

March 13, 2007

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

FROM: Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment Staff

SUBJECT: Markup of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007

PURPOSE OF HEARING

On Wednesday, March 14, 2007, at 2:00 p.m., in Room 2167, Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment is scheduled to mark up the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

BACKGROUND

In General

The Subcommittee has jurisdiction over the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (Corps) civil works program, the nation's largest water resources program. The Corps' responsibilities include navigation, flood control, shoreline protection, hydropower, dam safety, water supply, recreation, environmental restoration and protection, and disaster response and recovery. In addition to oversight of Corps' programs and projects, the Committee places a high priority on enactment of a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) every two years. This legislation typically contains project authorizations, modifications and deauthorizations, programs revisions and policy initiatives, and related provisions involving Corps activities. The last WRDA was enacted as P.L. 106-541 in 2000.

Army Corps of Engineers Water Resources Programs

The Army Corps of Engineers studies, designs, and constructs projects for the purposes of, among other things, navigation, flood control, beach erosion and shoreline protection, hydropower, recreation, water supply and environmental restoration and protection.

The first step in a Corps water resources development project is a study of the project's feasibility. Assuming the study recommendations are favorable, the next step is authorization. Project authorizations are traditionally contained in WRDAs. The typical prerequisite for including a project authorization in a WRDA is a favorable report from the Chief of Engineers.

The Corps of Engineers also has authorities to construct certain small projects without specific authorization from Congress. These authorities, known as the "continuing authorities program," include beach erosion, navigation, flood control, streambank and shoreline protection, snagging and clearing, modifications to existing projects for the benefit of the environment, and aquatic ecosystem restoration.

Today the Corps maintains more than 11,000 miles of channels for commercial navigation and operates locks at 230 sites. One half of all locks are over 50 years old. The Corps also maintains 300 deep commercial harbors and 600 shallow coastal and inland harbors. There are 75 hydropower plants at Corps facilities producing one fourth of the Nation's hydroelectric power. To address flood risks, the Corps manages 383 major lakes and reservoirs, and 8,500 miles of levees. The Corps estimates that, on the average, its civil works projects prevent \$20 billion in flood damages ever year.

PRIOR ACTIVITY

Last Congress, on July 14, 2005, the House passed H.R. 2864, the Water Resources Development Act of 2005, by a vote of 406-14. The Senate passed H.R. 2864, with an amendment, by voice vote on July 19, 2006. Unfortunately, the House and the Senate were unable to resolve their differences in Conference before the end of the 109th Congress.

In the 109th Congress, the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment held two days of hearings on projects, programs, and policies of the Civil Works Programs of the Corps, on March 10, 2005, and March 16, 2005. During these hearings, testimony was received from Members of Congress and the Administration.

AMENDMENTS

We are not aware of any amendments at this time.