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PNWA applauds veto override of water projects bill - celebrates passage of dredge fleet language

The Northwest Congressional delegation unanimously supported the veto override of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (H.R.1495). PNWA Executive Director Glenn Vanselow stated that "after literally decades of effort by PNWA, our membership and the Northwest Congressional delegation, we are pleased that Congress lifted the restrictions on the West Coast federal hopper dredges *Essayons* and *Yaquina*." He added that "this will allow the Corps of Engineers to operate these two dredges to maximize their efficiency, and maintain the reliability of navigation channels up and down the West Coast."

PNWA's members have maintained that it is more cost effective for these dredges to operate as needed and as funding allows, rather than at an arbitrary number of operating days per year. Indeed, there have been many years when work and funding were still available, yet the dredge had met its maximum number of days and had to return to its berth to await the start of the new fiscal year and the new count of days.

Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt stated that "the Port of Portland believes that unrestricted, cost-effective operation of the federal dredges *Essayons* and *Yaquina* is essential for the Port's maritime success."

Don Mann, Executive Director of the Port of Newport and PNWA's current President noted that "dredging of Oregon ports, channels and harbors is a critical link in the economic health of our coastal communities. Our communities must have cost-effective dredging for our ports. The Port of Newport is pleased that Congress has lifted the restrictions on the *Essayons* and *Yaquina*."

"The Port of Vancouver, USA depends on the Columbia River Channel being maintained at its fully authorized depth. We need a fully operational public dredge fleet for the Port to accomplish its mission, and the removal of these operating restrictions is a step in the right direction" noted Larry Paulson, Executive Director, Port of Vancouver, USA and PNWA Immediate Past President.

Vanselow added that "all Northwest Congressional delegation members, past and present, have been supportive over the years. PNWA's membership is especially appreciative of the leadership demonstrated by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Barbara Boxer (D-CA), and Representatives Peter DeFazio (D, OR-4), Brian Baird (D, WA-3), Darlene Hooley (D, OR-5) and Norm Dicks (D, WA-6). PNWA thanks these Members and the entire Northwest delegation for the successful removal of these restrictions."

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Dredge fleet background

PNWA began addressing this issue in the 1980s. Congress reduced the Corps hopper fleet to four dredges in 1978, in an effort to spur greater participation by the private dredging industry. In 1993, Congress put artificial restrictions on the use of the remaining federal dredges, ultimately reducing annual work days for the *Yaquina* to 178 days per year and 180 for the *Essayons*.

In 2002, PNWA conducted a study funded by Northwest ports, steamship and tug boat operators, pilots and the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department (OECDD), entitled “Making the Case for the Federal Dredge Fleet”. The study was released in May 2002, and found that since restrictions were imposed on the federal fleet, the cost per private bid had increased, and the number of private bids per solicitation had decreased – the exact opposite of the intent of Congress in imposing the restrictions.

After PNWA’s study was released, Congress directed the GAO to study the dredge fleet. The report “Effects of Restrictions on Corps’ Hopper Dredges Should Be Comprehensively Analyzed” was released by the GAO in March 2003. The report concluded that operating restrictions imposed costs on the government, and the benefits were largely unproven. Congress then directed the Corps to respond to the recommendations of the GAO report. Later that year, the Corps took a small step forward and increased the *Essayons’* authorized work days from 180 to 192. Lifting these restrictions will allow the Corps to maximize the efficient use of both the federal and private industry dredges necessary to maintain and improve navigation channels along the west coast.

About PNWA: The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of regional economic development. PNWA represents multiple industries in the public and private sectors in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. Members include public ports, navigation, transportation, international trade, tourism, agriculture, forest products, energy and local government interests. Since its founding in 1934, PNWA led the way for development of economic infrastructure for navigation, electric power and irrigated agriculture on the Columbia and Snake River System. In 1971, PNWA expanded, adding Puget Sound and coastal port members to provide a comprehensive regional perspective. Today, PNWA works with the U.S. Congress, federal agencies and regional decision leaders on transportation, trade, tourism, energy and environmental policy to enhance economic vitality in the Pacific Northwest.

You can learn more about PNWA at www.pnwa.net.