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. Given PNWA's focus on federal navigation infrastructure in the Northwest, WRDA is a key piece of legislation for our membership. We support keeping WRDA on a two year schedule and passage of a bill in 2020, to ensure timely and consistent authorization of navigation projects, and improvements to Corps policy. Our WRDA priorities are outlined below.

Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Significant Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) reforms were included in the Water Resources Reform & Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 and the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016. PNWA supports full expenditure of annual HMT collections, designation of certain amounts to specific categories of ports (i.e. donor/energy transfer ports, small ports), and that all cargo benefits from fees assessed via the HMT are fully utilized for its intended purpose to maintain the navigability of the rivers and harbors. We are working with fellow stakeholders, Members of the Northwest Congressional delegation and their staff, and Committee staff as HMTF language is drafted for inclusion in WRDA 2020.

Section 214 Expansion. Section 214 was made permanent in WRDA 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. Section 214 has allowed local governments, including ports, to move forward with vital infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects. Mitigation bank credits are often the preferred form of mitigation for several 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. The credits are used to support mitigation efforts, environmental programs, and activities that support a public purpose—not private shareholders. Unfortunately, several mitigation banks in the Northwest have yet to be permitted due to a lack of regulatory staff. Section 214 funding would help address this backlog, yet ports have not been allowed to use the authority for mitigation bank projects. If the port intends to sell credits from their mitigation bank, the Corps deems this to be a profit-making venture. PNWA supports expansion of Section 214 authority to allow for expediting the processing of mitigation bank permits regardless of whether the non-Federal government entity plans to sell mitigation bank credits.

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, over $900 million in public and private investments has 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. A Section 7001 proposal was completed for the turning basins at Vancouver, Longview, and establishing the Lower Martin turning basin near River Mile 77. The current vessel use of the river system suggests a turning basin near River Mile 77 should be established. PNWA supports authorizing language for the Corps to re-evaluate the Lower Columbia River Channel Improvement Project turning basins for efficiencies. The turning basin improvements will maximize the efficiency and safety of shipping on the Lower Columbia River.

Cap Sante Marina Federal Channel Deauthorization—Port of Anacortes, Washington. The Port of Anacortes is seeking to de-authorize a portion of the Federal Channel within Cap Sante Marina. However, the area does not include the wooden pile breakwater at the entrance to Cap Sante Marina. The areas for de-authorization includes the existing federal channel point of origin west of T-Dock and extending east and full width of the channel up to a point 15-foot offset from the southernmost tip of the existing USACE timber breakwater. The dimension is approximately 250 feet wide by 960 feet long. The second area for deauthorization begins at a point 15-foot offset from the southernmost tip of the USACE timber breakwater and extends north and full width of the channel to the channel point of termination south of the existing O-Dock and the dimension is approximately 200 feet wide by 620 feet long.