
WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA) 2026

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is the legislative vehicle for authorizing federal navigation projects and implementing policy changes for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). PNWA supports keeping this key piece of legislation on a two-year schedule to ensure timely and consistent authorization of navigation projects and improvements to Corps policy. PNWA's WRDA 2026 priorities:

Columbia River Treaty Flood Risk Management Agreement.

The original Columbia River Treaty was ratified in 1961. The U.S. pre-paid Canada for 60 years of flood risk management (water storage and planned water releases/flows). The flood risk management portion of the Columbia River Treaty expired in September 2024. The U.S. and Canada reached a 20-year agreement in principle (AIP) to modernize and amend the Columbia River Treaty. This AIP includes annual compensation from the U.S. to Canada for flood risk management. This annual payment ensures Canada will provide a guaranteed amount of water storage and reduced flood risk to the U.S. While awaiting treaty ratification, the two countries agreed to a 3-year interim pre-planned storage agreement. The first payment started at \$37.6 million in fiscal year 2025 and is adjusted to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

To pay for the interim pre-planned storage, Section 1152 Columbia River Basin of WRDA 2024 amended Section 8309 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 (136 Stat. 3780) and provided authorization for appropriations beginning on August 1, 2024, for each fiscal year 2025, 2026, and 2027, to remain available until expended. However, WRDA 2024 also contained a sunset clause stating the authority to compensate Canada for the interim pre-planned storage will expire on August 31, 2027.

Currently, negotiations between the U.S. and Canada to finalize the terms and conditions of the AIP and complete the amended Columbia River Treaty are on pause. The technical teams are still exchanging information and working on modeling. When negotiations resume, it will take time to finalize the treaty and achieve ratification in the U.S. Senate and Canadian Parliament. Ideally, negotiations will resume soon and reach a successful conclusion prior to 2027. However, to ensure reliable, pre-planned flood risk management and stable reservoir operations, it appears necessary to extend the 3-year interim pre-planned storage agreement another 3 years to 2030 at a minimum, and ideally, until the treaty is ratified.

PNWA seeks legislative drafting service language for WRDA 2026 to extend or remove the sunset clause and modify the authorization of appropriations to continue to provide flood risk management payments adjusted for inflation to Canada through 2030 or while the modernized Columbia River Treaty remains unratified.

Lower Columbia River Turning Basin Improvements.

The Columbia River Channel Deepening project was completed in 2010 and deepened the federal navigation channel from 40 feet to 43 feet deep. Since the completion of the deepening, approximately \$1 billion in public and private investments occurred at Lower Columbia River ports, terminals, rail, and other facilities. As part of the deepening project, several turning basins were established and constructed to allow loaded ships to safely maneuver. The current vessel use of the river system suggests a turning basin near River Mile 77, near Kalama, Washington, should be established and the turning basin near Longview, Washington should be widened and deepened to 43 feet.

In WRDA 2020, a feasibility study to re-evaluate the Lower Columbia River Channel Improvement Project turning basins for efficiencies was authorized. In partnership with the ports of Kalama and Longview, the Corps completed the feasibility study and received a favorable Chief's Report in September 2025. PNWA supports advancing the turning basin improvements near Longview, Washington and the establishment of a turning basin at River Mile 77 to the preliminary engineering design (PED) and construction phase. Construction of these improvements will be done in partnership with the ports of Kalama and Longview. The Corps will assume maintenance of the turning basins as part of the Lower Columbia River federal navigation channel post construction. This action will maximize efficiency and safety of shipping on the Lower Columbia River. **Proposed WRDA 2026 language: Columbia River Turning Basins Navigation Improvements, Washington & Oregon. The project for navigation improvements, that will deepen and widen the existing Longview Federal Turning Basin, establish a new turning basin at Lower Martin Bar, and install two Stern Anchor Buoys (SABs) in the Upper Longview and Kalama Anchorages. An estimated total cost of \$21,897,000, with an estimated Federal cost of \$16,408,000 (rounded) and the non-federal cost of \$5,489,000 in accordance with the provision of Section 101 (a) of WRDA 1986, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 2211(a)).**

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USACE Aquatic Disposal Facilities for the Columbia River Maintenance.

The Corps and non-federal sponsor ports of Vancouver, Kalama, Longview and Portland are working through the process for creating a 20-Year Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) for the Columbia & Lower Willamette Rivers. The DMMP, which is expected to be released in April 2026, concludes that the most efficient, lowest-cost option to maintain the river is to construct in-water confined aquatic structures (underwater holding pens) near the mouth of the Columbia River.

Although the structures support operations and maintenance activities, which is 100% federally funded, internal USACE policy classifies these structures as "construction" triggering a non-federal cost share at a total of \$97 million. A WRDA 2026 policy fix is needed to codify that these structures, similar to pile dike and jetty structures, are necessary for dredging operations to maintain the Columbia River waterway and are thus in the National interest. As such, the cost for developing the confined aquatic structures would be considered operations and maintenance and 100% federally funded.

Proposed WRDA 2026 language:

Sec. __. Lower Columbia River.

(a) Notwithstanding the June 23, 2004, project cooperation agreement regarding this project, the Federal share of the cost of construction of dredged material stabilization and retaining structures required under such agreement and any future project cooperation agreements related to the project for navigation, Lower Willamette and Columbia Rivers, from Portland, Oregon, to the sea, authorized by the first section of the Act of June 18, 1878 (chapter 267, 20 Stat. 157, chapter 264) shall be 100 percent; and

(b) Section 1139(c)(15) of the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-272) is repealed.

