

# Bases are loaded, now what?



The sun rises at Montgomery Locks and Dam, managed by the Pittsburgh Engineer District in Monaca, Pa.

The FY24 Work Plan offered great outcomes for the inland waterways' construction program but could not have been possible without passage of the FY24 E&WD appropriations bill. If that bill had not been passed, the inland construction program could have faced devastating consequences of little funding, the mothballing of projects, and lengthening timelines for completion.

On May 22, in another win for inland waterways infrastructure, the Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW) Committee marked up and passed its Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. Several outcomes in Section 109 of the Senate WRDA 2024 bill provide the ability to accelerate project completion, setting up a far more efficient future for the navigation construction program.

The Senate WRDA 2024 bill permanently adjusts the inland waterways cost-share for construction and major rehabilitation projects to 75% general revenues/25% Inland Waterways Trust Fund (from 65%/35%).

At press time, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee was scheduled to mark up its version of the WRDA 2024 bill on June 26. Even with all this good news, a WRDA 2024 bill needs to be enacted during this Congress to not strand runners on base.

On May 13, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released its FY24 Work Plan that allocates the funds provided in the FY24 Energy & Water Development (E&WD) appropriations bill, which funds the Corps' Civil Works mission, in addition to U.S. Department of Energy programs. The inland waterways construction program drove home two runs in the plan: record-level funding of \$456 million for inland waterways construction projects and a no cost-share requirement for that funding from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF), which usually cost-shares at 35% IWTF/65% general revenues.

The Corps selected four inland construction projects to receive their appropriation from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding, increasing the total amount of inland waterways funding provided from the BIL by \$343 million for a total of \$2.843 billion. Initially, \$2.5 billion was provided to the inland waterways by the BIL.

Because none of the funding included in FY24 requires the match from the IWTF, approximately \$160 million will be available for future use from the IWTF. This helps to ensure future success of inland waterways construction by increasing resources available to address cost escalations and narrow timelines for project completion.

The Construction projects receiving funding in the FY24 Work Plan are as follows:

- McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River

Navigation System (MKARNS) Three Rivers: \$103,170,000 (*will complete physical construction and fiscally close out the project*)

- Navigation & Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) navigation portion: \$75,000,000
- Lower Monongahela: \$41,000,000
- Chickamauga Lock: \$236,800,000 (*will complete physical construction and fiscally close out the project*)

The Work Plan also included funding for two inland waterway studies in the Investigations account: \$800,000 to continue the feasibility study for Bayou Sorrel and \$500,000 to initiate a study to evaluate deepening the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway, both in Louisiana. The Work Plan also provided \$368 million for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T), including an additional \$10 million for dredging the Mississippi River, which is so important during low-water events. Total allocations for MR&T channels and harbors are:

- Channel Improvement, Dredging, Ark., Ill., Ky., La., Miss., Mo. and Tenn.: \$21,403,000
- Helena Harbor, Ark.: \$580,000
- Baton Rouge Harbor, Devils Swamp, La.: \$564,000
- Greenville Harbor, Miss.: \$1,234,000
- Vicksburg Harbor, Miss.: \$1,244,000
- Memphis Harbor, McKellar Lake, Tenn.: \$2,435,000



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