

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA)



The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is the main legislative vehicle for authorizing federal navigation projects and implementing policy changes for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. WRDA is a key piece of legislation for PNWA's membership. We support keeping WRDA on a two year schedule and passage of a bill in 2022, to ensure timely and consistent authorization of navigation projects and improvements to Corps policy. Our priorities are:

Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Significant Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) reforms were included in the 2014, 2016 and 2020 WRDA bills. No changes are proposed at this time.

Section 214 Expansion. Section 214 was made permanent in WRRDA 2014 and allows the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits. Mitigation banks are one kind of project for which ports must receive permits. Mitigation bank credits are often the preferred by Federal agencies that protect fish, wildlife, and the environment. Having fully approved mitigation banks with credits available for use is critical to the completion of port infrastructure and navigation projects. Several port mitigation banks in the Northwest have yet to be permitted due to a lack of federal regulatory staff. Section 214 funding would help address this backlog, yet ports have not been allowed to use the authority for mitigation bank permitting. The Corps deems mitigation banks a "profit-making venture" if the port intends to sell credits from their bank, which is no different than a port leasing a dock that it owns. PNWA supports expansion of Section 214 authority to allow for expediting the processing of mitigation bank permits regardless of whether the non-Federal public entity plans to sell credits to other public or private entities. When public ports create mitigation banks, they are doing so in the public interest to provide benefits to their communities, just as with all other public port projects.

Snake River Channel and Turning Basin Characterization. The Snake River Federal Navigation Channel near the ports of Lewiston and Clarkston was established under the Rivers and Harbor Act of 1945 and was simply defined as 250 feet wide and 14 feet deep. In the past, the Corps was able to use discretion for turns and bends in the river system when maintaining the channel and previously dredged a wider footprint. This wider footprint allowed for vessels, including grain barges and cruise ships, to safely navigate the river. In order to ensure the ports of Lewiston and Clarkston, grain terminal facilities, and cruise operations continue safely, and the Corps meets their federal navigation mission, we are seeking language to formalize the federal channel definition including turning basins, and other safe navigation features in the Lower Granite pool on the Snake River. This will assist the Corps in budgeting, planning, and efficient maintenance of navigation needs in the future.

Tacoma Harbor Deepening. Include language to authorize the Tacoma Harbor Deepening project to move to the next phase of design, engineering and eventual construction from 51' MLLW to 57' MLLW at the Port of Tacoma, WA.

Port of Everett. Include language to assume the maintenance of the Boat Launch Connector Channel as part of the Everett Harbor and Snohomish River navigation project, to maintain critical emergency and law enforcement response in Puget Sound, tribal fisheries access to Usual and Accustomed grounds, and for the interests of national security.

Port of Port Townsend Breakwater. Include language to authorize the Corps to assume ownership and maintenance of the portion of the Boat Haven Marina Breakwater currently owned by the Port of Port Townsend which connects to the remainder of the breakwater owned and maintained by the Corps.

Willamette River Dredging Flexibility. Include language to provide the Corps flexibility to maintain the Lower Willamette River Federal channel including the portion that falls within the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) boundary without incurring liability for the entire Superfund site clean up. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must remain the lead agency of this Superfund project, while the Corps must be enabled to perform routine maintenance dredging to ensure safe navigation for the Port of Portland, Oregon and terminals upstream.

