

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 2022, 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 2014, 2016 and 2020 WRDA bills. PNWA supports full expenditure of annual HMT collections, spending down the \$9+ billion surplus in the fund, designation of certain amounts to specific categories of ports (i.e. donor/energy transfer ports, small ports), and that the trust fund be fully utilized for its intended purpose to maintain the navigability of the rivers and harbors. PNWA works closely with fellow stakeholders, Members of the Northwest Congressional delegation and their staff, and Committee staff on proposed changes to HMTF allocations. 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. 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 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 environmental programs that support a public purpose - not private shareholders. Unfortunately, several port 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" and will not support this action. 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 credits. Public ports are not private businesses, and funds from mitigation bank credit sales are reinvested in the port, supporting environmental stewardship programs and economic development efforts that benefit the taxpayers in the port district, as well as the local, regional, and national economy.

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 and Longview, and would establish 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 and the turning basin near Longview should be deepened. PNWA supports authorizing language for the Corps to re-evaluate and construct the Lower Columbia River Channel turning basins. The turning basin improvements will maximize the efficiency and safety of shipping on the Lower Columbia River.

Multi-purpose Navigation Infrastructure. While authorized navigation infrastructure, such as breakwaters, aids safe and efficient navigation, it often has the added benefit of providing flood protection to communities. However, if the structure begins to experience overtopping, the Corps is prevented from maintenance work to restore the flood protection benefits if the structure is still technically serving its navigation purpose. PNWA seeks language to expand coastal navigation infrastructure authority for multiple purposes to address navigation, flooding, and public safety benefits.

