

Hicks-Ray Associates



October 21, 2009

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

With 60 days left in the calendar year [before the holiday season really gets into full swing] there is no shortage of “front burner” issues of concern to WESTCAS. We hope that everybody can make it to the conference next week. But if you can’t, we’ll be working to report on the presentations and what we all learned in Tucson. The water resources community is entering a period of historic change and challenge. It is essential that WESTCAS members be an active presence in helping to guide the changes that are on the near horizon and making sure that they are wise and helpful in achieving water sustainability, particularly in the arid west.

Our own personal list of front burner issues would include in no particular order:

- The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will soon move from the draft stage of the Clean Water Restoration Act to the introduction of a bill along with public hearings. The Senate has already passed its version earlier this summer in S. 787 by a straight party line vote. We hope that the WESTCAS conference can be used for the organization to adopt a formal position with regard to what the organization feels is essential for the final version of the bill.
- The Administration is working on an Executive Order regarding activities on the 100 and 500 year flood plain. Some in the water community believe that this Executive Order is nothing to get worked up about. Others are deeply concerned over a process that is taking place completely out of the public view. Fred Caver who was for a number of years the Deputy Director of Civil Works at the US Army Corps of Engineers will provide an update on this issue. After hearing Mr. Caver’s presentation, you will hopefully be in a better position to judge for yourself the seriousness of this issue.
- There is a strong movement nationally for the water community to get behind HR 3202, Congressman Blumenauer’s “Water Protection and Reinvestment Trust Fund. Congressman Blumenauer believes that the creation of a revenue source to close the funding gap for wastewater and water infrastructure would provide a deficit neutral means to address the fact that funding needs currently exceed available appropriations by a 10 to 1 ratio. There is also the potential for an arid

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watersheds wastewater grant program that might be included in this legislation. Funding sources for this legislation would come through new excise taxes and a corporate profits tax. We have to assume that there would be a strong pushback from industry with regard to new taxes. But there can be no doubt that HR 3202 provides fresh new thinking for how to close the infrastructure funding gap.

These are just three of the issues that we look forward to discussion with everybody next week.