

Hicks-Ray Associates



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TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Fred B. Hicks and Tom Ray

SUBJECT: Latest Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization Updates

This coming Monday, May 6, the Senate will begin voting on its version of the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act [WRDA] with the first votes being used to determine whether there are 60 Senators who wish to proceed to full floor debate.

Yesterday afternoon, Senator Boxer and Ranking Republican Senator Vitter held a brief conference call with key stakeholders concerning strategy on the bill. Senator Boxer confirmed that when WRDA comes to the Senate floor on Monday that it will be in the form of a “managers amendment” which could differ significantly from the bill that was passed unanimously out of the Environment and Public Works Committee on March 22.

Senator Boxer noted that her version of WRDA would provide jobs and a new path forward for water resources infrastructure in the United States. She requested that stakeholders write to their Senators urging passage of the bill. However, she also announced that her manager’s amendment would not be made public until Monday, which is the same day of the initial round of voting.

This leaves stakeholders with a choice of withholding their endorsement until they can study the manager’s amendment or of supporting a bill without knowing its contents.

The manager’s amendment is likely to retain provisions which significantly reform and speed up the environmental review of Federal agencies that must approve Corps construction projects. We also anticipate that the title creating a WIFIA funding partnership between the Corps and USEPA will also be retained. Many WESTCAS members could potentially make use of this program.

Organizations that support the Boxer/Vitter manager’s amendment on Monday will earn the gratitude of both Senators and of Committee staff. The question is how great a leap of faith is justified without knowing the details before providing an endorsement.

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