

The United States Senate
Congressional Record
May 14, 2007

RE: Water Resources Development Act of 2007



Sen. Barbara Boxer [D-CA]: Before the leader leaves, I hope I can get the attention of the floor staff, to make sure--my understanding is you have now offered the amendments on Iraq to the underlying bill, but the text that is before us is clean of the Iraq amendments? I think it is a good thing to do because we can move on here with WRDA, as the amendments were applied to the underlying text, not to the amendment we are working on.

I thank my colleague for thinking it through. I am proud he is with us in wanting to move this WRDA bill forward.

Let a message go out we are going to move this bill forward. One of the reasons I say to my friend, thank you--I don't want to keep him here, I just want to thank him.

We have received a letter from the National Construction Alliance. It is the Laborers International Union of North America, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America.

The reason I am bringing this up is they are very strong supporters of WRDA. I think their letter lays out why, so I am actually going to read it so it goes into the Record at this point. It says:

Dear Senator Boxer and Senator Inhofe:

The National Construction Alliance, representing the three leading construction unions advocating for robust federal infrastructure investment, endorses the Senate version of the Water Resources Development Act reauthorization. This vital Federal infrastructure legislation should be considered and passed by the United States Senate. Our three constituent unions, the Laborers, Operating Engineers and the Carpenters, commend you both for your strong, bipartisan leadership on this legislation.

This gets to the heart of why Senator Inhofe and I and all on the committee believe so strongly about the bill.

The \$13.9 billion authorization of Corps of Engineers projects is an important and necessary step in addressing our country's serious backlog of water projects. From harbor improvement to flood protection, to lock and dam construction, dredging and environmental infrastructure, your bill will immeasurably strengthen America's water resources. As labor unions representing nearly one million skilled construction workers, we recognize that this WRDA reauthorization will create tens of thousands of good paying construction jobs.

We strongly urge the Senate to pass your legislation in an expeditious manner so that America's critical water infrastructure needs can be addressed.

I say to the President--who is sitting in the chair today, as opposed to the President of the United States--he has so long been speaking about the problem of our loss of middle-class jobs. What is so important

about this particular bill is that while we are doing things the Nation must have in order to grow and in order to protect itself from the ravages of Mother Nature, as we saw in Katrina--in the course of doing the right thing we are creating good jobs. It is a wonderful winner for everybody.

That is why we have more letters I want to share with colleagues. The American Society of Civil Engineers has added its voice to all these unions, to both Senator Inhofe and myself, saying they are very pleased with this bill, they are very pleased with the levee system fixes; they believe this is overdue legislation and that it ensures we have learned the lessons from Hurricane Katrina. It "goes far toward protecting human life and property in flood-prone areas."

They ask us if the American Society of Civil Engineers can be of more assistance, please call them. We may, because we want everybody to weigh in here and help us.

We have a letter from the Audubon Society. You have heard from the business side, the union side, now the environmental side. They have a million members. They say, please, let's have prompt consideration of WRDA because it restores America's natural resources. It includes:

..... Corps modernization provisions, including independent review of costly or controversial Corps projects and ensuring that mitigation for Corps projects is consistent with stricter State laws.

This refers to the Corps' formula in the last bill which is embedded in this bill.

Audubon also talks about:

..... two crucial Everglades restoration projects--Indian River lagoon and Picayune Strand--that would mitigate harmful federal drainage projects, restore more than 160,000 acres of wetlands and significant estuarine habitat, and help secure Florida's tourism and outdoor recreation economy.

They also cite the upper Mississippi River restoration program, in its first 15-year increment, will preserve 105,000 acres of habitat; protect 35,000 acres of floodplain habitat in five States along the river.

The Coastal Louisiana restoration program will begin to reverse the devastating pattern of land loss, protecting important habitat for birds and fish and other wildlife as well as the region's economy and quality of life.

The bill permanently authorizes the Asian Carp Barrier to protect the Great Lakes from this looming threat. The Audubon Society, which is so well respected on both sides of the aisle, closes and says that ecosystem restoration projects for the Everglades, the Mississippi, Louisiana's coastal wetlands, and the Great Lakes are overdue, as is Corps modernization.

Then I will add to these letters, Mr. President, a letter from the National Association of Manufacturers. I mean, this is one of those bills that gets everybody's support. It is something that is important for everyone.

They say: On behalf of more than 14 million manufacturing employees in the U.S., they are thanking us for our leadership, and they are saying: Let's move forward with WRDA. It is important. They say that: America's water resources infrastructure needs to be reliable and productive.

They applaud our efforts and they say how vitally needed WRDA is, including the modernization of locks, harbors, canals, and other key infrastructure that is vital to America's competitiveness. They say: WRDA will authorize many of these needs. So that is the National Association of Manufacturers. So it goes on and on.

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association has a similar letter that is very important to us. The American Farm Bureau. The American Farm Bureau has entered this, and they have written us saying it is a good bill, urging us to support WRDA, and they oppose any amendment that would hinder our progress in moving forward.

The corn growers of America, they have weighed in and they say: It is important. They have sent a letter to HARRY REID and MITCH MCCONNELL, our leaders, saying we need to have this bill. They need to have efficient transportation networks and so on. This is a very important letter, I think. They say that continued development of our water resources in an environmentally sound manner will contribute mightily to our Nation's well-being.

Congress needs to act now to address issues such as environmental restoration, navigation, flood control, hurricane protection, water supply, irrigation, beach nourishment, and recreation.

So that is yet another letter. The American Public Works Association has sent us a letter. They have a similar message: With adequate dredging, our ports and waterways are the backbone of our transportation system, ensuring domestic and international trade opportunities and low-cost, environmentally sensitive goods movements. It goes on.

Now, I have already placed some of those letters in the Record, and I am going to do it again today because I think every day, as colleagues will look at the Record, they will see their importance.

I ask unanimous consent to have these letters printed in the Record at the end of my remarks.

Exhibit 1

PACIFIC NORTHWEST WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

Portland, OR, May 10, 2007.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BOXER AND SENATOR INHOFE, We write to urge your support for the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act in 2007.

WRDA is fundamentally important to the economic health of our nation and particularly important to the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California. Our region depends on international trade to a greater extent than any other region in the United States. In Washington state, one in four jobs are related to international trade. Cost-effective, efficient, and environmentally sound trade and transportation corridors are imperative to secure our place in the global economy. Delay in WRDA means exacerbated backlogs which will dull our competitive edge.

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) membership includes nearly 100 organizations in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California. PNWA represents public port authorities on the Pacific Coast, Puget Sound, and Columbia Snake River System; public utility districts, investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives and direct service industries; irrigation districts, grain growers and upriver and export elevator companies; major manufacturers in the Pacific Northwest; forest products industry manufacturers and shippers; and tug and barge operators, steamship operators, consulting engineers, and others involved in economic development throughout the Pacific Northwest.

PNWA has a long history of working with the Committee and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on projects of regional and national importance, sharing the challenge to maintain and develop our

transportation infrastructure. Our members wish to thank the Committee for its support of Pacific Northwest transportation programs and projects.

Issues of particular concern to the members of our Association follow:

The federally-owned hopper dredge fleet and the Corps of Engineers' dredges Essayons and Yaquina, are particularly important to the maintenance of ports and harbors in the Pacific Northwest. The goals of Congressional actions in 1978, 1993 and 1996, which limited the utilization of the of the federal dredge fleet and provided increased opportunity for industry, have been meet.

Since passage of the Energy and Water Appropriations Act of 1993, designed to increase competition in the dredge industry, the number of private dredging contractors has declined. This is of concern because the Northwest has unique conditions such that, compared to other regions, Northwest ports depend to a greater degree on hopper dredging and on smaller class hopper dredges. The Government Accountability Office found in a March 2003 to Congress (GAO-03-382) that operating restrictions have imposed additional costs on the Corps' dredging program, but have not resulted in proven benefits to the taxpayer.

PNWA strongly supports the language included in your bill to lift operating restrictions from the Essayons and Yaquina, which will enable the Corps of Engineers to utilize the Essayons and Yaquina to the maximum extent possible to maintain Northwest ports, harbors and channels, consistent with the safe and efficient performance of their missions.

Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-541) provides the authority to the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities and to expedite the processing of permits. Section 214 has allowed local governments to move forward with vital infrastructure projects. By funding additional staff to work on specific, time-intensive permits, existing Corps staff members are able to process the significant permit application backlog much more quickly. Funding for additional Corps staff has resulted in a reduction of permit wait times not only for the funding entity, but for any individual or organization that makes an application with that District of the Corps.

This authority is currently scheduled to sunset on December 31, 2008. Though PNWA has been successful in working with Congress to secure short-term extensions for several years now, the time has come to give Corps regulatory offices as well as the contributing entities the predictability that would come with a permanent authority. PNWA strongly supports language in your bill that would make Section 214 permanent.

These provisions are strongly supported by PNWA's membership, and are important to improve the efficiency and cost competitiveness of Northwest ports engaging in international trade. Additional provisions that are supported by PNWA are included in the attached document, PNWA WRDA Requests. We appreciate the Committee's and Congress' attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Kristin Meira,

Alaska Assoc. of Port Managers & Harbormasters; Almota Elevator Company; Anderson-Perry & Associates, Inc.; Ball Janik LLP; Bell Buoy Crab Co.; Benton County PUD #1; Boise Cascade LLC; BST Associates; Central Washingtgn Grain Growers, Inc.; CH2M Hill; Clark Public Utilities; Columbia Basin Development League; Columbia County Grain Growers, Inc; Columbia River Bar Pilots; Columbia River Pilots; Columbia River Steamship Operators Assoc.; Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners; David B. Barrows Environmental Consulting; Douglas County PUD #1; Dustra Group.

East Columbia Basin Irrigation District; Foss Maritime Company; Office of Peter Friedmann; Gallatin Group; Gordon Thomas Honeywell Gov't Affairs; Harris Group Inc.; ID Wheat Commission; Jan T. Fancher, CPA, PLLC; Jefferson Government Relations; Kalama Export Company; Kleinfelder, Inc.; Lampson International, LLC; Lewis-Clark Terminal Association; Longview Fibre Company; Manson Construction; Moffatt & Nichol; Northwest Grain Growers, Inc.; Northern Star Natural Gas; OR Economic & Community Development Department (OECD).

Oregon Int'l Port of Coos Bay; Oregon Iron Works, Inc.; OR Wheat Growers League; Pacific Merchant Shipping Assoc. (PMSA); Pacific International Engineering (PIE); Parametrix; PB Ports & Marine, Inc.; PNGC Power; Pomeroy Grain Growers; Port of Anacortes; Port of Benton; Port of Brookings Harbor; Port of Camas-Washougal; Port of Cascade Locks; Port of Chelan County; Port of Chinook; Port of Clarkston; Port of Columbia County; Port of Garibaldi; Port of Gold Beach.

Port of Hood River; Port of Humboldt Bay; Port of Ilwaco, Port of Kalama; Port of Kennewick; Port of Klickitat; Port of Lewiston; Port of Longview; Port of Morrow; Port of Newport; Port of Pasco; Port of Port Angeles; Port of Portland; Port of Ridgefield; Port of Royal Slope; Port of Seattle; Port of Suislaw; Port of Skagit County; Port of St. Helens; Port of Sunnyside; Port of Tacoma; Port of Toledo; Port of Umatilla; Port of Umpqua; Port of Vancouver; Port of Walla Walla; Port of Whitman County; Port of Woodland; Potlatch Corporation; Presnell, Gage & Company; Preston Gates & Ellis LLP; Primeland Cooperatives; Reid Middleton, Inc.; The Research Group; RETEC Group; Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt; Seattle Public Utilities; Shaver Transportation Company; Stoel Rives LLP; Teevin Brothers.

Tidewater Barge Lines; Ukiah Engineering Inc. (UEI); USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council; WA Association of Wheat Growers; WA Public Ports Association; WA State Office of Trade and Economic Development (CTED); WA State Potato Commission; WA Wheat Commission; Weyerhaeuser Company; Whitman County Growers.