
National

McCain-Feingold Target Water Projects

by Mary Jane Freeman

The long-stalled Water Resources and Development Act of 2006 (WRDA), S. 728, introduced in April 2005, has finally been readied for debate in the Senate, but at great cost to the future of the nation's economic well-being. Periodically, WRDA measures are enacted to authorize certain Army Corps of Engineers infrastructure projects; but no WRDA bill has made it through Congress since 2001. Now, a left-right environmentalist elite has succeeded in inserting text into the bill to create *an oversight entity, outside of Congressional control* which will eviscerate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and likely kill urgently needed projects on the nation's 12,000-mile inland waterways.

Without passage of S. 728, in its original intent, hundreds of critical inland waterways projects are in jeopardy, including the Upper Mississippi River system. Yet, passage of the bill *as it now is crafted*, would subjugate the Corps' mission, to build and protect the nation's infrastructure, to the monied interests of globalist networks, who are using the pretense agenda of environmentalism and spending-control, to halt public works. This is the same agenda used to halt development of the nation's industry and science for 30 years.

The assault, led by Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Russ Feingold (D-Wisc.), is on behalf of a cast of right and left radical organizations which attack the Corps and Congress as criminals in cahoots to promote "congressional pork," "wasting scarce" Federal funds on "environmentally unacceptable" projects. In February 2006, McCain and Feingold introduced their own Water Resources Planning and Modernization Act of 2006, S. 2288, to "reform" the way the Corps does business, set "new priorities," and add more "transparency" to Corps decisions. They bragged of support from Green-Synarchist organizations including Taxpayers for Common Sense Action, National Taxpayers Union, Citizens Against Government Waste, American Rivers, National Wildlife Federation, Earthjustice, Environmental Defense, Republicans for Environmental Protection, Sierra Club, and the World Wildlife Fund.

A Compromise to Kill the Corps

Between April and July of 2005, the original S. 728, was on track for early adoption. The Senate Environment and Pub-

lic Works Committee passed it out in April 2005 to be calendared for full Senate debate. The House version, H.R. 2864, passed in the House in July 2005. Although both House and Senate bills included some Corps "reform" aspects (for example, independent review of certain projects and certain "transparency" requirements on expenditures), they were not new, because the Corps had already been under such obligations. The two bills identified more than 100 specific projects to be authorized, as does the new version of S. 728.

The bill stalled in the Senate. Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), on Bush Administration orders, refused to calendar the bill. So it sat in limbo for months. On Jan. 25 this year, 78 Senators wrote to Frist demanding that he schedule debate on S. 728. On Feb. 16, Senators Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), added their names to the list, but Frist still stonewalled.

By May, however, the Senate leadership got Senate minority leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Frist to agree to "hot-line" the bill—a procedure whereby both Democrats and Republicans agree in advance on baseline bill language and any amendments to be offered, and set time limits for debate. Sources report that under these conditions, Frist may now schedule the bill.

Coincident with the negotiations a *Washington Post* May 14 double-feature appeared, with the headline "Par for the Corps," superimposed on a half-page photo of flooded New Orleans, with the subhead, "A Flood of Bad Projects . . . And How to Stop It." This hatchet job was done by a pseudo-environmentalist duo, Michael Grunwald, the fanatical hard-liner, and John M. Barry, the softer sophist, to promote the McCain-Feingold bill. They both described the Corps as a failure. In conclusion, Barry called for creating a new "Water Engineering Board," to oversee the Corps. He likened it to the way BRAC—the Base Realignment and Closure Commission—decides what military bases will close, *outside of Congressional control*. Congress, under the new Water Engineering Board, would be able to "only accept or reject a package of recommendations."

Indeed, the hot-lining negotiations led to a compromise or substitute bill, called a manager's amendment, which incorporates the McCain-Feingold bill's creation of a Cabinet-level body tasked to set Army Corps water resources policy. The entity is called the Water Resources Planning Coordinating Committee. It *excludes* the Secretaries of Defense and Army—the two offices who directly represent the Corps' engineering expertise! But it includes the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, and the chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, along with the Cabinet Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, Transportation, Homeland Security, and Commerce.

The new entity is directed to "consult with the National Academy of Sciences"—a harsh critic of the Corps—on how to update Corps planning procedures; so the fox is guarding

the henhouse.

Another task of the new entity is to “eliminate” any “biases and disincentives that discourage use of nonstructural approaches to water resources development.” In plain English: Don’t build anything.

Greening the Corps: Woodley in Charge

A source close to the Corps told *EIR* that the Corps acquiesced to many of these reform provisions in 2005 after the WRDA bill stalled. It is little wonder this occurred, given the record of Bush-appointed John Paul Woodley, Jr., who took over as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works in May 2005. Earlier he had served in this position, from August 2003 to December 2004, by a recess appointment.

In February 2006, Woodley issued a report in which he “held in abeyance” the Corps’ plans to start rebuilding some of the 39 locks and dams of the Upper Mississippi-Illinois Waterways System—part of the projects authorized in the WRDA of 2006. He questioned the cost-benefit analysis used in the chief of Engineers’ finding of economic justification, relying instead on a National Academy of Sciences’ report opposing rebuilding of these locks. Citing the Academy’s report, Woodley argued, “Our basic concern is . . . we don’t have the tools . . . to make judgments on the likelihood of economic justification.” He submitted his report to the Office of Management and Budget in April, further delaying this project, for which the Corps has tried for more than 13 years to get the go-ahead: the repair of the aged locks on the Upper Mississippi/Illinois.

Woodley’s credentials include service as former Virginia Republican Gov. James Gilmore’s Secretary of Natural Resources where he took pride in “environmental stewardship,” as he stated in an April 1998 speech to the Virginia Military Institute.

The new version of S. 728, the manager’s amendment, is to be debated along with eight other amendments, four of which are sponsored by McCain-Feingold. It will not merely authorize badly needed and overdue water infrastructure projects, but also now includes this deadly “reform” language. It is akin to the 1997 McCain-Gingrich Amtrak “reform,” Bush’s 2005 anti-Congress Medicaid Commission to “reform” health care for the poor, and other budget-cutting “governance” schemes.

Many Senators, such as Ben Nelson (D-Fla.) and Kit Bond (R-Mo.), who back Army Corps water projects, seem to have fallen in line with the reform language, out of desperation to “get a bill” authorizing projects. In true Venetian-style

FIGURE 1

Locks and Dams on the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System



Source: U.S. Geological Survey, 1999.

The navigation system of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois River—shown by broken lines—involves 39 locks and dams: 27 of 29 are shown on the Mississippi by numbered sites; and 7 of the 10 on the Illinois are named. Of the 37 main chamber locks, 32 were built more than 50 years ago. The Army Corps of Engineers has studied how to proceed on modernizing this system for 13 years. Locks and dams 22 and 25, constructed in the 1930s, are among the first 7 the Corps wants to rebuild.

politicking, under one scheme in play, no objections would be raised until after a bill is passed. Then, in the resulting Senate-House conference committee to resolve differences with the House’s bill, changes could be made. This is a loser’s gamble. The nation urgently requires LaRouche’s Economic Recovery Act of 2006 to defeat the long-standing enemy of U.S. economic growth: Synarchist banking circles whose green agenda disguises their aim of taking down the industrial capability of the United States.