

Senate hopes to pass WRDA to support aging water infrastructure

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Senators James Inhofe (R-OK) and Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Chair and Ranking Member of the Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW), introduced the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (WRDA) today. Reauthorized every two years, WRDA provides funding, typically in the form of Army Corps of Engineers projects, for inland water and marine transportation infrastructure.

If enacted, the 2016 WRDA would authorize \$9 billion for 25 Army Corps projects in 17 states. The bill would invest in the nation's aged drinking water and wastewater infrastructure by modernizing the State Revolving Loan Fund programs, reauthorizing funds to control sewer overflows, and replacing lead pipes.

To improve ports around the country, the bill would increase funding for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which ensures ports are routinely dredged and properly maintained. WRDA would also authorize projects to protect against floods and strong storms, as well as updating the Army Corps' emergency rebuilding authority for dam flood control projects.

Other provisions include the development of drought resilience guidelines for communities to both prepare for and respond to drought conditions, and funding for the Army Corps to improve water supply projects. WRDA also includes a provision for direct emergency assistance for Flint, Michigan, to address drinking water contamination after the provision was dropped from the Senate energy bill earlier this month.

The bill will now be considered by the full Senate EPW committee where, if recommended, it will move on to the Senate floor for a vote.

Sources: E&E News, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
