

WRDA Report filed in Senate
August 27, 2004

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee filed a report on August 25 on S. 2773, the Water Resources Development Act of 2004, that requires the Corps of Engineers and the Transportation Department to study deepwater port infrastructure. The Senate language requires the study to be completed within 180 days (six months) of enactment.

"The committee is concerned that the rapid growth in maritime trade has placed great pressure upon our existing port infrastructure," the committee's report said. "Vessel sizes are increasing, and rapidly increasing volumes of containers and cargo are creating significant congestion to all modes of transportation serving the coastal and deepwater ports. The committee has determined that there is a need to understand the ability of coastal and deepwater port infrastructure to meet current and projected demands."

The report agrees with ASCE policy on ports. ASCE told the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in November 2003 that "growing traffic volumes and ever-larger ships are expected to strain U.S. port facilities in the first half of the 21st century."

"ASCE supports the creation of a federal trust fund financed by dedicated user fees for every infrastructure operation and maintenance program, including ports and harbors," ASCE said.

No money is specifically authorized for the deepwater port study in the Senate bill, however.

In March 2004, ASCE testified before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee advocating revisions to planning guidelines, some of which were included in the report submitted this week.

The bill is expected to go to the Senate floor in September. The House passed its bill in 2003. If the Senate passes the bill, the two bills will go to conference.

A copy of the report can be viewed at <http://thomas.loc.gov>

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.