



September 7, 2016

Senate WRDA Filed – Floor Action Possible

This past Friday, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee released a revised Manager's Amendment of S 2848, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016. This action is one of a series of steps that could lead to action on the Senate floor as early as this week.

One important issue for WESTCAS centered on Section 1032, the Dam Optimization provision of S. 2848. The Manager's Amendment submitted this week **does not** include this provision. This is an important win for Western water managers of federal reservoirs concerned with possible infringement on water supply operations. WESTCAS draft letter to the Senate EPW on S. 2848 included this concern; now, unless a similar provision is submitted on the floor, this concern is ended. Linda Christie and a number of WESTCAS members worked hard to successfully address the problem.

Other high priority legislation is already in line for Senate consideration; however, one of those, the Zeka bill, failed to get the 60 votes needed to move it to the floor. It is expected that appropriations would be considered first, then the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and then, since the Zeka bill was not successful, WRDA would be next in line.

There are reports that Senator Reid may slow consideration of WRDA until other "stuff" as he called it is handled—these include Zeka funding and funding to keep the government going past September. Politico reported that there were "terse" negotiations between McConnell and Reid yesterday. Reid's own party members had problems with his treat to block WRDA, including Senator Boxer, Chair of Senate EPW. The bill has strong support from Democrats because of the water and wastewater funding provisions and, significantly, the aid package for Flint, Michigan.

Senator McConnell filed a motion last night to proceed with the WRDA bill. This action has increased the optimism of both Senators Inhofe and Boxer that the Senate will indeed take action.

S. 2848 is a significant departure for WRDA because in addition to Corps of Engineers projects it also includes provisions related to Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act infrastructure. These provisions will be supported by many Members and public treatment systems but opposition can be expected from Congressional "deficit hawks" as well as Members who prefer a traditional version of WRDA focused on the Corps of Engineers. The House version of the bill [H.R. 5303] already takes the more conservative approach.

Both the Senate and House Committees of jurisdiction have passed WRDA bills. However, the House bill has yet to receive a CBO rating. It remains to be seen whether the House will be content to enter into a conference with the Senate based on the Senate bill.

Hicks-Ray will keep you posted on the latest actions and will provide a complete report at the October WESTCAS Fall Conference in Phoenix, October 26-28.

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WESTCAS Fall Conference in Phoenix, AZ
October 26-28

