

WRDA

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2022

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment | Prepared by T&I Democratic Staff

THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2022

On May 16, 2022, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chair Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA), and Ranking Member David Rouzer (R-NC), introduced H.R. 7776, the bipartisan “Water Resources Development Act of 2022.” This legislation was approved by the Committee by voice vote on May 18, 2022.

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is legislation that is essential to everyday life. Nearly 80 percent of traded goods that Americans rely on is moved through our nation’s ports, harbors, and inland waterways. Projects for flood damage reduction help protect both our rural and urban communities, thus benefiting millions of Americans. And, ecosystem restoration projects restore and maintain our vital natural resources. This work, carried out by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), is made possible through regular enactment of WRDA.

H.R. 7776 continues the bipartisan tradition of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to move a new WRDA every two years to respond to local water resource needs and to ensure continued Congressional oversight over the Corps.

WRDA IMPROVES WATER RESOURCES INFRASTRUCTURE

WRDA 2022 authorizes the study and construction of locally-driven projects that were developed in cooperation and consultation with the Corps. These projects are key to preserving our nation’s economy, to protecting our communities, and to maintaining our quality of life.

- Authorizes the construction of **18 pending Reports of the Chief of Engineers** received since the enactment of WRDA 2020. These reports are the final recommendations to Congress by the Corps on rigorously studied water resources infrastructure priorities.
- Authorizes **72 new feasibility studies** for future water resources development projects.
- Directs the Corps to **expedite the completion of 14 feasibility studies** currently underway.
- Authorizes **critical water and wastewater infrastructure assistance** for community driven projects carried out by the Corps throughout the nation.

WRDA CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S NAVIGATIONAL CAPACITY

- Authorizes the Corps to **undertake a study and make recommendations on the nation's dredging capacity**, including expanding that capacity to invest Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) dollars provided by WRDA 2020.
- **Authorizes critical navigation projects and studies**, including studies to promote increased navigational capacity at critical U.S. ports, including the Ports of Elim, Alaska; Long Beach, California; Houston, Texas; Coos Bay, Oregon; and Norfolk, Virginia.

WRDA BUILDS MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

- Authorizes the Corps to **rebuild and maintain critical navigation jetties and breakwaters** to dimensions necessary to address sea-level rise, extreme weather, and other challenges posed by climate change.
- Allows for the Corps to **rebuild and maintain hurricane and storm damage reduction projects** to dimensions necessary to address sea-level rise, extreme weather, and other challenges posed by climate change.
- Clarifies the authority of the Corps to **study the impacts of coastal storms on back-bay and riverine flooding** as part of an ongoing coastal storm risk reduction project study.
- **Renews Congressional support for water resources projects that promote the beneficial reuse of sediment** by establishing a strategic plan for reusing clean dredged materials for ecosystem restoration or storm damage reduction projects.
- Continues to **expand Corps authority to address the future water supply needs of communities**, especially those communities in the nation's arid regions, including review of sediment loadings that may limit available space for water storage and authority for aquifer recharge projects.
- Promotes consideration of the value of **preserving open space, critical habitat, and recreational areas in water resources development projects**.
- Directs the Corps to **inventory and investigate opportunities to restore natural floodplains and to identify antiquated dams for rehabilitation or removal**.

WRDA INCREASES COORDINATION WITH TRIBAL, MINORITY, AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

- **Requires the appointment of local liaisons for enhanced coordination with Tribal and indigenous groups (including Native Hawaiians)** on water resources issues.
- Provides critical **financial assistance to Tribal and indigenous groups (including Native Hawaiians) in Corps' studies and projects**.
- Establishes **national policy that the Corps strive to understand, accommodate, and seek to address the water resources development needs of all communities**, including Tribal and economically disadvantaged urban and rural communities through additional outreach and technical and financial assistance.

WRDA PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Creates additional **flexibility for the Corps to address the water resources needs of economically disadvantaged communities, communities of color, and rural communities.**
- Provides the Corps with the authority to **provide technical assistance for resiliency planning**, with priority given to economically disadvantaged and tribal communities.
- Directs the **Corps to partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to remediate legacy contamination of potentially hazardous materials** at specific locations throughout the nation.
- Expands Corps **authority to study addressing the water resources challenges facing economically disadvantaged communities**, including communities of color, and Tribal and rural communities, at no cost to the community.

WRDA IS ECONOMICALLY RESPONSIBLE

- **Authorizes the Secretary to work with non-federal sponsors in scoping potential water resources development projects** prior to beginning the cost-shared feasibility study.
- Directs the Secretary to **deauthorize outdated or non-viable Corps of Engineers authorities** to reduce the backlog of projects and ensure vital infrastructure investments are available to address relevant and current water infrastructure needs.

WRDA STILL WORKS

Continuing to pass WRDA legislation every two years ensures that our communities' infrastructure needs are being met, and that Congress exercises proper oversight of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Congress has now successfully enacted four consecutive WRDA bills in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020. With WRDA 2022, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continues this bipartisan tradition and shows that **WRDA still works.**