



washington dc update

The Final Days of the 111th Congress

May 17, 2010

WESTCAS to be Represented at CEQ Discussion

Fred Hicks will represent WESTCAS at the upcoming meeting of the Waterways Alliance in Washington DC this Wednesday, May 19th. Ms. Robyn Colosimo, Deputy Associate Director for Natural Resources, Council on Environmental Quality, will be the featured presenter. A HRA report will be prepared for WESTCAS members on the meeting.

The Congress is moving into the final two weeks before the Memorial Day recess which will take up the first week of June. Then, the 4th of July one week recess, then five weeks of summer recess. The bottom line is that the days available in the legislative schedule for the 111th Congress are rapidly dwindling.

There are still huge issues to be address such as the climate change bill, extending the Bush tax cuts, and various fixes for the economy. And then there are many more pending issues of special concern to WESTCAS including the “waters of the US” legislation, the FY11 Appropriations cycle, and other environmental issues.

It is impossible to know at this time exactly what may and may not get done between now and September and also what might be accomplished during a lame duck session of the Congress which would be held after the mid-term elections in November. We will monitor this issue and keep the WESTCAS membership updated.

One issue that will be likely resolved between now and May 25 is whether House Republicans will extend their decision not to request FY11 Appropriations for their home districts to the WRDA process. Chairman Oberstar has indicated that he plans to move a WRDA bill this year and he has set May 25 as the deadline for Republican Members to officially rescind the requests they had submitted back in November, 2009.

Neither House Democrats nor either side of the isle in the Senate has taken a similar pledge. If the “no project request exclusion” is extended to WRDA, many suppose that it will also be extended to any new Highway reauthorization bill. The House Republican policy creates a hardship for Districts which have only a single House Member when this Member is a Republican since local stakeholders must look entirely to the Senate to carry their projects and without the normal support of their Representative. There is also the issue of transferring most of the power over projects away from publicly elected Members of Congress and to Federal agencies.

It should be remembered that House Republicans, regardless of how they may feel about this policy, are obliged to follow the instructions of their caucus. We will keep you updated as this situation is resolved.

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