

Corps Reform Bill Introduced in Senate

Introduced by Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Russ Feingold (D-WI) on Feb. 13, 2007, the Water Resources Planning and Modernization Act of 2007 (S. 564) will protect America's rivers and coasts, and the species and people that depend on them.

The Value of Water

America's waters nourish our food supply, sustain wildlife, and provide drinking water and recreation opportunities. They also serve as economic engines. However, our rivers are overly dredged for barges, excessively dammed for electricity and ill advised levies turn their floodplains into at-risk neighborhoods. As a result, the list of endangered species is growing while citizens living in floodplains are threatened by increasing global warming driven storms.

21st Century Corps – Restoring America's Waters

The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) constructs the dams, dredges the rivers, and alters the natural flow of our water. While Corps' projects in the 20th Century have relied on 'structural' approaches that degrade our water resources, the 21st Century Corps can restore our nation's water resources and protect the people and the species that depend on them. This is what S. 564 is all about.

Growing Our Economy and Revitalizing Our Environment

This bill will provide critically needed oversight of massive or controversial water projects to keep our environment healthy, people safe from floods. More specifically, the bill will:

- Require Independent Review of Projects if a governor of an affected state requests one, a project is estimated to cost over \$40 million, or if a project is controversial. Independent review of technical designs and of projects that reduce flood damage will ensure people stay out of harms way.
- Identify Vulnerabilities to Natural Disasters by re-establishing a Water Resources Council that will identify where people are vulnerable to flood damage and report these findings to Congress, along with recommendations on how to improve the nation's flood damage reduction programs.
- Protect the Environment by requiring that the Corps 'mitigate' or off-set the harm a project's environmental damage according to the standards of the Clean Water Act. Where states have adopted stronger mitigation standards, the Corps must meet those standards.
- Prioritize Better Projects by requiring the Water Resources Council to send Congress a prioritized list of all authorized projects every other year. This will enable Congress to make better decisions on which project it invests our tax dollars on.
- Update the Corps' Planning Guidelines by requiring the Corps to update its planning principles and guidelines. The principles and guidelines, which give the Corps its marching orders, have not been updated since 1983 and don't reflect the latest science or our nation's conservation values.

Hurricane Katrina Highlights the Need to Modernize the Corps

- Government reports conclude that the levees protecting New Orleans failed due to poor engineering by the Corp.
- By permitting industry to dredge and channel thousands of acres of Gulf wetlands the Corps exposed Gulf Coast residents to the full brunt of Hurricane Katrina.
- Prior to Katrina, Louisiana had lost some 1,900 square miles of coastal wetlands. A Corps-built navigation channel, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) also destroyed 20,000 acres of coastal wetlands that could have buffered the storm surge.

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CorpsReformNetwork

*Protecting and Restoring
America's Rivers, Wetlands and Coasts*