

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:


We are writing to urge your support for language included in both the House and Senate versions of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (H.R. 1495) that would remove operating restrictions from the federal west coast hopper dredges Essayons and Yaquina. By removing the current restrictions on the annual number of days the Essayons and Yaquina may work, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be able to more fully utilize these federal resources in the manner most beneficial to and cost-effective for the taxpayers of the United States, and maintain and improve the ports, harbors, and channels of the Pacific coast.


West coast ports depend on the federal dredge fleet to maintain federally authorized channels and harbors. Federal policy currently imposes artificial and arbitrary limits on the number of days per year these federal dredges may work. This has led to circumstances where authorized channel depths have not been maintained.

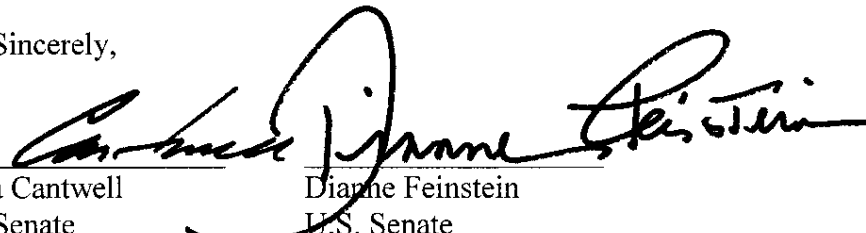
Several studies have been completed with regard to these dredges, including a GAO study (GAO-03-382). The GAO found that restrictions on the use of the Corps' hopper dredge fleet have imposed costs on the Corps' dredging program, but have thus far not resulted in proven benefits. The study also found that since the implementation of restrictions on the federal dredges, the number of private firms has decreased, the number of contractor bids per Corps solicitation has decreased, and the number of bids exceeding Corps estimates has increased.

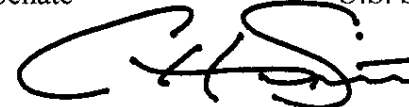
As you work to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the Water Resources Development Act, we strongly encourage you to preserve the matching language in the House and Senate versions of WRDA, and remove the artificial operating restrictions from the Essayons and Yaquina.

Sincerely,


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senate


Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senate


Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senate


Gordon H. Smith
U.S. Senate


Patty Murray
U.S. Senate