The Association of State Floodplain Managers is pleased to comment on the Army Corps of Engineers FY 2013 budget request. We wish to call attention to several small programs which have significant impact in helping states and communities manage their flood risk. Those programs are Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS), Planning Assistance to States (PAS) and Silver Jackets. We believe that expansion of these programs could greatly increase the Corps’ ability to provide technical assistance and guidance. Additionally, we wish to express strong support for on-going and expanded work to develop a national levee inventory.

The Association supports both structural and non-structural flood loss reduction projects, but believes we need to achieve a better balanced approach to flood loss reduction and prevention through stronger roles and responsibilities at the local and state levels. Federal flood policy should support and encourage local and state solutions to flooding problems and costs, and we encourage the Corps to do that not only through its non-structural floodproofing committee, but through 3 other specific programs we discuss herein. Often, locally developed solutions address multiple local concerns, incorporating economic, social and environmental considerations into flood control and management strategies. We encourage the Corps to support policies and programs that will assist communities and citizens develop and implement local solutions.

As state and local officials whose job it is to assist our communities in saving lives and avoiding damage from floods, we know how important it is to have a variety of tools available. This allows us to help communities to plan their floodplain management comprehensively, to meet multiple objectives, to get the most value for the federal, state and local dollars spent, and to become fully engaged in managing their own risk.

Dedicated to reducing flood risk and losses in the nation.
The Corps has developed a number of programs – FPMS, PAS, and most recently, Silver Jackets, which provide broad technical assistance and expertise to local communities in these efforts. Our members have found programs like these to be valuable tools for which there is much more demand than can be met. Many communities have used these low cost technical assistance programs which help them plan and implement local solutions with long term benefits and save federal, state and local disaster expenditures.

Silver Jackets has proven to be an effective and very flexible tool for allowing the Corps to not only provide technical assistance to assist in State led efforts to help communities suffering flood damages. Under this program the Corps can bring in other pertinent federal agencies for a collaborative effort to facilitate the full range of options to reduce flood risk and to leverage and optimize resources and develop tailored solutions for a variety of community challenges. We are very pleased that the Corps plans to expand Silver Jackets and we encourage the Committee to strongly support this effort. It pays big dividends and gets the Corps expertise out to many areas and smaller projects that might not otherwise benefit from Corps assistance.

For Fiscal Year 2013, the Corps budget request includes $4 million for PAS and $9.5 million for FPMS. Apparently funds for Silver Jackets will be drawn from the FPMS and FCEE programs. We certainly urge you to support at least this level of funding, but note that the demand for assistance from these programs far exceeds what this funding level can provide. We encourage the Committee to provide amounts above the budget requests for all three programs. The demand and the need is there, as well as authorized funding levels, and this is a very promising area for expansion of Corps activity.

The programs we are discussing fill a gap in the Corps’ ability to be effective in addressing certain kinds of floodplain management situations. If sufficiently well funded, it is likely that hundreds of communities would benefit substantially from Corps efforts.

We also wish to express our strong support for the $10 million requested for the continuing work on the National Levee Inventory. It is critical that the nation assemble better and more complete information on the number, location and status of our levees. It is important that the next stage in this effort be expanded to include non-federally owned and maintained levees. Without this additional information, the federal and state governments cannot assess the scope of levee challenges we face.

About ASFPM
ASFPM and its 33 Chapters represent over 14,000 state and local officials and other flood risk professionals. Our website is: http://www.floods.org. For any questions on this testimony, please contact Larry Larson, ASFPM Executive Director at larry@floods.org or (608) 274-0123 or Meredith Inderfurth, ASFPM Washington Liaison at (703) 448-0245.