



Waterways Are Worth Fighting For



A 2,700-ton shell is loaded onto a barge headed to Olmsted Lock and Dam behind 1st Lt. Ian McBride with the Corps of Engineers.

The recent flooding on the Mississippi River, Illinois Waterway and other tributaries has dealt another blow to waterways shippers and particularly, the American family farmer. And while it pains us to see locks and dams literally underwater and barge tows sitting idly waiting to move, this latest crisis underscores the critical importance of this vital part of the transportation supply chain. Without the waterways, commerce slows or ceases, exports lag, costs increase to more expensive modes if they are even available to haul the freight, and congestion grows.

While the inland waterways are often out of sight, out of mind, floods and droughts bring the temporary picture of transportation hiatus front and center. This situation could become a more permanent reality if our nation's lawmakers ignore the opportunity we have ahead to modernize aged lock and dam infrastructure.

While there still is not a plan for how to fund fixes for the inland waterways, nor the rest of the nation's infrastructure, there is no shortage of rhetoric on all sides of the political aisle. But the country's infrastructure needs are expensive and getting more so with each passing year (or decade) we don't invest in their recapitalization.

FY20 Requests to be Released

In the absence of a defined infrastructure package, House and Senate appropriators will soon release their Fiscal year (FY) requests for 2020 as mark-ups are announced. Waterways Council Inc. (WCI) will vigorously engage in the FY20 rollout of the Energy & Water Development (E&WD) appropriations

bill that funds the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, responsible for maintaining the inland waterways system. Our congressional champions have restored administration cuts to the Corps' program over the last eight fiscal years and we are working to achieve that outcome again this fiscal year. For FY20, the House approved a "deeming resolution" to allocate \$1.3 trillion for all FY20 appropriations bills in the House. The Senate has not announced its spending levels.



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The Trump administration's FY20 budget request proposed a cut of 31% to the Corps' Civil Works program to \$4.827 billion from the FY19 appropriated funding level of \$7 billion. Proposed funding in the FY20 request for Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) projects was \$55.5 million, when matched by General Fund revenue yields a total investment of \$111 million

requested for the Lower Mon Project in Pittsburgh, funding it to completion. In the FY19 minibus appropriations bill, Congress appropriated \$329.8 million for five IWTF-funded projects, despite the fact that in FY19, the president's request for construction was just \$35 million for the Olmsted project. Congress increased that FY19 amount by 842.3%, enabling full and efficient funding for Lower Mon, Kentucky Lock, Chickamauga Lock, and funding to completion for Olmsted Locks and Dam and for major rehabilitation of LaGrange Lock. If the President's FY20 budget were to be enacted, the Lower Mon project would be the only IWTF project to receive FY20 funding while ongoing work at Kentucky Lock and Chickamauga Lock would go unfunded, causing potential shutdown and furloughs.

Progress for Ports

In the port arena, progress is being made. On May 8, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee approved a bill (H.R. 2440) by voice vote aimed at spending all of the harbor maintenance tax receipts for their intended purpose instead of diverting a portion of the funds for other unrelated things. The bill was crafted by House T&I Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) and Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.), chair of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, and co-sponsored by Committee Ranking Member Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) and Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.). This bi-partisan measure would bolster our Nation's ports and harbors to be fully and properly maintained.

So as we are reminded of the importance of the waterways while shippers and operators are flooded out, work goes on in the nation's capital to keep the Corps efficiently funded for the next fiscal year. The U.S. is uniquely blessed with our vast inland waterways system. It's important to raise your voice with your members of Congress and urge investment in locks and dams, and ports, for the future.



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