



# The Water Resources Development Act

## WHAT IS WRDA?

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is the main vehicle for authorizing water projects to be studied and constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Most Corps projects require two separate authorizations: an authorization to study a problem and propose a solution; and a second authorization to construct the project recommended by a Corps study. WRDA also implements policy changes that affect the Corps' planning process, Corps programs, and Corps projects.

### Sizing up the Corps of Engineers \$60 Billion Project Backlog

- 1,167 projects under construction (FY2010)
- 14,000 miles of levees and floodwalls
- 12,000 miles of commercial navigation channels
- 900 coastal and inland harbors
- 700 flood control dams and reservoirs

In the last WRDA, which was passed in 2007, Congress responded to the failure of Corps projects during Hurricane Katrina and to dozens of major studies identifying significant flaws in the Corps' planning process by including some important reforms. However, additional reforms are still needed to modernize the Corps' planning process and to ensure that Corps projects make the best possible use of scarce taxpayer dollars. WRDA 2007 also authorized \$23 billion in new Corps projects and programs. The Corps now has a more than \$60 billion backlog of authorized but unconstructed projects.

## HOW IS A WRDA DEVELOPED?

Either the President or Congress can propose a WRDA. Proposed legislation is considered by the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. Most recently, the Senate passed a WRDA in May 2013. The Senate bill would add at least \$5.7 billion worth of projects to the Corps' more than \$60 billion project backlog, and would cost taxpayers at least \$12.2 billion over the next ten years. The Senate bill would significantly undermine the environmental review process for Corps projects – a process that has saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars while making projects better and safer for communities.

### WRDAs to Date

- 1974
- 1976
- 1986
- 1988
- 1990
- 1992
- 1996
- 1999
- 2000
- 2007

### DOES WRDA APPROPRIATE MONEY TO THE CORPS?

No. WRDA does not appropriate money to the Corps but it does set the limits on the amount of money the Corps can spend on a particular project or program. Funding for Corps projects is appropriated through the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bills or through emergency supplemental bills.

### DOES CONGRESS HAVE TO PASS A WRDA EVERY TWO YEARS?

No. Congress typically does not pass a WRDA every two years. As demonstrated by the ten year hiatus between passage of WRDA 1976 and WRDA 1986 and the seven years between WRDA 2000 and WRDA 2007, Congress can – and should – take the time it needs to get the next WRDA right.