

Hicks-Ray Associates



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TO: WESTCAS Membership
FROM: Fred B. Hicks and Tom Ray
SUBJECT: DC Updates

The Congress is now back at work after its two week spring recess. Actually, this seems to have been longer than two weeks because most of the month of March, before the recess began, was dominated by the health reform issue. With that piece of business settled, at least for the moment, Congress can now begin to consider what other items it will deal with in the remaining months of the 111th Congress.

There are several hearings of interest to WESTCAS members scheduled for this week. This includes a Thursday hearing before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to consider the need for a reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act this year. Major stakeholders representing the missions of the Corps including navigation, ports, flood control, and ecosystem restoration are scheduled to testify.

Another issue that will likely come up on Thursday is Chairman Oberstar's concern both that the Corps of Engineers has been slow to implement "Principals and Guidelines" that were a part of WRDA-07 and also the fact that in 2009 the Council on Environmental Quality took the lead role away from the Corps and assumed responsibility on its own behalf. Chairman Oberstar will likely have some interesting questions with regard to the implications of the move by CEQ.

Finally, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Mike Conner and other Department of Interior officials are scheduled to testify also on Thursday before the House Energy and Water Appropriations Committee concerning their proposed FY11 budget. This should give WESTCAS members yet another glimpse of the Bureau's latest plans for how to approach the new WaterSmart initiative.

Congress returning from a long recess is not unlike a train leaving the station. Progress at first seems slow but the momentum is building. There will not be another recess until the Memorial Day recess at the very end of May. What happens between now and Memorial Day should give us a good idea of what priorities the Congress hopes to complete before the 111th Congress comes to an end in December. We will keep you updated.

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