



2018 WRDA Reauthorization

Boating Priorities

Permitting Reforms

Basic permits to allow for the buildout of essential boating infrastructure like marinas, boat ramps, and mooring fields can take over a year to be processed. While the last WRDA reauthorization included provisions to reduce bureaucracy and streamline permitting, Congress still needs to do more.

State Programmatic General Permits (SPGPs) are supposed to reduce duplication between agencies and improve the permitting process to allow for more flexibility for a geographic region. However, oftentimes localities aren't allowed to access SPGPs, and different entities in the same area are forced to apply for duplicative permits that slow down the process of building new boating infrastructure.

ASK: Direct USACE to issue more SPGPs to allow for the more efficient buildout of boating infrastructure.

Low tonnage ports and shallow draft channels

Under the current process USACE prioritizes dredging funding by total tonnage. This does not properly account for lower tonnage needs and usage for recreational activities. Under the current process, and as evidenced by the current sporadic approach to federal navigation maintenance, dredging and dredged material management projects are conducted almost entirely in the nation's largest port districts, thereby ignoring the needs at smaller ports and channels used by recreational boaters and anglers.

Smaller, recreational based ports are critical access points for marinas and business developments along the coast. With the recreational boating industry contributing over \$121 billion annually in economic impact, prioritization of dredging for access points on the recreational side should not be ignored. Without sufficient dredging in low tonnage areas, some recreational boaters are forced to use high traffic commercial channels, which poses a user conflict and safety risk for all parties. Additionally, lack of dredging in low tonnage areas directly impacts the economic benefit of marinas and coastal businesses.

ASK: Congress can provide two solutions to address low tonnage port needs:

- 1. Direct USACE to amend their prioritization process to ensure that a percentage of existing available funds be prioritized for three different categories: High-Tonnage, Low-Tonnage and Commercial or Recreational ports.**
- 2. Develop a federal pass-through program to be managed by the individual state's maritime agencies or channel dredging specialists. (similar to the FHWA Ferry Boat Program or the Department of Interior's CVA/BIG programs)**

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

The spread of harmful plants, animals and other organisms threaten America's water habitats and have lasting economic damage for the anglers, boaters, local community, and industry. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the environmental impacts of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species are second only to habitat destruction as a cause of global biodiversity loss, and managing these

invasive species costs an estimated \$137 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Important tools to fight the spread of these Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are proper inspection and decontamination stations at boat ramps.

AIS decontamination stations, placed near boat ramps, provide a place for officials to ensure that boats being launched are not contaminating U.S. bodies of water with invasive species or bacteria. AIS boat inspection/decontamination requirements and procedures vary by state, and can cause confusion among recreational boaters. If a boater is accustomed to procedures in one state, when they travel to another state with their boat they can encounter a completely foreign set of procedures and regulations. Result: delays at ramps, complete loss of access, and wasted state resources for duplicative efforts.

To that end, Congress should direct USACE, in consultation with the Departments of Commerce, Interior, and Agriculture, to conduct a study regarding the effectiveness of current AIS programs and decontamination procedures.

Additionally, Congress should authorize new programs to promote AIS decontamination stations. These facilities would follow in the footsteps of the AIS decontamination stations established by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and those in Wyoming established by the National Park Service.

Congress should include an authorization of \$360,000 for Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. There are currently 6 Regional Panels that utilize federal funding to coordinate federal, state, and private AIS efforts. The Regional Panels are truly where “the boat hits the water” with regard to AIS programs. Congress has not increased their authorization since 1996. A modest authorization increase from \$300,000 to \$360,000 will ensure that the panels can continue their basic functions.

ASK:

- 1. Direct a study on the impact of current AIS programs and boat decontamination procedures**
- 2. Additional authorizations for decontamination stations in areas throughout the country. This will improve boating facilities and assist in the preventing the spread of AIS.**
- 3. Authorize \$360,000 for Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. The current authorization is \$300,000. Congress has not raised this since 1996, and this increase will ensure that the essential panels can continue their basic functions.**

Army Corps of Engineers Project Justification

USACE currently uses four criteria for justification of projects, none of which adequately speak to the interests of waterfront communities and businesses.

ASK: Create a new “economic development” criteria that would encompass marina expansions and other waterfront development projects.

Overall Recreational Boating Access

In conclusion, our organizations support the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act and urge Congress to increase funding for small ports and shallow draft channels. Dredging for waterways such as the Great Lakes Harbors of Refuge, small ports on the Pacific Coast and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway is an essential part of providing access to our great outdoors.

Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund – This very successful “User Pay/Everyone Benefits” program continues to be the keystone for recreational boating and fishing. Programs such as Boating Infrastructure Grants, Clean Vessel Act funding and state fish habitat programs help to keep boating fun for all. We are in the middle of its current authorization cycle and appreciate Congresses continued support for all its programs.