



NOR'WESTER



Finalized WRDA bill passes House, stalls in Senate

Recently, we reported that the conference committee charged with reconciling the House and Senate versions of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act had finished their work, and that the completed bill was ready for final passage and to be signed into law. This bill contains a number of provisions that PNWA has been advocating on behalf of our members, with great support from our region's Congressional delegation. We are pleased to report that the House overwhelmingly passed the conference report, with a vote of 381-40.

After the House passed the bill, it was sent to the Senate, where the process has slowed. The Senate was not able to bring the bill to the floor for a vote prior to their recess for the August recess. Senate leaders now promise that the measure will be brought to the floor for a vote in the first week of September when lawmakers return to the Hill.

Once the Senate passes WRDA, it will head to the President's desk to be signed into law. However, it should be noted that the White House has issued a Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) that promises a veto of the bill. This is surprising, as the President has only vetoed three bills in his entire time in office. The Administration's message centers on the cost of the bill. However, several Congressional leaders were quick to note that this WRDA bill is five years overdue, and that each year of delay to an authorization bill leads to more projects that join the backlog.

PNWA staff will send messages to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid as well as Senate Environment & Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer to urge the consideration of the WRDA conference report on the Senate floor in September. Sen. Boxer specifically mentioned PNWA's letter sent to her in May urging passage of the Senate's WRDA bill in her remarks in the Congressional Record. Letters from other trade and industry groups from around the nation were also included. Once the Senate passes the measure, we will send a similar message of support to the President, as well as Assistant Secretary of the Army John Paul Woodley.

Restrictions lifted on dredges *Essayons* and *Yaquina*

After literally decades of work by the Northwest Congressional delegation, PNWA, and our members, past and present, we are pleased to report that the conference committee agreed to lift operating restrictions on the West Coast dredges *Essayons* and *Yaquina*. This will allow the Corps of Engineers to operate the two dredges to maximize their efficiency, and will help address dredging costs, response to emergencies and the reliability of navigation channels up and down the West Coast.

Section 214 permit funding authority extended to 2009

Another provision of interest to PNWA members is Section 214, and the effort to eventually have the authority made permanent. Section 214 is the authority that allows ports, cities and other nonfederal government agencies to contribute funds to the Corps to expedite permitting work. The authority is currently authorized through 2008, and the conference report provides for an extension through the end of 2009. PNWA will be working with our Northwest Congressional delegation to participate in any hearings that are held to discuss the authority, and we look forward to working together in a collaborative manner to eventually make this authority a permanent feature that can be used with predictability by Northwest stakeholders.

Deed and flowage easement restrictions lifted

The Ports of Lewiston, Clarkston, Whitman County, and Pasco have been limited in their use of lands that were formerly owned by the Corps of Engineers. The use restrictions for these lands have been lifted in the conference report, and will allow these Ports to develop the lands in ways that are most beneficial to the economic development of their local communities.

Siltation at Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor (Ports of Ilwaco & Chinook, WA)

The bill includes language that would authorize a study to determine if siltation at Baker Bay is tied to the flow of the federal navigation channel.

Port of Sunnyside aquatic ecosystem restoration project

The bill contains language that would allow the Port of Sunnyside's past work on an aquatic ecosystem restoration project in the Yakima River will be credited toward the non-federal share of the project.

Elliott Bay Seawall in Seattle

The conference report contains a provision allowing the Corps to accept non-federal contributions for the Elliott Bay Seawall study, and count those contributions toward the non-federal share of any projects that become authorized as a result of the study. The provision also allows the Corps to consider seismic activity in the study.

Erosion control project for Puget Island (Wahkiakum Co., WA) and Westport Beach (Clatsop Co., OR)

A provision in the bill will authorize sections of Puget Island and Westport Beach to receive a one-time placement of dredged material, at a fully-funded federal cost of \$1M.

PNWA is very grateful for the efforts of our West Coast Congressional delegation over the years on all of these provisions, as various iterations of WRDA were debated and expired. We are very pleased that this year's WRDA bill is within sight of the finish line, and we look forward to supporting the effort for a WRDA until it eventually becomes law. For more information about WRDA, please visit www.pnwa.net and click on "Water Resources Development Act".

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