

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
Chairman  
Environment & Public  
Works Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Environment & Public  
Works Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

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.

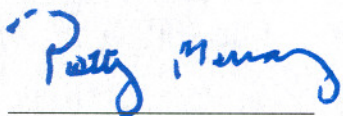
In many parts of the country, the Corps of Engineers faces a tremendous backlog of permit applications that must be reviewed. This backlog has imposed a great cost in lost jobs, reduced economic activity and a decline in international competitiveness.

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 a provision to make Section 214 authority permanent in the Senate WRDA of 2007, and encourage you to include that provision in the final bill at conference. 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.

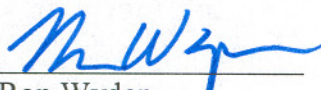
Sincerely,



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



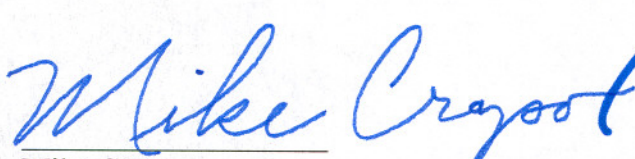
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



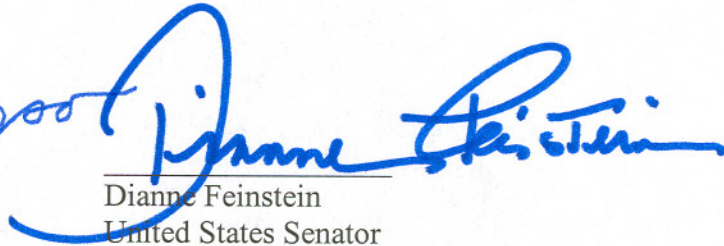
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



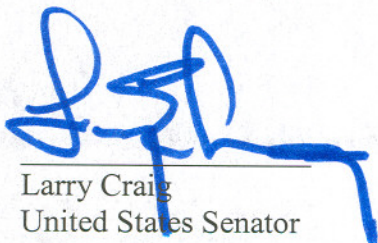
Gordon Smith  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Larry Craig  
United States Senator