Register Now to Attend NWC’s 2015 Annual Meeting

With 1800 miles of navigable waterways along five rivers, Arkansas is third in the nation in the number of inland waterway miles. The Mighty Mississippi River, forming the eastern border of the state, is the main trade corridor for goods produced in the northern part of the United States, while the Arkansas, Ouachita, Red and White Rivers also serve important transportation routes to gateway ports near the Gulf of Mexico.

Signifying its importance to the nation’s transportation system, the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) has been upgraded from connector to corridor as part of the Maritime Administration’s America’s Marine Highway Program. The upgrade opens future funding opportunities for port and waterways expansion projects. In addition, the MKARNS, the largest civil works project ever undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the time of its opening, has numerous flood control projects, hydroelectric power plants, and soil conservation and recreational areas.

Register Online Today!

waterways.org/2015-annual-meeting/

Attend this year’s meeting to learn more from high-ranking federal officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as regional experts, who’ll discuss the multiple benefits Arkansas’s water resources bring to the region and the nation.

Little Rock, situated on the Arkansas River, is home to a thriving New South culture. With a big role in history while looking to the future, register now to attend NWC’s Annual Meeting and see what Little Rock is all about. You’ll leave with a new idea of what a southern city can do.

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Industry Events

August 3-5
Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association
New Orleans, LA
www.gicaonline.com

August 4-5
Soy Transportation Coalition
Rosemont, IL
www.soytransportation.org

August 18-20
National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies
Jackson Hole, WY
www.nafsm.org

August 25-27
Tenn-Tom Waterway Development Council
Point Clear, AL
www.tenntom.org

August 27
RRVA Oklahoma Water Resources Conference
Durant, OK
www.rrva.org

August 27-28
Ouachita River Valley Association
Hot Springs, AR
www.orva.org

September 7-11
PIANC – Smart Rivers
Buenos Aires, Argentina
www.pianc.org

October 7-9
Pacific Northwest Waterway Association
Portland, OR
www.pnwa.net

October 12-13
Tennessee River Valley Association
Nashville, TN
www.trva-tcwc.org

October 11-14
American Association of Port Authorities
Miami, FL
www.aapa-ports.org

October 15-16
American Waterways Operators
St. Louis, MO
www.americanwaterways.com

October 19-22
PIANC – Dredging Conference
Savannah, GA
www.pianc.org

October 28-30
Int’l Propeller Club of the U.S.
Savannah, GA
www.propellerclubhq.com

NWC Events
More info at waterways.org

September 16-18, 2015
Annual Meeting
Little Rock, AR

March 7-9, 2016
Legislative Summit
Washington, DC

September 21-23, 2016
Annual Meeting
Norfolk, VA

Welcome New Members!

Manatt, Phelps & Phillips
Washington, DC
Julie Minerva

Van Scyoc Associates
Washington, DC
Thane Young

Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Sacramento, CA
Rick Johnson

Colonial Group, Inc.
Savannah, GA
Ryan Chandler
WRRODA — One Year Later

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee held a hearing on June 10th, marking the 1-year anniversary of the enactment of the Water Resources, Reform and Development Act of 2014.

For nearly three hours, the Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Chief of Engineers, fielded questions from committee members, many of whom expressed frustration that “the Corps seems to be slow-walking implementation guidance.”

One particular target was the Administration’s handling of Section 7001, the new process by which to identify feasibility reports, proposed feasibility studies and proposed modifications to projects or studies to be considered for authorization in future bills. The same witnesses had faced criticism on the implementation of this provision at hearings earlier this year, with concerns that the intent of Congress was disregarded as the administration added its own policy prerogatives to the 5 criteria set forth in WRRDA, contrary to the law. In the first report issued under the new provision, only 19 of the 114 submissions were deemed to be worthy of inclusion in the report, with the rest relegated to the appendix.

The growing frustration boiled over amid assertions that the administration was deliberately misinterpreting the new process. Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) and Ranking Member Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), both suggested the first annual report to Congress was written in a way that frustrated the will of Congress by deliberately applying the wrong criteria to project proposals. Shuster asserted that “the administration is purposefully misinterpreting the new project authorization process established under WRRDA.” DeFazio noted that the law was written to change the current “totally opaque process where spending priorities are determined somewhere in the administration, mostly by trolls over at [the Office of Management and Budget] who are accountable to no one,” and emphatically declared “Well, obviously we will correct that in the next bill. We will say these are the only criteria you may use. Period. End of story.”

As to the status of those projects improperly included in the appendix when they otherwise satisfied the criteria in the law, subcommittee Chairman Bob Gibbs pressed Secretary Darcy to provide a corrected list, a point reinforced by Chairman Shuster to make sure she explicitly agreed. Shuster reiterated his intention to return to a two-year schedule for water resources bills with the next one contemplated next year.

For the rest of the provisions awaiting guidance, LTG Bostick acknowledged that the guidance documents have been coming out slowly, and both he and Sec. Darcy pledged that more guidance is coming soon, although the timing is uncertain.

To read NWC’s letter to Secretary Darcy expressing concerns about the first WRRDA 7001 report, click here: waterways.org/advocacy/

An up-to-date list of implementation guidance issued thus far can be viewed at: www.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/ProjectPlanning/LegislativeLinks/wrrda2014/wrrda2014_impguide.aspx

Despite the ongoing concerns of numerous stakeholders and the repeated calls for greater engagement with state and local officials, the Administration has released the highly controversial “waters of the U.S.” rule to expand federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act.

The final rule was ceremonially released by EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and ASA (Civil Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy on the banks of the Anacostia River in Washington. The agencies’ attempts in recent months to build support and repackage the jurisdictional expansion as the “clean water rule” were not persuasive, however. Almost immediately, vocal critics of the rule pressed the Congress to intervene to prevent the rule from going into effect.

The American Farm Bureau Federation called the final rule worse for farmers and ranchers than the original proposal. Similarly, the National Association of Counties said the rule falls short of adding clarity to protecting the nation’s waters and adds costs with few benefits. Instead, according to NACo Executive Director Matt Chase, “the flawed consultation process has resulted in a final rule that does not move us closer to achieving clean water goals and creates more confusion than clarity.” Chase further added that “counties support common-sense environmental protection, but the final rule expands federal oversight and will create costly delays in critical work without any proven environmental benefit.”

The rule will become effective 60 days after publication in the Federal Register. Publication, still pending at this time, will also launch the much-anticipated legal appeals process, as various groups contemplate which federal district courts will be supportive of their views. Ultimately, this issue is expected to wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court, if Congressional efforts to kill it are not successful.

This Just In

The Final Rule will be published in the Federal Register on June 29th, Document 2015-13435: www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/search?conditions%5Bterm%5D=2015-13435

Bicameral Efforts to Stop WOTUS

- H.R. 1732, The Regulatory Integrity Protection Act, adopted in the House by a vote of 261-155, would withdraw the rule and require EPA to consult with state and local governments and other stakeholders in developing new regulations.
- H.R. 2822, the FY16 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill, approved by the Appropriations Committee, prohibits EPA from making changes to the definition of “navigable waters” under the Clean Water Act.
- S. 1140, the Federal Water Quality Protection Act, approved by the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee, would require withdrawal of the rule and establish criteria for any new rule pertaining to the scope of the Clean Water Act.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY 16 Interior and Environment funding bill with a provision that prohibits implementation of the Waters of the U.S. rule.
Appropriations Update

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved FY16 funding measures for the Corps of Engineers’ civil works program at amounts substantially higher than the Administration’s request.

The House version of the Energy and Water bill has been advanced after floor approval, and would fund the program at $5.637 billion, compared to the Senate version, where the Appropriations Committee approved a net appropriation of $5.37 billion ($5.49 billion minus a rescission of $128 million of unobligated prior year balances).

Construction funding is strong in both bills, at $1.631 billion in the House and $1.641 billion in the Senate, compared to the Administration’s request of $1.172 billion. Both bills recommend full use of the revenues from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Operations & Maintenance would be funded at $3.094 billion by the House and $2.909 billion by the Senate. The Senate bill hits the WRRDA target of $1.254 billion from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, with the House mark coming in at $1.17 billion. The Senate report also directs the General Accountability Office to study the economic importance of small inland ports, including revenue and job creation, and include a recommendation for the establishment of a dedicated revenue stream for dredging of these ports.

Investigations would be funded at $111 million in the House bill, compared to $109 million by the Senate. The Senate report directs the Corps to complete a survey on the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations in support of an overall flood risk management plan for the entire main stem of the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River and Tributaries project would receive $330 million under the Senate bill, an increase of $105 million over the budget request, with the House bill providing $275 million.

While both Chambers have indicated an intention to adhere to regular order and move individual funding bills, future action is murky. Full Senate consideration of the energy and water bill could occur after the Fourth of July recess, but hearty debate over the underlying funding allocations is sure to occur.
A Harsh Reminder That There is More Work to Do

BY MICHAEL D. TALBOTT, P.E.

Unlike most other public infrastructure, drainage and flood control systems are relied upon only occasionally. In fact, drainage has been referred to as the “forgotten utility.” People do pay attention when we get a devastating flood that impacts thousands of people, and tragically, causes loss of life.

“We have known all along that this flood damage was coming,” proclaimed the Houston Chronicle in a front-page editorial. This headline could have been written this week, but it actually appeared in the newspaper after floodwaters paralyzed Houston in 1935. And the Houston Post agreed: “We must not forget again, as we did in 1929.”

Floods are defining moments for communities. Those floods in 1929 and 1935 initiated the community’s journey toward reducing the misery of flooding. As a result, the Harris County Flood Control District was created in 1937 by the Texas Legislature with a dedicated funding capability, a partnership was formed with the federal government, and flood damage reduction projects have been underway ever since.

The Flood Control District hasn’t forgotten, and this week the community was tragically reminded that flood fighting must continue. Not often at the forefront of the conversation are the challenges that the Flood Control District is faced with in funding and implementing projects needed to move or store millions of gallons of stormwater in a densely populated and relatively flat area.

The community’s expectations for flood protection have evolved over time. In the 1940s it was believed that projects should be able to handle four inches of rain in 24 hours (which we now know is statistically a 2-year event). Many of our 2,500 miles of bayous, creeks and channels were built using this standard.

The National Flood Insurance Program introduced the “standard” of a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year (also known as the 100-year flood), but detailed floodplain maps weren’t available until 1985. Not many of our channels are built to that standard.

So now we struggle to retrofit our systems to meet current public expectations. We’re fortunate that we have a Flood Control District whose only job is to devise the flood damage reduction plans, implement the plans and maintain those systems.

There are only two things you can do with flood water—move it or store it. You need flood insurance for the times when you can’t do enough of those two things. Also, if you’re not in the mapped floodplain it doesn’t mean you don’t need flood insurance, it means it’s cheaper. Other areas can flood when intense rainfall overwhelms roadway stormwater systems and water flows overland to get to the bayous. Some storms will exceed the capacity of whatever is built.

We have 22 watersheds in Harris County, each with its own independent flooding problems. The battle to reduce flood risk must be fought on many fronts simultaneously. Where will the rain fall next time?

This time, Brays Bayou received

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
the brunt of the rainfall and the resulting flooding. As a result, the Brays Bayou Federal Flood Risk Reduction Project—“Project Brays”—has been put in the spotlight and received critical attention regarding the schedule, funding and effectiveness.

The project has never stalled; the funding (local and federal) has come in a steady stream; and with each part of the project completed, more homes and businesses have a reduced risk of flooding.

Project Brays has received a lion’s share of countywide project funding, and, as a result, many damages were avoided during this event. Other areas of the county hit with heavy rains this week would have also experienced worse flooding if not for the success of other projects that were pursued simultaneously (Sims Bayou, White Oak Bayou and Cypress Creek for example).

The Flood Control District’s governing body, Harris County Commissioners Court, is committed to ensuring that we have a steady source of funding for our capital projects and maintenance operations. Unprecedented investment in projects has been made over the past 15 years with more than $1.7 billion being provided from local and federal tax dollars. The community is much more flood resistant than it has ever been.

Funding is an issue for all infrastructure projects nationwide—it’s not unique to this area and not unique to flood reduction projects. Without question, we could use more money to advance projects faster on all fronts and some additional damages could be avoided. What is the appropriate amount to spend on flood risk reduction? As taxpayers, would we like to divert money from other community needs or provide more funding? The majority of the community didn’t flood this time—they might have a different opinion on priorities.

Even with more money, there is a limit on how fast projects can be constructed. Logistically, flood risk reduction projects have to be built in a particular sequence to avoid moving the flood somewhere else.

We know what needs to be done to reduce the risk of flooding—it takes time and money to make it happen. With every completed project we move toward a more flood-resilient community.

Michael D. Talbott, P.E., is the Executive Director of the Harris County Flood Control District

Have You Ever Heard of the Water Resources Council?

Unless you were intimately involved with water resources policy in the 1970s, the answer to that question is most likely no. So why are we hearing about it now and why is it a big deal?

Executive Order 13690, establishing the new Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS), described in the related article, requires the Water Resources Council to issue amended guidelines to federal agencies to implement amended EO 11988 consistent with the FFRMS. The new EO sets forth other requirements as well, including that agencies consult with the Council when issuing or amending existing regulations and procedures to comply with the EO, that the Council shall issue amendments to the Guidelines as warranted, and that it shall update the FFRMS every 5 years.

Seems like wonky inside-the-beltway drivel, right? But don’t be fooled. The Water Resources Council has not been congressionally authorized to carry out any activities, nor has it...
received any federal funding since 1982. So, how then can it do what’s directed in the new Executive Order when it hasn’t been funded in more than three decades? Simply put, it can’t. At least not lawfully. The Administration’s attempts to resurrect the Water Resources Council are contrary to basic principles of federal appropriations law.

As background, the Water Resources Council was established by the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965, Publ. Law 89-80, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 1962a). The authorities of the Council included, among other things, preparing assessments of the adequacy of regional and national water supplies and reviewing regional or river basin plans and programs, including making recommendations related to the coordination of the water and related land resources policies and programs of Federal agencies.

The Council was a stand-alone independent federal agency, with a dedicated staff and an annual appropriation, and the law provided for its authority to meet, including a requirement that all appropriate papers and records be made publicly available.

The Council’s rules and regulations describe how it is permitted to carry out its duties and responsibilities. Notably, the regulations, implemented in 1978 (43 Fed. Reg. 25945, June 15, 1978), track the requirements of the Government in the Sunshine Act, enacted in 1976, Publ. Law 94-409. 5 U.S.C. § 552b, that meetings be open, and that all records and materials be available to the fullest extent of the law.

Since 1982, the Congress has not provided, nor has the Administration requested, any funding for the Water Resources Council or any of its activities. As a consequence, because the Congress took purposeful action to defund this body, the Council may not lawfully conduct federal business. Moreover, the Administration has cast aside the specific procedural and public participation requirements designed to ensure transparency and accountability in government decision-making, violating the rights of water resources stakeholders.

That’s just not good government.

Fort Bend Successfully Manages Flooding

BY ANDRÉ D. MCDONALD

On June 4th, the Brazos River crested at approximately 50.2 feet on the Richmond gauge. The record high for that gauge was 50.3 registered in 1994. The 99+ miles of levees in Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District #2 (LID 2) performed as designed and prevented flooding of the protected areas. Some of the areas that were not structurally protected did not fare as well and experienced some flooding.

Of course the full damage assessment cannot be done until the river recedes to its normal condition (about 10-15 on the Richmond gauge) but it appears little or no damage was done to the flood control works.

Because the water exceeded the trigger points in our Emergency Preparedness Plan, we staffed the Emergency Operations Center and patrolled the levees 24/7. Our designs worked, our plan worked and as a result 150,000 people are resting easy in their un-flooded homes with little or no knowledge that the system they pay for did its job and protected them.

The included photos are from approximately the same vantage point looking at our principal drainage conduit, Ditch H. One picture shows the flow during normal conditions and the other on the morning of 31 May 2015 prior to the crest.

André McDonald is the President of the Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District #2.
Ensuring Public Safety and Building More Resilient Communities

As the recent flooding in Texas and neighboring states starkly reminds us, we must remain vigilant to protect the millions of Americans who live and work in low lying areas. As the two related articles describing the scenes from the front lines demonstrate, in communities such as Fort Bend and Harris Counties which have made long-term commitments to invest in flood control projects, lives were saved. We saw this play out in Dallas as well, where approximately 90 percent of that area’s average annual rainfall was received in just one month. Localized flooding occurred in low-lying areas that have planned (but not yet funded) projects, but the system worked. There was no loss of life. Tragically, lives were lost in other communities that did not have that level of protection. Indeed, in the wake of devastation in Hays County, Judge Bert Cobb suggested revisiting an abandoned 50-year-old flood control and water supply proposal to dam the Blanco River upstream of Wimberley, where several people lost their lives earlier this month.

Physical infrastructure upgrades and flood risk reduction practices are being implemented in numerous places around the country, and for the most part, those costs are being borne by non-federal sponsors. This work involves state and local emergency management officials and drainage and watershed experts, working collaboratively with their elected officials. Many of these initiatives have their roots in the comprehensive, systems approach for managing floods that was developed along the Mississippi River after the 1927 floods. That plan—known as the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project—demonstrated again in 2011 that it could withstand and manage epic flows because the system performed as designed. After that historic event, the MR&T enjoys a 44 to 1 return on investment. Overall, flood damage reduction programs have saved lives and prevented more than $700 billion in riverine and coastal damages—reducing damages by almost $8 for each dollar spent. In testimony before the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee on June 10, 2015, Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick, the USACE Chief of Engineers, referenced the fact that despite the historic May 2015 rainfall totals in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, the flood control systems “played a major role in assisting those states.”

As we’ve learned from the MR&T, and the partnerships between Harris County, Fort Bend and the Corps of Engineers, a comprehensive approach requires cooperation between the federal government and local stakeholders, including their elected officials; implementation of a well-conceived plan; a systems approach, including consideration of competing purposes and uses; and above all, commitment. Commitment to solve the problems resulting from flooding and commitment to expend the needed resources over a sustained period of time.

Congress Has Heard the Concerns

“None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to implement, administer, carry out, modify, revise, or enforce Executive Order 13690 (entitled “Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input.”)”

We will continue to work in support of this rider, already included in several FY16 funding bills with bipartisan support, to ensure an open and transparent process for the underlying Standard. The Nation cannot afford anything less.
Unfortunately, those lessons have been largely ignored in the recently issued Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS). Executive Order (EO) 13690, issued by the President on January 30, 2015, to amend EO 11988, established the FFRMS and requires that federal agencies update their regulations and procedures to replace the long-established 100-year base flood elevation (BFE), also referred to as the 100-year flood, with one of three new approaches to establish the floodplain. Those choices are: an elevation and lateral flood hazard area that result from using a climate-informed science approach defined with the best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods intended to integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate change models; a freeboard level of BFE + 2’ for noncritical actions, and BFE +3’ for critical actions; and a redefined federal flood hazard area from the current 100-year BFE to a 500-year level, a 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood.

At the outset, it is important to note that it would be entirely appropriate, and good policy, to examine the 100-year BFE to ascertain whether that standard continues to provide the level of safety and protection that is needed to protect the millions of Americans who live and work in low lying areas. If it is determined, after a careful review, that the 100-year standard does not now, nor will it in the future, provide the needed level of protection, then the determination of a new standard ought to include an open and transparent dialogue with state and local officials and all impacted stakeholders.

Regrettably, that did not occur here. Instead, critical features of the FFRMS were established behind closed doors with no public input. The opportunity to submit comments is merely an after-the-fact exercise that seeks input on how to implement the new Standard. No information has been provided to explain the process for selection of the expanded vertical elevations and floodplain alternatives in EO 13690, nor has any fact-based analysis been revealed to justify or explain the new FFRMS levels of protection. Moreover, there has been no disclosure of any cost-benefit analysis. Finally, a careful review of EO 13690 and the FFRMS shows numerous inconsistencies and contradictions, setting up what threatens to be an unwieldy, burdensome and costly federal regulatory scheme. Such an outcome will lead to less, not more, protection for the nearly 50% of the country who live and work in the floodplain.

Equally troubling is the vast, seemingly endless, applicability of the new standard. Despite assertions that it is only intended to apply to federally funded projects and that it does not apply to private investments, the FFRMS explicitly states that it applies to “all Federal Actions.” A federal action is defined as “any Federal activity including: (1) acquiring, managing, and disposing of Federal lands and facilities; (2) providing Federally undertaken, financed or assisted construction and improvements; and (3) conducting Federal activities and programs affecting land use, including but not limited to, water and related land use resource planning, regulating, and licensing activities.” This could include the issuance of Federal permits, licenses and approvals, which are predicated upon private investment dollars.

In addition, as drafted, the FFRMS appears to be applicable to all grants, housing loans, federally-backed mortgages, highway aid, consultation requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and numerous other programs, irrespective of the 50% “substantially improved” proviso.
Mississippi River Commission Announces Spring Meeting Schedule

The MRC will travel the Tennessee, Cumberland and Ohio Rivers Sunday, August 9th through Friday, August 14th with stops in the following locations to experience dialogue sessions with partners and stakeholders: Chattanooga, TN; Decatur, AL; Savannah, TN; Nashville, TN; Olmstead Lock, Paducah, KY.

Public meetings will be held by the Mississippi River Commission on board the Motor Vessel MISSISSIPPI as follows:

**Cape Girardeau, MO (City Front)** 9:00 a.m., August 14th, 2015

**Memphis, TN (Beale Street Landing)** 9:00 a.m., August 17th, 2015

**Lake Village, AR (Boat Ramp at Old Greenville Bridge)** 9:00 a.m., August 19th, 2015

**Morgan City, LA (Port Cm Dock)** 9:00 a.m., August 21st, 2015

All meetings will be open to the public, with an opportunity for presentations by the public, District Commander’s overview for the Commission on current project issues in the respective area, and a report by the President of the Commission on national and regional issues affecting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Commission programs and projects on the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Please contact Edie Whittington for more information at 601-634-576 or cemvd-ex@usace.army.mil.
Viking Cruises to Launch Mississippi River Service

With a homeport of New Orleans, Viking Cruises will launch a Mississippi River service in late 2017, announced Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and Viking Cruises Chairman Torstein Hagen.

Viking River Cruises’ first North American river cruise itineraries will operate from docking facilities near the French Quarter in New Orleans. Plans call for the construction of six new vessels over the next three years at an estimated cost of $90 million to $100 million per vessel, all of which will be built in U.S. shipyards and crewed by U.S. citizens. Cruises will take passengers on a journey along the Mississippi River from New Orleans to itinerary stops in St. James, East Baton Rouge and West Feliciana parishes; continuing upriver to Memphis, Tennessee; St. Louis; or St. Paul, Minnesota, depending on the season. The specially-built riverboats will boast a full complement of luxury amenities, with accommodations for up to 300 passengers at approximately one-tenth the size of oceangoing cruise vessels.

WRRDA Opens Door for Mississippi River Deepening

BY SEAN DUFFY

A provision in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA) opens the door to deepen the Mississippi River Ship Channel from 45 to 50 feet, in anticipation of larger ships coming to the region as a result of the expansion of the Panama Canal. Section 2102(b) of the 2014 law amended a provision in WRDA 86 by adjusting the Federal channel maintenance responsibilities from 45 to 50 feet.

WRDA 1986 authorized the channel to be deepened to 55 feet based on a 1981 Feasibility Study and a Chief of Engineers’ Report that was completed in April 1983. In order to take advantage of the 2014 provision, the 1981 study needs to be updated, and the Corps of Engineers and the local project sponsor, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, recently signed a cost-share agreement to mark the beginning of this critical step. The Corps’ New Orleans District issued a notice that it intends to prepare a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and held a series of scoping meetings. The resulting report will identify the depth that creates the greatest net benefits up to a 50 foot channel. Deepening to 55 feet may be considered in the future.

The Big River Coalition has led the effort in support of the channel deepening and was a key stakeholder in the development of the Corps’ Institute of Water Resources report to Congress on the country’s preparedness to receive post-Panamax vessels. Titled “U.S. Port and Inland Waterways Modernization: Preparing for Post-Panamax Vessels Report,” the report was issued in June of 2012 and provided support for the WRRDA provision.

Sean Duffy is the Executive Director of the Big River Coalition. For additional information, see www.bigrivercoalition.org
Taking advantage of a new authority in WRRDA 2014, the Upper Monongahela River Association (UMRA), along with the Monongalia County Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District, reached an agreement to make the local rivers more accessible.

Section 1015 of WRRDA expands the authority of the Corps to accept voluntarily contributed funds from states and other non-federal interests. After working tirelessly on this effort, UMRA was able to secure the agreement to allow increased lock operations for recreational boats on the Upper Mon and Upper Allegheny Rivers.

Under the new agreement, the Corps will keep open the Opekiska and Hildebrand locks during summer weekends, expanding opportunities for recreational and commercial boating, including bass fishing tournaments.

Tom Waters, Chairman of the Missouri Levee & Drainage District Association, was nominated by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon, and confirmed by the state’s Senate, to serve on the Highways and Transportation Commission. In addition to making transportation policy, the commission has authority over all state transportation programs and facilities, including bridges, highways, aviation, railroads, public transportation, ports, and waterborne commerce. Waters is a seventh-generation Missouri farmer who produces corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa.
Inland Waterways Funding and Management

The Transportation Research Board unveiled its new report, *Funding and Managing the U.S. Inland Waterways System: What Policymakers Need to Know*, followed by a discussion focused on implications of the findings for decisions about the level of investment required for the system and options for funding.

The study was motivated by reports of deteriorating and aged infrastructure; the perception of inadequate capital investment; a growing backlog of capital projects, and the decline of federal funding for inland navigation. Panelists included TRB Committee Chairman Chris Hendrickson, Carnegie Mellon University; Committee members Michael Bronzini, George Mason University, and Leonard Shabman, Resources for the Future; as well as Jack Wells, U.S. Department of Transportation (retired); Mike Toohey, Waterways Council, Inc.; Craig Philip, Vanderbilt Center for Transportation Research, and Ingram Barge Company (retired). The panel was moderated by: Steve Godwin, Transportation Research Board.

As background, in March 2014, the TRB conducted a public meeting to receive input from the inland waterways industry and a wide array of water resources stakeholders as it considered the importance of the inland waterways for freight transportation, and the multiple uses of the waterways. NWC participants included Amy Larson; Kristin Meira, Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association; Ted Coombes, Executive Director, Southwestern Power Resources Association, and Craig Philip, Ingram Barge Co.

The committee set forth 4 major conclusions as follows:

1. The inland waterways system is a small but important component of the national freight system.

2. The most critical need for the inland waterways system is a sustainable and well-executed plan for maintaining system reliability and performance that ensures efficient use of limited navigation resources.

3. More reliance on a “user pays” funding strategy for the commercial navigation system is feasible, would generate new revenues for maintenance, and would promote economic efficiency.

4. Asset management can help prioritize maintenance and ascertain the level of funding required for the system.

The full report, including in-depth analysis of each conclusion, and a link to the webcast can be accessed here: [www.trb.com](http://www.trb.com)

Changes at the Corps

Brigadier General Donald E. (Ed) Jackson, Jr., currently serving as Deputy Commanding General for Military and International Operations, United States Army Corps of Engineers, will take over as Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations upon the retirement of Major General John W. Peabody after 36 years of service to the nation. Jackson’s promotion to Major General was recently confirmed by the Senate.

Brigadier General Donald E. Jackson, Jr.

Major General John W. Peabody
Parker Towing Company, one of the largest barge lines in the Southeast, celebrates 75 years of providing outstanding commitment and service to its customers, growing the region’s economy, and delivering cargo that fuels the American dream.

**Congratulations and looking forward to the next 75 years.**

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**Congratulations to...**

Meagan Kaiser, Executive Director of the Upper Miss, Illinois and Missouri Rivers Association, as she and husband Mark welcome new baby Mark Allen.

Heather Stebbings, Government Relations Director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, as she, her husband Paul and big brother Charlie, welcome new baby Sylvie Rose.