

WRDA Bill Introduced in Senate April 8, 2005

Expansion of the upper Mississippi River locks would be authorized under Sen. Kit Bond's (R-MO) version of the Water Resources Development Act (S. 728), introduced on April 6. Bond's legislation would approve \$2.48 billion in federal funding for seven new locks, including \$1.58 billion for ecosystem restoration.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials have said expansion of the navigation system, primarily constructed in the 1930s, is necessary to maintain barge traffic and a healthy economy. Through fiscal year 2004, the agency spent more than \$73 million studying the proposed navigation project, according to Corps spokesman Gene Pawlik.

The 2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, released in March, gave the nation's inland waterways a grade of D minus.

The bill also contains language that reaffirms federal interest in shoreline protection projects, including beach restoration and periodic renourishment, for a period of 50 years. In addition, the bill provides comprehensive Regional Sediment Management authority for the Corps.

Rep. John Duncan (R-TN) is said to be working on a House version of WRDA. Duncan's bill is expected to look much the same as the \$4.6 billion bill passed by the House in 2003, according to his spokesman. The bill, passed 412-8, requires an independent peer review of most corps projects -- including those on flood control and waterway navigation -- costing more than \$50 million.

Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-VT) may introduce a Corps reform amendment, said Jeffords spokesman Erik Smulson.

This weekly report is written by the American Society of Civil Engineers' Government Relations staff. If you have any questions or comments about any items in this report please email govwash@asce.org.