



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2020

Contact: Deb Calhoun, 301/332-0813

dcalhoun@waterwayscouncil.org

CONGRESS PASSES WRDA 2020 AS PART OF OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS AND COVID RELIEF PACKAGE

LEGISLATION INCLUDES INLAND WATERWAYS TRUST FUND COST-SHARE ADJUSTMENT, STRONG FY21 FUNDING FOR CORPS

Washington, DC -- On December 21, as part of an Omnibus Appropriations and COVID-19 relief funding package, the U.S. House of Representatives passed (359 yeas to 53 nays), and later the U.S. Senate passed (92 to 6) the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 with an historic win for the inland waterways.

The package included WCI's top priority to adjust the cost-share for construction and major rehabilitation of inland waterways projects from 50% Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF)/50% General Revenues to 35% IWTF/65% General Revenues for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 through FY 2031. Projects whose construction starts between FY2021-FY2031 will operate under the adjusted 35%/65% cost-share for the duration.

Particularly in a difficult COVID-19 environment, the passage of WRDA is a significant achievement for efficient modernization of the inland waterways system, potentially providing more than \$1 billion in additional construction funds over 10 years that should help significantly reduce the backlog of authorized projects.

The WRDA bill also included a 902 cost-limit increase for Kentucky Lock and a Chief's Report authorization for the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway – Brazos River Floodgates and Colorado locks. The cost-limit increase allows work on Kentucky Lock to continue to completion, and the Chief's Report allows construction of new sector gates and channel widening to provide for more safe and efficient navigation, and also helps with water and sediment management capabilities on the Brazos River.

WRDA 2020 was a rider to the Omnibus Appropriations bill that included \$900 billion for COVID-19 related funding. The Omnibus also included the FY21 Energy & Water Development (E&WD) appropriations bill that funds the Corps of Engineers.

FY21 funding for the Corps is \$7.8 billion, an increase of \$145 million above the FY20 level and \$1.8 billion above the Administration's FY21 budget.

Funding for the Investigations account is \$153 million, an increase of \$2 million above FY20's level and \$50.4 million above the Administration's request.

The Construction account received \$2.69 billion, an increase of \$11.6 million above FY20's funding level and \$519.4 million above the FY21 Administration's request.

With \$113 million appropriated from the IWTF, a construction program of just under \$323 million will be provided for FY21. This allows funding of Chickamauga Lock to completion and efficient funding for Kentucky Lock.

The FY21 funding measure provides for nine new study starts and seven total new construction starts across the Corps' Civil Works mission. For the first time since 2004, one of the new starts must be for inland waterways lock and dam modernization. The Corps' FY21 Work Plan, typically released 60 days after enactment of the appropriations bill, will detail which project will be selected for the new start.

Operations and Maintenance received \$3.85 billion, an increase of \$59.7 million above FY20's appropriated amount and \$1.8 billion above the FY21 Administration's budget.

Also of note is the rejection of any additional and onerous taxes or fees on commercial operators to supplement existing revenue streams.

For strong leadership on the WRDA bill, WCI expressed its thanks to House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio and Ranking Member Sam Graves, and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso and Ranking Member Tom Carper.

Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) also offered thanks to Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, and House Appropriations Chair Nita Lowey and Ranking Member Kay Granger for their efforts to pass the FY21 Omnibus appropriations package that included the E&WD bill.

Tracy Zea, WCI President/CEO, said, "Despite the many challenges of this year, WCI is very grateful that Congress passed WRDA 2020 with WCI's top priority to adjust the construction cost-share, and provided strong FY21 funding for the Corps of Engineers. This is a win for the Nation, our economy, and shippers and exporters. An efficient, modern inland waterways system facilitates U.S. competitiveness in world markets, and this bill's passage will strengthen our ability to stay on top."

The Omnibus package is headed to the White House for the President's signature.

Waterways Council, Inc. is the national public policy organization advocating for a modern and well-maintained national system of ports and inland waterways. The group is supported by waterways carriers, shippers, port authorities, agriculture, labor and conservation organizations, shipping associations and waterways advocacy groups from all regions of the country. Visit www.waterwayscouncil.org.

