

Nor'wester newsletter

Issue #665 January 11, 2019

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Shutdown continues, emergency border wall funding could impact the Corps

With the continuation of the government shutdown and no resolution in sight on the fight between Congress and the President regarding border wall funding, the Trump Administration is weighing an emergency declaration to begin development of a wall without Congressional approval. This declaration would allow the Administration to target funding that was provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in a 2018 supplemental appropriations bill intended to fund disaster relief and prevention. The Administration could divert unobligated disaster relief funds to begin development of the wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

PNWA will be reaching out to our Corps Districts to anticipate what projects in our region could be impacted. We do not anticipate that navigation projects funded through the FY2019 Energy & Water Development bill will be targeted, but projects funded in the emergency supplemental could be at risk if their funding remains unobligated. We will provide an update to our membership as we receive additional information. For questions and additional information, contact [Heather Stebbings](#).

CRSO EIS timeline update

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Since 2016, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration and Bureau of Reclamation have jointly explored a range of reasonable alternatives for long-term system operations for the Federal Columbia River Power System. As part of this [CRSO EIS](#) effort, the agencies will also evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on flood risk management, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources and recreation. This new plan for the river is driven by Judge Simon's remand of the previous BiOp. While Judge Simon left the 2014 BiOp in place, he found that the federal agencies must produce an updated EIS and deliver a new Biological Opinion.

On October 19, 2018, the federal agencies received a [directive from the President](#) to develop a schedule to complete the CRSO EIS one year early. The agencies submitted schedule options to CEQ, and this week they announced an updated timeline. The CRSO EIS will now be completed by September 2020, rather than September 2021. Click [here](#) for the agencies' updated fact sheet.

The EIS process includes multiple opportunities for public engagement. This process also includes involvement by Northwest [states, tribes, and other federal agency representatives](#). PNWA looks forward to supporting the work of our federal partners as they update the scientific and economic analysis and deliver a new plan to the Court by 2020.

Corps seeking input on development implementation guidance for WRDA

The Assistant Secretary of the Army Civil Works (ASA-CW) is asking interested stake holders to provide public comments to aid in the development of the implementation guidance for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2018. Recommendations will help assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in

executing specified provisions in three different WRDA bills: 2018, 2016, and 2014. A WRDA Implementation Guidance [website](#) provides a list of the various provisions and instructions for providing comments. The 60-day comment period closes February 12, 2019.

PNWA members are encouraged to share their views with [Heather Stebbings](#) as well, as PNWA member views will be aggregated into a comment letter as well.

U.S. Department of Transportation announces INFRA grant funding opportunity

The Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program was established in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 and is funded by the Highway Trust Fund. Approximately \$855-902.5 million will be available through the grant program. Eligible INFRA project costs may include: reconstruction, rehabilitation, acquisition of property, environmental mitigation, construction contingencies, equipment acquisition, and operational improvements. The INFRA grant program awards a minimum of 25 percent of funding for rural projects. Applications for the second round of awards can be submitted electronically in [Grants.gov](#) beginning January 7, 2019. The application period closes March 4, 2019, at 8:00 p.m. EST. For additional information, click [here](#).

