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WRDA bill sent to President Bush

Congress has sent the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) to the White House for consideration. The bill (H.R.1495) enjoys strong Congressional support. After passing their own versions of the bill, the House and Senate passed the compromise conference report by wide margins. The Northwest Congressional delegation unanimously supported this legislation, and has been critical in securing provisions of interest to PNWA members.

However, it is likely the President will veto the bill. The White House began sending these signals in July, and a draft document that would accompany his veto was quoted in news stories several weeks ago. The President's concerns appear to focus on the size of the bill. However, it should be noted that this bill is five years overdue. It is meant to be biennial legislation, and the last WRDA bill was enacted in 2000. Additionally, this is an authorization bill, and does not actually spend any taxpayer dollars. Instead, it authorizes projects that must then compete for funding in the annual appropriations process.

The President now has three choices with regard to this bill. The first would be to sign it into law. The second would be to do nothing for ten days, at which point the bill would automatically become law. The third option is to veto the bill. If the President chooses to veto, the bill will head back to Congress. A two-thirds super-majority would be required in both the House and Senate to override the veto. The largest obstacle in this scenario will be time, as both chambers have many pressing items to resolve before the end of the year. The schedule is most limited in the Senate, which has not made much headway in passing the annual appropriations bills that fund the government. It will be a challenge for WRDA bill managers to jockey for position on the Senate calendar to have this legislation considered a final time this fall.

PNWA will send letters of support to the House and Senate if the President vetoes the bill. PNWA is grateful for the ongoing support of the Northwest Congressional delegation, and we look forward to celebrating the eventual completion of this bill. We are especially pleased to report that Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) joined with twenty other Republican Senators on October 3rd to send a message of support for WRDA to President Bush. For more information about WRDA, including provisions that are important to PNWA members and a copy of the Senate Republicans' letter, please visit www.pnwa.net and click on "Water Resources Development Act".

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