

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 identify and overcome obstacles to processing permits in a fair and timely fashion. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the resource agencies have been working with PNWA to resolve permitting challenges.

Key accomplishments include:

- The Northwestern Division requested a peer review of its Districts' permitting processes, resulting in numerous improvements.
- Corps Headquarters increase the budget and assigned additional staff to the Seattle District for regulatory activities.
- The Corps Division Commander led an Executives Task Force (Corps, NMFS, USFWS, EPA, Coast Guard) to improve coordination among the agencies.
- The agencies agreed to streamline some procedures including resolution of agency disputes, quicker decision processing, and regular meetings with stakeholders. That agreement was reaffirmed in 2009.
- Corps Headquarters set a nationwide objective of reducing permit-processing time.
- Section 214 of WRDA 2000 was passed, allowing ports and other non-federal government entities to provide funding to the Corps to hire additional permit review staff. Section 214, originally set to sunset in 2003, has been extended six times. The authority is currently authorized through December 31, 2010.
- The Corps Portland District and the resource agencies adopted and continue to refine SLOPES (Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species).

PNWA appreciates that throughout all of these activities Corps leadership, the three federal resource agencies, and the Congressional delegation have been very responsive to PNWA staff communications and requests.

These efforts are demonstrating results:

- The backlog of permit applications has been reduced.
- Processing times from application to answer have been reduced.
- The agencies have established procedures to improve coordination among themselves.
- Communication between the agencies and applicants has improved significantly.

PNWA continues to work to improve the permitting process. Our efforts include:

- Leading a national coalition to make Section 214 permanent.
- Working with the Corps and federal and state resource agencies to improve the Settlement Evaluation Framework, which establishes procedures for testing dredge sites and handling dredge material.
- Creating a joint PNWA-WPPA working group to reduce the potential impacts of FEMA's forthcoming guidance for development in and adjacent to flood plains under the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Facilitating communications between applicants, the Corps and the resource agencies to address individual permitting issues.

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

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