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- **WRDA 2024 Passed by Congress**

PNWA cannot thank Senators Jeff Merkley, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Mike Crapo, Jim Risch, and Ranking Member Rick Larsen enough for their efforts upfront and behind the scenes to ensure all of PNWA's key priorities were addressed in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. We have greatly appreciated the communication and collaboration across the aisle with the staffs of both the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to craft the legislation to ensure that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) policies and project authorizations are meeting the needs of water resources projects.



WRDA 2024 Passed By Congress - Legislation Heads to President's Desk

On December 10, the U.S. House of Representatives passed S. 4367, the "Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024" (WRDA) by a large bipartisan vote of [399 to 18](#) and on December 18, the U.S. Senate passed the bill by an exceptional bipartisan vote of [97 to 1](#). The legislation heads to President Biden's desk and he is expected to sign the bill into law. This will be the seventh consecutive WRDA bill passed on a two-year cycle and PNWA looks forward to continuing this bipartisan effort going forward for WRDA 2026.

WRDA 2024 Information:

To view the WRDA 2024 bill text, [click here](#).

To view the section-by-section WRDA 2024 summary, [click here](#).

For more information about WRDA 2024, [click here](#) and [here](#).

PNWA Issues Addressed in WRDA 2024

To view the actual text of these provisions, [click here](#).

Columbia River – Confined Aquatic Structures

We would have preferred language authorizing construction of the confined aquatic structures on the Lower Columbia River at full federal expense. However, we would not have been able to achieve agreement from both political parties and both Chambers of Congress. This section on "ability to pay" has extensive text and provides authority to the Secretary to determine whether to waive the cost share for the confined aquatic structures. In addition, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is authorized to do a study of the use of these structures for future policy recommendations. We are pleased to see our immediate need addressed as well as a study for future actions utilizing confined aquatic structures.

Pile Dike Maintenance Clarification

To ensure that pile dikes can continue to be maintained under Operations and Maintenance even if the shoreline has eroded, language was included to clarify this action as maintenance to restore function to an existing structure rather than a new project requiring new authorization and new environmental studies. In addition, the bill reiterates the need for the Corps to continue pile dike maintenance at Federal expense on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

Replacement of the Dredge Oregon at the Port of Portland

The original language proposed and subsequent input from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had to be modified to achieve agreement between both the House and Senate in a bipartisan fashion. The language from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee was favored by PNWA and we appreciate the extra effort by our Congressional delegation members to ensure this language was included in the bill. As a result, any costs of replacing the Dredge Oregon will be included as part of the full operating costs.

Port of Skamania County Conveyance

There are generally applicable terms included and the Port of Skamania County will have Corps property in North Bonneville conveyed to the Port. The Department of Interior's first right of refusal of the property is waived.

Mount St. Helens Sediment Control

The Corps is authorized to conduct a feasibility study to add navigation as a purpose of the Mount St. Helens Sediment Control project. This study is anticipated to be completed far in advance of the Corps' 50 year management plan update in 2035.

Columbia River Treaty

This section provides authorization to pay Canada from FY2025 through FY2027 for pre-planned flood storage during the interim period and the payments are adjusted for inflation. Authorization is achieved in the bill and now appropriations will be needed.

Other PNWA Member Priorities:

Northwest Seaport Alliance (Port of Seattle)

The bill authorizes the Secretary to expedite completion of the project feasibility study for the Seattle Harbor Navigation Improvement Project to deepen the East Waterway at the Port of Seattle. Another section deauthorizes a specific portion of the channel in the East Waterway.

As a result of adjustment to the Harbor Deepening section of the legislation, the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma will be able to take advantage of reduced cost shares for their harbor deepening projects and operations and maintenance costs.

Additional Provisions of Note:

Harbor Deepening

The depth for harbor deepening construction cost share and subsequent operations and maintenance cost share was adjusted from 50 feet to 55 feet.

Emerging Harbors

Requires the Secretary to issue guidance within 90 days of passage of the legislation to implement the additional uses (dredging marinas and berths accessibly by Federal channel) and develop a pathway to accept fund from non-Federal sponsors.

Inland Waterway Trust Fund (IWTF)

As of October 1, 2024, the cost share for inland projects is now 75% federal and 25% from the Inland Waterway Trust Fund. Should PNWA ever require use of IWTF, it will be beneficial to have a higher federally funded contribution.

3x3x3 Rule Changes

For planning studies that occur after enactment of WRDA 2024, the Corps' 3x3x3 Rule of no more than \$3 million, 3 years long, and engaging 3 concurrent levels of review process will now be no more than \$5 million, 4 years long, and 3 concurrent levels of review process.

Maximization of Beneficial Use

It is now a national goal for the Corps to use 70 percent by tonnage of suitable dredged material obtained from the construction or operation and maintenance of water resources development projects beneficially.

Section 214 Modifications

The provision in a previous WRDA allowing for contributions to the Corps by certain eligible entities like ports, utilities, and railroads to assist with staffing capacity for permit processing was modified to add Tribes as an eligible entity. Another provision in the bill requires the Corps' permit finder website to be updated within 30 days of the end of each fiscal year with the current status of permits for which Section 214 funds have been contributed.

Removal of Abandoned Vessels

The legislation spells out the conditions under which the Corps can remove abandoned vessels and authorizes \$10 million per year from 2025 to 2029 towards this purpose.

U.S. Moorings

The legislation requires the Secretary to prioritize completion of the prospectus for the U.S. Moorings Facility in Portland in order to access funds to begin replacing/repairing the facility.

Additional GAO Studies

Studies authorized include:

- Corps Modernization
- Modernization of Environmental Review
- Distribution of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund
- Study on Donor Ports
- Study of Homeless Encampments on Corps Property
- Report on Material Contaminated by a Hazardous Substance and the impacts to the Civil Works Program

Oregon:

Environmental Infrastructure

Section 8359 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 (136 Stat. 3802) is amended to increase funding from \$50 million to \$100 million and adds Lincoln County after Lane County to the provision.

Oregon Environmental Infrastructure

\$40 million is authorized for the Secretary to establish a program to provide environmental assistance to non-Federal interests in the State of Oregon.

Willamette Valley

Requires study of an alternative ceasing hydropower at the Willamette River Basin prior to completing review and consultation with other Federal agencies on the operation and maintenance of the Willamette River Basin projects for flood control, navigation, and other purposes. Another section requires a status report on the disposition study of hydropower in the Willamette Valley, Oregon.

Feasibility Studies

- Project for flood risk management and streambank erosion, Siuslaw River, Florence, Oregon.
- Project for flood risk management and ecosystem restoration, Willamette River, Lane County, Oregon.

Technical Corrections

- Project for ecosystem restoration, Nursery Reach, Walla Walla River, Oregon.
- Project for ecosystem restoration, Mill Creek and Mill Creek Flood Control Zone District Channel, Washington

Washington:

Feasibility Studies

- Project for navigation, flood risk management, and ecosystem restoration, Grays Bay, Wahkiakum County, Washington.
- Project for flood risk management and sediment management, Grays River, in the vicinity of Rosburg, Wahkiakum County, Washington.

- Project for ecosystem restoration, Wind, Klickitat, Hood, Deschutes, Rock Creek, and John Day tributaries, Columbia River, Washington.

General Reauthorizations

As a high priority, the project for flood risk management and sediment management, Grays River, Wahkiakum County, Washington

Coastal Washington

The Secretary is authorized to carry out comprehensive studies for riverine and coastal flooding of coastal areas in the State of Washington.

Western Washington State

Counties in Puget Sound may soon see a program to assist with water quality efforts to reduce toxins. "Secretary may establish a program to provide environmental assistance to non-Federal interests in Chelan County, Island County, King County, Kittitas County, Pierce County, San Juan County, Snohomish County, Skagit County, and Whatcom County, Washington". The program can provide design and construction assistance for water-related environmental infrastructure, resource protection, and development projects including wastewater treatment, water supply, environmental restoration, and surface water resource protection and development.

Maintenance of Navigation Channels

Adds Oak Harbor Channel and Breakwater as a project.

Support of Civil Works Missions

Western Washington University in Bellingham will "conduct academic research on water quality, aquatic ecosystem restoration (including aquaculture), and the resiliency of water resources development projects in the Pacific Northwest to natural disasters."

If you have any questions, contact [Dena Horton](#).

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