



washington dc update

December 16, 2011

Major and Very Positive Developments

Over the past many weeks, you have endured a series of reports from us talking about FY12 Appropriations omnibuses, minibuses, megabuses and a host of other arcane topics. These issues are critical to the water resources community in the Arid West because they determine both Federal investments in water infrastructure as well as how the Congress wishes to approach the issue of regulations.

Beginning late yesterday, the FY12 Appropriations log-jam suddenly broke apart and the result is that the Congress is on the verge of passing a “Megabus” that will not only keep the government open after midnight tonight but bring to a conclusion the FY12 Appropriations cycle.

WESTCAS has been very active in this process, particularly with regard to Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers water infrastructure funding. This includes a WESTCAS letter, signed by Ed Curley, and delivered to the House and Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committees supporting additional investment.

The results of this advocacy are now apparent in the “Manager’s Statement” with regard to Energy and Water Appropriations. And the news is very good.

- The Senate had provided an additional \$80,000,000 in Bureau of Reclamation Water Resources funding over the funding request. WESTCAS supported this increase. The House/Senate conferees in the Megabus have increased this level to \$90,000,000.
- The Senate had provided \$40,000,000 in Corps of Engineers Environmental Infrastructure funding while the House provided zero. WESTCAS endorsed this \$40 million add. The conferees provided \$29,600,000 of this amount. Even more important, they set a precedent for re-inserting Corps Environmental Infrastructure funding back into the Energy and Water Appropriations bill.
- WESTCAS has repeatedly expressed its concern over the “Principals and Guidelines” that CEQ, the Corps, and other agencies have been developing, largely out of the public view. The House/Senate conferees have included a very strong statement with regard to this issue:

Water Resources Principals and Guidelines---No funds are provided for the line item proposed for water Resources Principles and Guidelines, as this is considered a new start. No funds provided to the Corps shall be used to develop or implement rules or guidance if an update or replacement to the document dated March 10, 1983, and entitled “Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies” is finalized during the fiscal year period covered by the Energy and Water Development Act for 2012. The Corps shall continue to use the Water Resources Principles and Guidelines in effect as of the date of enactment of this Act during that same period.

CONCLUSION: So, the Congress is preparing to pass the FY12 Megabus and the President preparing to sign a measure that includes significant increases in water infrastructure funding for the Bureau and the Corps of Engineers and a very strong statement with regard to the regulatory agenda on P&G being proposed by the Administration.

WESTCAS is the voice of water resources in the Arid West. You just helped make a difference in the FY12 Megabus! We hope you will (1) pat yourselves on the back and (2) get ready to roll up your sleeves for 2012 so we can take full advantage of these hard-won gains of 2011.

Summary & Take-Away .

Bipartisan may sound like a foreign word these days, but, with a prompting from groups like WESTCAS, the FY12 appropriations log-jam broke and Congress is on the verge of passing a Megabus that will not only keep the government going but will add significant funding to both the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers. Kudos to WESTCAS for helping make a difference!

And, like lagniappe, the bipartisan Conference report clarified that no funds were provided for the proposed Principles and Guidelines—that work is a “new start” and no funding is provided for any new starts.

