



washington dc update

Update on the FY11 Appropriations Cycle

May 4, 2010

Update on CEQ and the P&G Process



Terry Breyman has moved back to the ASA (Civil Work) office and been replaced by Robyn Colosimo. The Waterways Alliance reports that CEQ is now in the process of setting up "work plans and work groups" for specific issues. Ms. Colosimo has said that non-federal interests will be considered during the process, probably starting in the fall.

We will make sure that WESTCAS has opportunity to participate.

May is normally the time when the House of Representatives begins to mark up its annual Appropriations bills. This includes Energy and Water Appropriations that funds water projects at the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation.

But very little is working in what might be called a "normal fashion" this year. While there is a possibility that the House may mark up a handful of bills, the current consensus is that the House and Senate Leadership will bring few if any to the floor. Their rationale for not doing so is their fear that Republicans could force a series of votes during consideration that could prove uncomfortable for Democrats, particularly those in close races for re-election.

The best bet is that most of the FY11 Appropriations bills will be put on a continuing resolution on October 1st with the CR extending until after the November 2nd elections. This would allow the Congress to finish work on FY11 Appropriations during a lame duck session that could begin any time after the election and up to mid-night on December 31st when the 111th Congress will end.

Since nobody can know the outcome of the mid-term elections and whether the Democrats will keep their House and Senate majorities, all sorts of strange things are possible. This includes holding over the FY11 Appropriations bills until the new year and the start of the 112th Congress. But that can be a dangerous proposition. WESTCAS members will remember FY07 when appropriations bills were carried over into a new Congress. The result was that the FY07 bills were eventually put on a full year CR which in turn resulted in the stripping of all earmarks out of the bill and Federal agencies being given sole discretion for how to spend their money.

That was a problem for local stakeholders who were building water resources projects and depending upon Corps or Bureau funding. Some of the projects got their money in FY07 and some didn't.

What will happen in FY11? Quite honestly, at this point, nobody knows. The best strategy is to "stay tuned" and watch what happens. That's what we will be doing and we will keep you updated.

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