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Coastal Connection

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Appropriations Shake Up

Democrats Announce Appropriations Subcommittee Plans

In a move Democrats hope will expedite the annual appropriations process, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) and House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) announced last week that they are realigning the Appropriations Subcommittees to start the 110th Congress. The move will undo the reorganization that occurred following the 1994 elections when Republicans gained control in both chambers of Congress.

The Chairmen are hoping that simplifying Subcommittee alignment between the House of Representatives and the Senate will allow appropriators to finish bills before the start of the new fiscal year.

Below is a list of the Appropriations Subcommittee Chairmen:

House

Agriculture: Rosa DeLauro, CT
 Commerce-Justice-Science: Alan B. Mollohan, WV
 Defense: John P. Murtha, PA
 Energy-Water: Peter J. Visclosky, IN
 Financial Services: Jose E. Serrano, NY
 Homeland Security: David E. Price, NC
 Interior-Environment: Norm Dicks, WA
 Labor-Health-Education: David R. Obey, WI
 Legislative Branch: Debbie Wasserman- Schultz, FL

Congress and the Coast

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Military Construction-VA: Chet Edwards, TX
 State-Foreign Operations: Nita M. Lowey, NY
 Transportation-Housing: John W. Olver, MA

Senate

Agriculture: Herb Kohl, WI
 Commerce-Justice-Science: Barbara A. Mikulski, MD
 Defense: Daniel K. Inouye, HI
 Energy-Water: Byron L. Dorgan, ND
 Financial Services: Richard J. Durbin, IL
 Homeland Security: Robert C. Byrd, WV
 Interior-Environment: Dianne Feinstein, CA
 Labor-Health-Education: Tom Harkin, Iowa
 Legislative Branch: Mary L. Landrieu, LA
 Military Construction-VA: Tim Johnson, SD
 State-Foreign Operations: Patrick J. Leahy, VT
 Transportation-Housing: Patty Murray, WA

Holding Pattern Continues for Federal Agencies

Progress on individual projects is being hampered by funding delays.

Most federal agencies are currently operating under a Continuing Resolution that is set to expire on February 15, 2007. As the fourth month of the fiscal year begins, Congress has not passed any appropriations bills other than those funding Defense and Homeland Security operations.

The President's FY2008 Budget will be released on February 5, 2007.

The Chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have announced their plans to pass a Joint Resolution that will fund most of the federal government at FY 2006 levels until September 30, 2007. Some modifications may be made to this funding formula once the Joint Resolution is drafted and considered by the House and the Senate.

However, it appears that any earmarks that appeared in the FY 2007 House or Senate appropriations bills will not apply in the current fiscal year. It is unclear how this will impact individual projects. At this point, everyone is waiting to see the final language of the Joint Resolution in order to make any further judgements.

How does this impact coastal communities? Obviously, this is not how anyone, including Members of Congress,

expected to finalize the FY 2007 budget process. Once the final details of the Joint Resolution are approved, agencies will be able to move ahead with planning and other project-related work for the remainder of the fiscal year. Ultimately, the ability of agencies and non-federal project sponsors to manage projects is being hindered by this delay.

Boxer Ready to Advance WRDA

Senate Chairwoman signals her intention to hold hearings in February.

Press reports from Capitol Hill have noted that Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) plans on holding a hearing on the stalled Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) as early as February 15. Boxer is the Chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The legislation authorizes Corps of Engineers projects and provides policy direction to the agency. While WRDA bills are supposed to be passed on a two-year cycle, the last WRDA was signed into law in 2000.

Negotiations on WRDA broke down during the final hours of the last Congressional session in 2006 because of a small set of disagreements between the House and Senate. Unfortunately, conference committee members were not able to reconcile these differences before Congress adjourned in December.

While no dates have been set for hearings in the House, Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) has indicated a desire to move forward on WRDA as quickly as possible.

Boxer and Oberstar were scheduled to meet today in order to discuss WRDA and other issues that will be considered by their respective Committees.

McIntyre Introduces Beach Project Bill

Bill to extend federal participation is one of the first bills in the new Congressional session.

Congressman Mike McIntyre (D-NC) introduced H.R. 68, a bill that would establish a process to extend federal participation in periodic beach renourishment projects.

Shore protection projects are designed to have a period

beyond initial construction that restores the beach to its engineered profile. Engineers consider this periodic renourishment to be on-going construction spread out over several years.

When Congress authorizes construction of shore protection projects through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) or other legislation, the authorization usually denotes how long the federal government will participate in the periodic renourishment of a project (usually 50 years).

For projects nearing the end of this authorized time period, McIntyre's bill would provide a means for non-federal sponsors to extend their existing partnership with the Corps of Engineers for on-going beach construction.

Distribution of the Coastal Connection was delayed this week because of a family emergency that required me to be away from the office. I apologize for the delay.

The next edition will be distributed on January 16.

-Paul Ordal

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