

Info Alert

National Conference of State Legislatures Office of State-Federal Relations

House Releases Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013

Sept. 12, 2013

On Sept. 11, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Penn.), Ranking Member Nick J. Rahall, II (D-W.Va.), Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman Bob Gibbs (R-Ohio), and Ranking Member Tim Bishop (D-N.Y.) [introduced H.R. 3080, the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 \(WRRDA\)](#). The legislation authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to carry out water infrastructure projects such as harbor and port maintenance, dam and levee construction and maintenance, and environmental restoration projects. Previously, on May 15, 2013 the [U.S. Senate passed its reauthorization](#) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), S. 601.

Previous legislation authorizing water resource projects included provisions pertaining to specific water infrastructure projects in states through a process of earmarking. However, due to Congress' 2010 moratorium on earmarks, the House version includes language that would establish a process for Congress to review projects selected by the USACE, after consulting with state and local authorities. The bill would then allow Congress to set funding priorities among the selected projects moving forward while also providing Congress the power to defund specific projects. Another goal of the WRRDA is to reduce the amount of time allocated to review proposed projects. Specifically, the bill would cap review costs at \$3 million per project while also instituting a maximum of three years per review.

The legislation also attempts to address the fact that only \$900 million is appropriated on an annual basis from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF), even though the fund collects \$1.6 billion annually. The bill includes provisions that would, by 2020, gradually increase annual spending to a maximum of 80 percent of the annual amount of funds collected. However, not only does this increase fall short of making full use of the trust fund, which [NCSL advocates for as part of its Waterways and Ports Policy Directive](#), it is also below the spending level authorized in the Senate approved bill.

Finally, in order to cover the \$10 billion authorized for new projects, WRRDA would rescind approximately \$12 billion worth of previously authorized water projects, which have long been left inactive.

The Congressional Budget Office has yet to score the cost of WRRDA

Important Resources

[Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 \(WRRDA\)](#)

[Section-by-Section Bill Analysis](#)

[A Whiteboard Explanation of WRRDA](#)