

## ***Water Resources Legislation Passes Senate Committee*** **April 15, 2005**

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee this week moved a bipartisan bill to authorize more than \$7 billion in water resources projects for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2005 emerged from the committee quickly on April 13 in contrast to its fate in 2004, when a similar bill failed to make it through the full Senate. Congress has traditionally renewed WRDA every two years, but its passage has been mired in debate over how to reform Corps operations. The last WRDA authorization expired in 2002.

Several senators withdrew amendments so that the bill could make it to the Senate floor as soon as possible, keeping debate about Corps reform to a minimum and saying they may bring up the issue later.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Christopher Bond (R-MO), said he hopes WRDA will make it to the Senate floor by May or June, after the transportation bill.

Sens. Jim Jeffords (I-VT) and Max Baucus (D-MT) offered an amendment that would have established an independent peer review process within the Office of the Inspector General of the Army, as agreed on in last year's version of WRDA. But the amendment was quickly killed on a voice vote.

Jeffords indicated that he may bring the amendments to the Senate floor. Meanwhile, Sens. Russ Feingold (D-WI) and John McCain (R-AZ) have introduced legislation that would mandate independent review of Corps projects and strengthen environmental mitigation standards.

Some experts have said that passage of a WRDA bill this year is again unlikely because of overall spending cuts. House Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman John Duncan (R-TN) is said to be working on a House version of WRDA.

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](mailto:govwash@asce.org).