



NPCA Position on H.R. 8 – Water Resources Development Act of 2018

June 6, 2018

Dear Representative:

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. On behalf of our 1.3 million members and supporters nationwide, please consider our position on many of the important provisions in H.R. 8, the Water Resources Development Act of 2018, which is being considered by the House of Representatives. We appreciate that the House is keeping this bill on a two-year cycle. This is an important bill for improving the health of our national parks that is worthy of support.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is an important partner in many places where NPCA works to protect and restore national park waterways and landscapes, the communities that surround them and the millions of people who visit them each year. From Gateway to the Grand Canyon, Everglades to Olympic, water is central to the features, wildlife, recreation and aesthetic of these esteemed places. However, national parks, once viewed as isolated and remote, are increasingly affected by activities occurring in their watersheds. These beyond park boundary activities often enhance or detract from the visitor experience.

Therefore, we are pleased to see the bill focus attention on restoring the essential ecosystem of Everglades National Park. Including the upcoming Post-Authorization Change Report for the Central Everglades Project (Sec. 203) and the recently completed Kissimmee River Restoration Post-Authorization Change Report (Sec. 308) is important to the Everglades and the bill supports its restoration and protection.

NPCA also supports Sections 113 and 114 which require the Army Corps to engage stakeholders and the public in reviewing the Army Corps' 7001 annual report and draft implementation guidance developed in response to a WRDA bill. NPCA believes that public input and education is important in federal rulemaking and compliance.

Reforming the Army Corps' benefit-cost procedures is important, and this bill potentially takes a small step towards ensuring a full and accurate accounting of the economic principles and analytical methodologies of Army Corps projects (Sec. 125). Though the legislative text is unclear, we hope that the analytical methodologies that the National Academy of Sciences studies will evaluate and assess the benefits of natural and nature-based features, which are often undercounted, miscounted or discounted.

NPCA also supports ensuring the Army Corps encourages the use of natural and nature-based features in its projects. Although we prefer stronger language requiring the Corps to adopt those features, we are pleased to see the requirement that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) provides Congress with a report on the consideration by the Army Corps of natural and nature-based features when conducting feasibility projects for flood risk management, hurricane and storm damage reduction and ecosystem restoration (Sec. 130). We also appreciate seeing requirements that the Army Corps pay attention to aquatic invasive species research (Sec. 138) and harmful algal blooms (Sec. 139), both of which impact the water resources in our national parks.

Lastly, we appreciate the bill, which was reported by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, was largely free of controversial policy changes to environmental laws and regulations that protect our national parks. Congress already enacted Corps procedures designed to quicken project analysis and delivery in the last two WRDA bills. None of those changes have had adequate time to be fully implemented.

Thank you again for promoting a bipartisan bill that addresses our nation's water infrastructure needs. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-454-3385 or clord@npca.org with questions.

Sincerely,

Chad Lord
Senior Director, Water Policy
Government Affairs