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 benefit, 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 two to three times lower 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.
Principles for WRDA Authorization:

- Ensure all annual revenues from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund are to be used for their intended purpose, the proper maintenance of our coastal ports and harbors, so critical to America’s global economic prominence.

- Enact a long-term funding solution for the Inland Waterways Trust Fund to ensure the continued viability of the locks and dams critical to the efficient, low-cost and environmentally sound transportation along our waterways.

- Recognizing that dam and levee infrastructure throughout the nation are in need of immediate attention, adopt a dam and levee safety program that provides for the effective and improved management of levees necessary for the continued enjoyment of the public safety and economic benefits yielded by this public works investment.

- Adopt an integrated water resources management policy that promotes a balanced approach to long-term coordination and planning of water resources and water infrastructure, and encourages voluntary intergovernmental cooperation based on the fundamental notion of state and local leadership with Federal assistance.

- Guarantee balanced management of our nation’s floodplains, rooted in the sound concept of net positive benefits and recognizing the critical need to provide projects that assure a safe water supply, protection from damaging floods, environmentally friendly transportation, environmental restoration, and abundant food and energy supplies.

- Make Section 214 regulatory funding authority permanent, allowing ports and other non-federal government entities to partner with the Corps of Engineers to deliver vital infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects in a more timely and cost-effective manner.

- Ensure that the Congress plays a meaningful role in the important and independent investment decisions regarding the nation’s water resources infrastructure, and that such decisions are made in an open and transparent manner.

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, engineering consultants, and state and local governments.