

2020 POLICY BRIEF



Support Authorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge federal lawmakers to pass a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill during the 116th Congress and continue a regular two-year authorization cycle.

BACKGROUND:

WRDA bills authorize water resources studies and projects and set policies for navigation, flood control, hydropower, recreation, water supply and emergency management for the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps). This legislation is usually passed on a biennial basis and addresses county interests related to ports, inland waterways, levees, dams, wetlands, watersheds and coastal restoration.

Congress has recently returned to regular order, passing WRDA legislation on a two-year authorization cycle in 2014, 2016 and 2018. The current authorization will expire at the end of 2020 and the congressional authorizing committees are expected to consider a new WRDA bill during the 116th Congress.

As owners, users and regulators of water resources and infrastructure, counties are directly impacted by the policies and funding authorized in the legislation. We often partner with the Army Corps to strengthen local infrastructure.

NACo played a key role in including county priorities in the 2018 WRDA bill, testifying before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and discussing the county role in strengthening America's water infrastructure. The final WRDA bill included several provisions supported by counties, such as requiring the Army Corps to consult with impacted stakeholders, including local government, on future pending WRDA projects, annual district budgets, deauthorized projects and guidance documents.

Both the U.S. House and Senate moved separate WRDA bills. On July 29, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously approved [H.R. 7575](#), the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020. In the Senate, WRDA legislation is a two-part effort. On May 6, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously passed two bipartisan bills, [S. 3591](#), the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 ([AWIA](#)) and

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[S. 3590](#), the Drinking Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 ([DWIA](#)).

KEY TALKING POINTS:

Counties appreciate the directive in the 2018 WRDA authorization instructing the Army Corps to consult with local governments projects.

Counties support preserving and maintaining the partnership between federal, state and local governments for funding, implementing and maintaining essential and environmentally sound navigation, harbor, beach management, and flow control projects across the nation.

Local governments need a strong WRDA to address critical water infrastructure needs in our communities.

Through WRDA, the Army Corps supports certain projects and studies, allowing some communities with limited funds to move forward with vital projects that would otherwise be unaffordable.



“Without WRDA, our counties could not have accomplished the multitude of projects we have been able to carry out over the past several decades. Simply put, WRDA is a partnership that works”

-National Association of Counties (NACo) testifying before U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

NACo WRDA 2020 Priorities

- Extend Section 404 Permits from Five to Ten Years
- Improve Consultation with Local Governments on Projects
- Reauthorize the State Revolving Loan Fund, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund
- Unlock the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund
- Revise the Process to Assess Benefits of Federally Funded Water Infrastructure Projects
- Increase Funding for the Use of Natural Infrastructure to Mitigate the Risk of Storms and Flooding and Improve Resiliency
- Support Research into Harmful Algal Bloom Prevention and Mitigation
- Increase Funding for Publicly Owned Dams and Levees
- Invest in Transboundary Water and Sewage Infrastructure Along U.S./International Borders
- Fund Continued Education and Scientific Studies on Ocean Acidification

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