



WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA)

(Harbor Maintenance/Development Legislation)

Background:

The Water Resources Development ACT (WRDA), currently being discussed by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to review and construct various projects for improvement of U.S. rivers and harbors. Florida's seaports are primarily interested in the impact of WRDA provisions on deep-draft navigation issues within Florida shipping lanes. Efficient and reliable deep-draft navigation is the foundation for any functioning seaport and the growth of waterborne commerce. A failure to invest in the nation's waterborne commerce infrastructure will impact our ability to recover adequately from any economic recession, and limit our ability to export U.S. and Florida-based manufactured products.

Current Issue:

The last time the U.S. Congress passed WRDA legislation was in 2007. The last meaningful revisions to water resource and deep-draft navigation administrative rules were in 1986. Passing this legislation is critical to the health of international commerce in the U.S.

According to the USACE, full channel dimensions at America's top 59 harbors are maintained less than one-third of the time. Inadequate maintenance dredging leads to "light loading," and could possibly cause significant safety concerns at our nation's seaports. This lack of routine dredging delays the transport of goods and ultimately places unnecessary costs on businesses and consumers. Congress must fulfill its responsibility to maintain the nation's ports and harbors.

In Florida, the state has attempted to adjust to this lack of federal authorization where possible. Florida has fully funded some deep-draft navigation projects in Miami and Jacksonville when federal funds were not made available. The lack of federal authorization and funding has made it difficult for Florida to adequately prepare for future waterborne commerce opportunities not only in the U.S. but with our trading partners overseas.

Recommendations:

The Florida Ports Council recommends that Congress pass WRDA legislation, to include:

- Authorization of the *full use* of tax revenues deposited in the **Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund** for their intended purpose.
- Revision of the **outdated federal-cost sharing formula** to increase the channel depth threshold from 45 feet to 53 feet.
- Authorization for the USACE to assume the **maintenance of navigation improvements** carried out by non-federal sponsors.
- Reimbursement for **state funds spent on deep-draft navigation** projects ordinarily funded through federal sources.
- Requirement of a **comprehensive analysis of USACE reviews** to determine how to reduce duplication and unnecessary "modeling" costs.
- Ensure that projects with approved USACE chief reports **are authorized for funding in a timely manner.**

September 2013

