

## Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) (Pub. L. 113-121) & FY 2016 Appropriations

### ASCE Position

*ASCE applauds Congress for its bipartisan passage of Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) in 2014. Now Congress must fully implement the programs authorized in WRRDA. ASCE urges Congress in the FY2016 appropriations process to:*

- *Fully fund the National Dam Safety Program at the authorized level of \$13.9 million;*
- *Fully implement and fund the National Levee Safety Initiative at the authorized level of \$79 million;*
- *Fund the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) at the authorized level of \$1.25 billion;*
- *Fund the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) at the authorized level of \$25 million.*

### Key Points

The new Water Resources Reform and Development Act:

- **Creates a National Levee Safety Program:** The new national Levee Safety Initiative will promote consistent safety standards, establish levee safety guidelines and provide funding assistance to states for establishing participating levee safety programs. WRRDA authorization: \$395 million over five years.
- **Reauthorizes the National Dam Safety Program:** The National Dam Safety Program provides training, technical assistance, research funding, public awareness, and support to states through incentive grant awards that encourage states to improve their programs. Authorized at nearly \$70 million over five years.
- **Expenditures from the HMTF:** WRRDA requires that 100% of funds collected by the HMTF be allocated to the intended purpose (dredging the nation's ports and harbors) by 2025. Previously only a fraction of funds collected by the fund were actually used for port and harbor programs.
- **Creates a New Water Infrastructure Financing Program:** WIFIA increases flexibility for local sponsors and leverages private sector investments to supplement federal funding. The new WIFIA program can be used for traditional clean water and drinking water projects, and also will provide assistance to projects with the goal of reducing flood damage, restoring aquatic ecosystems, and improving inland and intracoastal waterway navigation systems.
- **Authorizes Public-Private Partnership Pilot Program:** WRRDA establishes a new program at the Corps to evaluate the cost effectiveness and project delivery efficiency of allowing non-Federal partners to carry out projects, a model known as public-private partnerships (P3s). The law permits 15 P3s for water resource development projects for coastal harbor improvement, channel improvement, inland navigation, flood damage reduction, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and hurricane and storm damage.

## **Status**

The FY 2016 appropriations bills are currently being drafted. President Obama signed the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) into law on June 10, 2014. This marked the first major water resources bill signed into law in seven years. In May 2014, the House passed the bill with a vote of 412-4 and the Senate passed the bill with a vote of 91-7.

## **Background**

Our nation's water resources are critical to our economy, our infrastructure, public safety, and the preservation and enhancement of our environmental resources. ASCE's 2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure graded the nation's water resources infrastructure:

### **Ports "C"    Inland Waterways "D-"    Dams "D"    Levees "D-"**

ASCE's Failure to Act economic study on the nation's marine ports and inland waterways shows that underinvesting in just these two sectors threatens more than 1 million U.S. jobs and \$270 billion in U.S exports by 2020.

- The United States has 300 commercial ports, 12,000 miles of inland and intracoastal waterways and about 240 lock chambers, which carry more than 70 percent of U.S. imports by tonnage and just over half of our imports by value.
- The scheduled expansion of the Panama Canal by 2016 means the average size of container ships is likely to increase significantly, affecting the operations at most major U.S. ports that handle containerized cargo and requiring them to modernize. Needed investments include harbor and channel dredging and new or rehabilitated lock and dam facilities.
- Between now and 2020, investment needs in the nation's marine ports and inland waterways sector total \$30 billion, while planned expenditures are about \$14 billion, leaving a total investment gap of nearly \$16 billion. These investments would not include the "inside the fence" infrastructure, which could significantly increase the costs.
- Costs attributable to delays in the nation's inland waterways system were \$33 billion in 2010. This cost is expected to increase to nearly \$49 billion by 2020.

## **References**

- ASCE Policy Statements Available at: [http://www.asce.org/public\\_policy\\_statements/](http://www.asce.org/public_policy_statements/)
- ASCE 2013 Report Card on America's Infrastructure – download the app at [www.infrastructurereportcard.org](http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org)
- ASCE Failure to Act report covering ports and inland waterways at: [www.asce.org/failure\\_to\\_act\\_economic\\_studies/](http://www.asce.org/failure_to_act_economic_studies/)

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