



washington dc update

August 7, 2009

Bureau of Reclamation Stakeholders Meeting

Earlier today, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor hosted a “Reclamation Stakeholders Meeting” this morning at the Department of Interior. Mike was joined by Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science and several other Bureau personal in presenting updates for those in attendance. We were especially interested in the following three issues:

Note:

Jo-Ellen Darcy
Confirmed

Before adjourning for the summer, the Senate confirmed Jo-Ellen Darcy to be the next Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. In her new capacity, Ms. Darcy will be head up the Army Corps of Engineers. Her confirmation continues the ongoing process of filling top Administration appointments.

1. Mike Connor noted that the following schedule is being followed by the White House Council on Environmental Quality as it revises “principals and guidelines” for all Federal agencies who manage water projects. Outside stakeholder comments were due on July 17. Federal agencies have until August 26 to forward their comments to the CEQ. After that, CEQ will submit the comments and findings to the National Academy of Science for their review. This is the point that the process will probably slow down since this review may take a while. And this will be the point when WESTCAS and other advocacy organizations can begin to have a real impact on this issue.
2. Mike Connor was asked what he thought about CEQ’s decision to revise the Executive Order issued during the Carter Administration concerning Federal oversight over activities on floodplains. The Commissioner replied that he would look into the issue. Several of the stakeholders suggested that any time the Federal government expands its reach to activities on the 500 year floodplain, there was no way that the Bureau would not be affected. This is another indication of how much this issue has flown under the radar screen.
3. A budget summary sheet was passed out [see attached] which gives House and Senate funding figures for the Bureau for the FY10 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. There is optimism that this bill will be conferenced as a stand alone item in September or October. We have attached the budget sheet that was distributed this morning for your review.

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