



washington dc update

May 13, 2013

Water Resources Development Act Updates

We suspect that a tiny percentage of the general public is aware that the **Water Resources Development Act** is being reauthorized in the Congress. But there can be no doubt that the battle currently ranging on the Senate floor, with action to begin shortly in the House, will impact the way water resources are managed for many years to come.

WRDA was passed by a unanimous vote out of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on March 22. Debate on S. 601 began on the Senate floor on May 6 and will be continued today. The bill currently under consideration is a manager's amendment which differs in many respects from the original measure passed out of the EPW Committee.

Senators and a full spectrum of advocacy groups, including those from the water resources community, are fully engaged with this process with deadlines for the latest round of Senate amendments to the bill due at the EPW Committee offices by 4:00 PM today, which will be followed by floor consideration in the Senate.

We have been working with multiple associations and stakeholders on an almost minute by minute basis over the past few days including streams of emails, conference calls, and communication with water resources staffs in a number of Senate offices. After such a long dry spell with regard to Congressional action on water related issues, the whole process has been exhilarating and a breath of fresh air.

Many issues that are being decided in the Senate WRDA these include, but are not confined to:

- *The inclusion of provisions for a large number of specific water projects, thus breaking the drought on Congressional advocacy for individual projects.*
- *Tough new rules to shorten the period of environmental review that are being championed by Senator Boxer.*
- *Nearly half a billion a year authorized by Corps of Engineers Environmental Infrastructure.*
- *A new Corps/EPA partnership that creates a new loan guarantee program.*
- *Proposed new standards for the Corps to use in reallocating water supplies.*

These are just a few examples of the 350 page Senate version of the bill. We will have a better idea of the details when all proposed amendments have been voted on. This could be as early as the end of the week.

The scope of the WRDA reauthorization process is so broad that we believe that the process will continue through much of the 113th Congress. In other words, it would not be surprising if a final version of WRDA was not passed until late next year. But don't kid yourself. What is happening now as the Senate debates its version of the bill and the House prepares to draft its own WRDA will play a powerful role in the process.

WESTCAS has the opportunity to study in detail the contents of the Senate bill to create a detailed position on WRDA. This document can then be used to communicate our support for some of the provisions of the Senate bill and our concerns with others. It can also be used to reach out to the House as they prepare to draft their own version of the legislation.

There has been no time like the present for WESTCAS to make a difference.



Summary & WESTCAS Actions at San Diego Conference

WRDA and WESTCAS

There is much that concerns Western States that WESTCAS should focus on in S.601, as it is currently being debated on the Senate floor. Further updates and details will be provided as debate continues. A number of amendments are offered, those potentially affecting western water resources should be securitized at our meeting in San Diego.

Key Action Items

At the upcoming San Diego conference, key WRDA issues will include:

- Title I – project development & funding
- Title II – particular issues with Sec 2014 & 2015, potential changes to “water control plans” at individual projects
- Title VI – Levee safety & bureaucratic red-tape
- Importantly, the strategy for the House, as our contacts at the T&I Committee take up WRDA (i.e., opportunity to counteract negatives in Senate version)

Be sure to join us in San Diego for this important Legislative workshop.