

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 15, 2007

Rep. James L. Oberstar, Chairman  
Rep. John Mica, Ranking Member  
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

We are writing to urge your support of language included in the Senate Water Resources Development Act (H.R. 1495) that would make permanent Section 214 of WRDA 2000 (P.L. 106-541). "Section 214" provides the authority to the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits, and is scheduled to sunset on December 31, 2008. Section 214 has already been extended four times, and the time has come to provide predictability for the Corps and the non-Federal sponsor entities by making this authority permanent. This year's WRDA bill is the right vehicle for that action.

In many parts of the country, the Corps of Engineers faces a tremendous backlog of permit applications that must be reviewed. This backlog has imposed a great cost in lost jobs, reduced economic activity and a decline in international competitiveness.

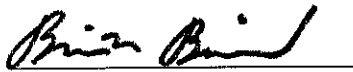
Section 214 has allowed municipalities and ports to move forward with vital infrastructure projects. When these entities fund additional regulatory staff to work on specific, time-intensive permits, existing Corps staff members are able to address the significant permit application backlog. Our constituents report that funding for additional Corps staff has resulted in a reduction in permit wait times for the sponsor entity, and has reduced the strain on Corps regulatory staff who are responsible for reviewing applications from not only large entities, but small businesses and private citizens as well. This authority indirectly benefits every person who makes an application in the districts where it has been used. In addition, a recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) notes that the majority of Section 214 permit applications have been for ecological restoration projects, which are vital to the environmental wellbeing of our nation.

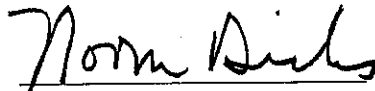
Municipalities and ports in the Seattle, Sacramento, Portland, Los Angeles and Jacksonville Corps districts have used this authority, more districts are in the process of arranging agreements, and the GAO recently reported that 19 districts would consider using the authority if it were made permanent. We thank you for including an extension of Section 214 authority in the House WRDA of 2007, however, lapses in the authority and short term extensions are detrimental to the long term planning that is necessary for successful relationships between the Corps and non-federal funding entities. It is time to


provide predictability for the Corps and stakeholders, and remove the likelihood that this authority will lapse again.

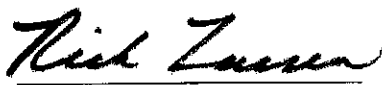
As you work to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the Water Resources Development Act, we strongly encourage you to adopt the Senate language that would make this important authority permanent.

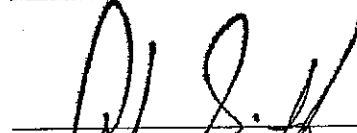
Sincerely,

  
Brian Baird  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


  
Norm Dicks  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


  
Peter DeFazio  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

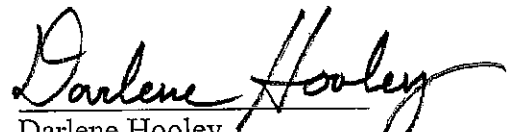
  
Rick Larsen  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

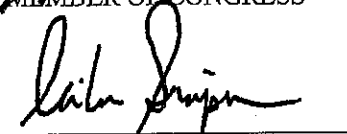
  
Adam Smith  
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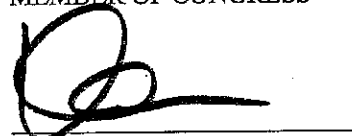
  
Jim McDermott  
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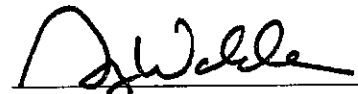
  
Jay Inslee  
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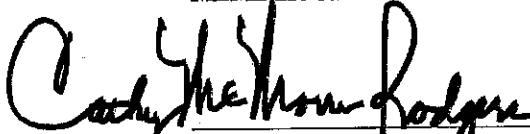
  
Earl Blumenauer  
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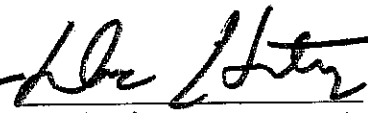
  
Darlene Hooley  
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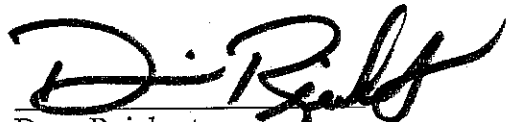
  
Mike Simpson  
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