

Addressing Regulatory Challenges in the Pacific Northwest



PNWA works with ports and federal agencies to address delays and conflict in the permitting process



PNWA has been working with Congress and the federal agencies since 2000 to help identify and overcome obstacles to processing permits in a fair and timely fashion. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Services have agreed to work with PNWA to resolve permitting challenges. Some key accomplishments include:

- The Northwestern Division requested a peer review of its Districts' permitting processes, resulting in numerous changes
- General Fastabend led the establishment of the Executives Task Force (Corps, NMFS, USFWS, EPA) to improve coordination among the agencies
- The agencies agreed to streamline some procedures, including resolution of disputes between the agencies, to speed up decisions, and to meet regularly with PNWA
- The Executives Task Force staff, the Services and Seattle District staff met as a result of a meeting with PNWA, and several work groups were formed
- Corps Headquarters assigned additional staff to the Seattle District, increased their budget request for regulatory activities, and set an objective of reducing permit-processing time nationwide
- PNWA has led a national coalition of interests to prevent the sunset of Section 214 from WRDA 2000. This authority allows ports and other non-federal government entities to provide funding to the Corps to hire additional permit review staff. The authority is currently authorized through the end of 2009, and PNWA is working to make it permanent.

PNWA appreciates that throughout all of these activities, Corps headquarters leadership, the Division Commander, the three Corps District Commanders, the three federal resource agency regional administrators, and the Congressional delegation have been very responsive to PNWA staff communications and requests.

These efforts are beginning to demonstrate results:

- The backlog of permit applications has been reduced in some districts
- Key permits, such as the Port of Seattle's permit for the third runway at Sea-Tac Airport, have been granted
- The Portland District and the Services adopted and continue to refine SLOPES (Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species)
- The Seattle District and the Services have worked with PNWA and our port members to improve communication, clearly define needs, and capture opportunities for streamlining

PNWA is working with WPPA, OPPA and PNWA members to address issues related to the regional Sediment Evaluation Framework. We are making progress in refining the document and clarifying its application. We are also working with WPPA and our mutual members in attempting to reduce the potential impacts of FEMA's proposed guidance for development in and adjacent to flood plains under the National Flood Insurance Program.

PNWA looks forward to continuing to work with the Corps, the Services and Congress to foster a fair and timely permit processing system that meets the needs of both the environmental and economic health of the region.