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## House WRDA bill released

Today, the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee released their Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (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 work of the Committee, including Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D, OR-4), for recognizing the importance of this legislation and for their efforts to return to a routine WRDA schedule. [Full bill text](#) and a [summary](#) can be found on the [Committee's website](#).

PNWA is in the process of doing an initial read of the bill, but wanted to highlight a couple of provisions important to Northwest navigation stakeholders:

- [Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund \(HMTF\)](#). Nor'wester readers will remember that WRRDA 2014 [authorized phased in spending of HMTF revenues](#), to reach full spending of annual receipts in FY2025. The House's WRDA 2016 would maintain this current approach, but then take the HMTF off-budget in FY2027, and make the funding directly available for the Corps to cover maintenance costs for all federally-maintained harbors.
- [Small ports](#). The bill also makes the 10% set aside of annual HMTF spending permanent. Many will recall that this set aside was authorized in WRRDA 2014, but only through FY2022. PNWA has been a leading voice in the effort to make the small port set aside permanent in the next WRDA, and we are so pleased to see this language in the bill.
- [Donor ports](#). Many will recall that Section 2106 of WRRDA 2014 authorized \$50M annually to be provided to donor and energy transfer ports for expanded uses. The House bill proposes changing the definition of a donor port from one where at least \$15M is collected in harbor maintenance tax annually to one that collects at least \$5M. This language would slightly increase the number of donor ports eligible for funding through this program and PNWA is looking into the potential impact on current donors.

- [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 The bill supports the Port of Cascade Locks request to remove an outdated flowage easement on port property.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.

As we saw in the Senate bill, the House bill would also build 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. Both the House and Senate proposals include 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 very beneficial for our members, so many of whom partner closely with the rail carriers in the region.

PNWA will be reading through this bill in more detail and will provide additional updates as we have them. We also continue to track the Senate's WRDA legislation, which was released in late April and quickly passed out of the Environment & Public Works Committee (EPW) on April 28th. It is not yet known when the bill will reach the Senate floor, but PNWA will keep members and colleagues apprised of WRDA progress in both chambers as the legislation moves forward.

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