



April 27, 2016

[PNWA Website](#) - [About PNWA](#) - [Action Agenda](#) - [PNWA Events](#) - [News](#) - [Contact Us](#)**In This Issue:**[Senate WRDA draft released](#)**Senate WRDA draft released**

On Tuesday, April 26th, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) released their 2016 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). WRDA is the bill that authorizes projects and modifies policies relating to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Historically it was biennial legislation, but has been delayed in recent years with bills passed in 2000, 2007 and 2014. We applaud the Committee for recognizing the importance of this legislation and for working to get back to a more routine WRDA schedule. [Full bill text](#) and a [section-by-section summary](#) can be found on the Committee's [website](#).

The Senate draft includes improvements that could benefit Northwest ports. The bill includes modest Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) modifications, building upon the significant reforms we saw in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA):

- [HMT Target](#). The bill addresses the challenges we saw this year due to an unexpected drop in FY2015 HMTF revenues. The drop in revenue resulted in a lower HMT target for FY2016. In an effort to continue the forward movement to reach full spending of annual HMT receipts, the bill would ensure expenditures increase by at least 3% annually until full use is achieved.
- [Donor Ports](#). Donor ports would see an extension to WRRDA 2014 Section 2106, which authorized \$50M annually to be provided to donor & energy transfer ports. The bill requires that annual HMT targets be met from FY2016-FY2020 to continue the program through FY2025.
- [Emerging Harbors/Small Ports](#)

- The 10% small port set aside authorized in WRRDA 2014 would be extended through FY2025. Small ports would also see a new base level of funding, raising it from 10% of FY2012 HMTF spending levels to 10% of FY2015 HMTF spending. This would be an increase of approximately \$20M annually. While [PNWA is seeking permanence](#) for this set aside, we are pleased to see that the provision has been extended and that the Committee has increased authorized funding for these projects. PNWA will continue to seek permanence as the WRDA process continues.
- A separate section of the bill would also require the Corps to draft implementation guidance for WRRDA 2014 Section 2102, specifically with regard to emerging harbors and the Great Lakes. This could help to provide additional clarity on how the Corps allocates funds to these projects moving forward.
- Harbors of Refuge. The bill authorizes the Corps to maintain all federally authorized Harbors of Refuge, which could benefit many of our coastal ports on the Oregon and Washington Coasts.

Other sections of the legislation could benefit specific portions of our membership. Information is below, and additional detail can be found on our [PNWA fact sheet](#).

- Columbia River
 - Turning Basin at River Mile 77. Language is included to support the PNWA request to modify the existing Lower Columbia River navigation project to include a [turning basin at River Mile 77](#) . This would allow for better positioning of vessels and a more efficient river system benefiting all users of the Columbia River trade gateway.
 - Ecosystem Restoration funding. The bill authorizes an increase in ecosystem restoration funding for the Columbia River and Tillamook Bay estuaries from \$50M to \$75M. Projects that receive funding through this program provide for protection, monitoring, and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat.
 - Invasive Species. The bill strengthens language in WRRDA 2014 that authorized watercraft inspection stations to be established in the Columbia River Basin. The language would allow the stations to be located outside of the basin, as long as they were to prevent introduction of invasive species.
- Port of Cascade Locks, OR. The bill supports the Port of Cascade Locks request to remove an outdated flowage easement on port property. This would allow the port to develop jobs within their Business Park, build out the full potential of their properties, and provide maximum investment in the area.
- Willamette Falls Locks Working Group. Language in the bill supports a request by the Willamette Falls Locks Working Group, to ensure all economic benefits of a

project, including cultural and historic preservation, recreation and tourism, can be considered in Corps disposition studies.

We also wanted to highlight a provision in the bill which builds upon PNWA's efforts regarding [Section 214](#). Section 214 is the funding authority that allows ports and other non-federal public entities to contribute funds to the Corps to hire additional regulatory staff. PNWA led a national coalition supporting this authority, which was made permanent in WRRDA 2014. The bill released on Tuesday proposes expanding the authority to allow rail carriers to also provide funds to the Corps to help streamline the regulatory process.

We believe this could be a beneficial addition to the program since so many of our PNWA members work with their rail partners on various projects throughout the Northwest. PNWA sincerely thanks our Northwest Senate delegation for their efforts to support our requests for the bill, which is expected to be voted on by EPW tomorrow. The House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (T&I) has not yet released their WRDA legislation, but we continue to track the WRDA process and will provide additional updates as they are available.

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