



**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives**

Washington, DC 20515

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

November 6, 2015

BACKGROUND MEMO

TO: Members, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
RE: Roundtable Policy Discussion on “The Importance of Port, Waterway, Flood Control, & Ecosystem Restoration Improvements to the Nation’s Economy: Concepts for the Next Water Resources Development Act”

PURPOSE

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will meet on Friday, November 13, 2015, at 9:30 a.m. in the Formal Conference Room of the Louisiana Supreme Court, 400 Royal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, to participate in a roundtable policy discussion on “The Importance of Port, Waterway, Flood Control, & Ecosystem Restoration Improvements to the Nation’s Economy: Concepts for the Next Water Resources Development Act.” Participants will include representatives from the State of Louisiana, locally elected officials, the National Waterways Conference, the American Association of Port Authorities, the Waterways Council, Inc., the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, and other stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

The Corps’ Civil Works Program

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has jurisdiction over the US Army Corps of Engineers (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 the 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, program revisions and policy initiatives, and related provisions involving Corps activities. The last WRDA was enacted as P.L. 113-121 in 2014.

Today the Corps maintains more than 25,000 miles of channels for commercial navigation and operates 236 locks at 192 sites. The average age of these locks is almost 60 years and more than half of the 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 projects at Corps facilities producing 25% of the Nation's hydropower and distinguishing the Corps of Engineers as the Nation's fifth largest electric producer. To address flood risks, the Corps owns and operates more than 700 dams. Almost 15,000 miles of levees are covered by Corps programs. It is estimated that in the last decade, on average, Corps civil works projects prevented \$48.5 billion in flood damages each year.

The Corps of Engineers, as a water resource agency, must balance competing demands on water resources as it develops and manages navigation, flood damage reduction, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and other project purposes.

For example, the Corps of Engineers has the responsibility to maintain the navigability of our inland waterways. One way the Corps of Engineers carries out this mission is to operate dams that control the flow of water on a river. However, the same dam that regulates river flows for navigation may also provide flood protection, provide water supply, generate power, and create recreational opportunities.

Process for Corps Water Resources Development Projects

The first step in a Corps water resources development project is a study of the project's feasibility by the Corps of Engineers. If the Corps has conducted a study in the area before, a new study can be authorized by a resolution (commonly referred to as a "survey resolution") of either the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure or the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. If the Corps has not previously studied the area, then an Act of Congress is necessary to authorize the study. The majority of studies are authorized by Committee survey resolutions.

Assuming the Corps' 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 biennial WRDA is a favorable project feasibility report from the Chief of Engineers (commonly referred to as a "Chief's Report").

The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA) contained many important provisions that accelerated project delivery, authorized 34 Chief's Reports, deauthorized outdated projects, increased flexibility for non-federal project sponsors, encouraged private sector investment to multiply the effect of federal funding, and reformed the Harbor Maintenance and Inland Waterway Trust Funds.

As part of an effort to evaluate potential innovative and alternative means for funding water infrastructure projects, WRRDA authorized a new low-cost loan and loan guarantee

program, known as the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA). If funded, WIFIA will provide low-cost, long-term loans to help finance water infrastructure projects and accelerate water infrastructure investment. EPA will manage the WIFIA program for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects, and the Corps will manage the program for water resources development projects.

PARTICIPANTS

Kyle Graham, Executive Director
Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Natalie Robottom, President
St. John Parish, Louisiana

Bob Turner, Regional Director
Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority East
On Behalf of the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies

Amy Larson, President,
National Waterways Conference

Paul Aucoin, Executive Director,
Port of South Louisiana
On Behalf of the American Association of Port Authorities

Matt Woodruff, Director Public & Government Affairs
Kirby Corporation
On Behalf of Waterways Council, Inc.

Michael Hecht, President and CEO
Greater New Orleans, Inc.