-stage manned space-flight program in the late 1950s and '60s. "The electronic permit application launched by Corps headquarters a couple of years ago was like *Project Mercury*, demonstrating the feasibility of launching an electronic permit application form," says Hume. "The eJPA is like *Project Gemini*, demonstrating how the Corps' electronic permit application can be broadened and enhanced to create a single interactive eJPA that allows a permit applicant to simultaneously apply online for the required Corps and state permits in Virginia. *Project Apollo* will involve the other Corps districts and state regulatory agencies as they modify the Virginia eJPA to make it usable anywhere in the country."

The Corps Online Permit Application Center includes a public web site (<https://epermit.usace.army.mil>) that contains Corps permitting guidance, an optional user registration capability, a user-friendly extensible markup language (XML) version of the National 4345 permit application form, and permit status-checking capability. The XML form, designed to be downloaded to the user's PC and completed offline, includes instructions and automated error checking. When the form is complete, the applicant simply goes online and clicks the submit button on the form to upload their application. Applicants can then check the status of their application from the web site, which is updated on a 24-hour cycle. Currently, electronic status checking is only available for applications submitted to the Jacksonville (Fla.) District.

Once an application has been submitted online, the data will be stored in the Corps Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link (OMBIL) database's Regulatory Module. The appropriate Corps district is then electronically notified of the new application and it is assigned to a processor. As the application is processed, information such as site inspection and public notification dates is entered into the Regulatory database. That and other summary information about the progress of each permit application is then made available via the Corps Online Permit Application Center web site.

For more information on Virginia's new eJPA, contact the Norfolk District Chief of Regulatory Branch, Bob Hume, at 757-201-7657.

###