Support Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Reauthorization

The National Waterways Conference supports timely consideration and enactment of a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). WRDA legislation must recognize the vital importance of America’s water resources infrastructure to our nation’s well-being and quality of life, and balance economic and human needs with environmental and ecological considerations while ensuring public safety.

The Water Resources Development Act Should Be Enacted to Meet the Nation's Economic, Safety and Transportation Needs. WRDA reaffirms the government’s pledge to authorize, modify, and improve projects, programs, and policies to protect the nation from floods and to keep our waterways open to navigation. Regular authorizations of water resources development projects fulfill these important missions. Investments in infrastructure are long-term investments in the strength and security of the nation, and they provide for tangible and long-lasting benefits to ensure the quality of life for our children and grandchildren far into the future.

Water Resources Projects Grow the Economy. Reliable, well-maintained water resources infrastructure is fundamental to America’s economic and environmental prosperity, and is essential to maintaining our nation’s competitive position within the global economy. Our water resources infrastructure provides life-saving flood control, needed water supplies, shore protection, water-based recreation, environmental restoration, and hydropower production, all essential to our economic well-being.

Waterways Transportation is the Safest, Most Energy-Efficient and Environmentally Sound Mode of Transportation. More than 95 percent of U.S. imports and exports pass through the nation’s harbors. With adequate maintenance and capital investment, our ports and waterways can continue to provide domestic and international trade opportunities and low-cost, environmentally sound movement of goods. The cost for transportation over inland waterways is $11 cheaper per ton than other modes of transportation, translating into an annual savings of $7 billion for American businesses.

Water Resources Projects Undergo Unparalleled Economic and Environmental Review. All projects undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undergo a thorough public interest review and cost/benefit analysis that seek to maximize net national economic development benefits, while protecting our precious environmental resources.
Proposals for WRDA 2016

- Reinforce the essential role that the Congress plays in the important and independent investment decisions regarding the nation’s water resources infrastructure by affirming that Section 7001 of WRRDA 14 mandates that any proposals submitted under this section which satisfy the criteria enumerated in the law must be included in the required report to the Congress for consideration for authorization in WRDA. Noncompliance with Administration policy is not a permissible reason to relegate any proposal to the report’s appendix.

- Ensure an open and transparent process for the development of implementation guidance by requiring consultation with non-federal sponsors on any provision impacting their responsibilities and by providing for notice and an opportunity for comment, and the consideration of those comments in the development of final implementation guidance.

- Modify Section 1024 of WRRDA 14 to confirm that an “emergency” is not limited to natural disasters but also includes failures that result from lack of maintenance, as reflected in the 2014 Manager’s Amendment, and further recommend that authority to implement this provision be delegated to the District Commanders to ensure prompt action.

- Recognizing that non-federal sponsors are increasingly taking on more responsibility for the study and construction of projects, direct that implementation of Section 1014b of WRRDA 14 allow for incremental reimbursements for completed discrete segments, consistent with Policy Guidance Letter 53, and provide that a local sponsor is eligible for reimbursement for the federal share of work later recommended by the Chief of Engineers and approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works).

- Require implementation of Section 1007 of WRRDA 14, after the requisite notice and opportunity for comment, to establish timely and consistent review of Section 408 decision requests, before any further implementation of EC 1165-2-216, and further clarify the scope of projects subject to Section 408 review as those that affect a Corps project’s functionality and purpose, not every activity within a project’s property boundaries.

- Develop a comprehensive approach for the regular maintenance of the nation’s small ports and harbors, which play a critical role in regional and national economies.

The National Waterways Conference, established in 1960, is dedicated to a greater understanding of the widespread public benefits of our nation’s water resources infrastructure. Our mission is to effect common sense policies and programs, recognizing the public value of our nation’s water resources and their contribution to public safety, a competitive economy, national security, environmental quality and energy conservation. Conference membership is comprised of the full spectrum of water resources stakeholders, including flood control associations, levee boards, waterways shippers and carriers, industry and regional associations, port authorities, shipyards, dredging contractors, regional water supply districts, hydropower producers, engineering consultants, and state and local governments.