



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **WATERWAYS COUNCIL, INC. APPLAUDS SENATE FOR PASSAGE OF WRDA BILL LONG-AWAITED BILL INCLUDES KEY INLAND WATERWAYS FUNDING POLICY CHANGES**

Arlington, VA –Today Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) expresses its gratitude to Senate Environment & Public Works Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Ranking Member David Vitter (R-LA) for their collaborative efforts to draft, manage and pass a long-overdue Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), S. 601. WCI is also especially grateful for the inclusion of several provisions of the RIVER (Reinvesting In Vital Economic Rivers and Waterways) Act, S. 407, introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), and co-sponsored by Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Sen. Al Franken (D-MN), and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS).

The WRDA bill contains a number of critically important provisions related to the modernization of inland waterways lock and dam infrastructure. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the locks and dams on the nation's inland waterways system have exceeded their economic design life expectancy.

Of specific interest to inland waterways stakeholders, the final WRDA bill -- passed in the Senate today by a vote of 83 to 14 -- was amended by the managers to include elements of the RIVER Act to remove the over-budget and long-delayed Olmsted lock and dam project from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF), the remainder of the cost to be paid 100% by general treasury revenue and not cost-shared 50-50 through the IWTF. This action will free up around \$750 million to the IWTF to complete critical priority navigation projects.

An increase in the threshold for major rehabilitation, from the current \$14 million to \$20 million, was approved.

Also included in the WRDA bill is prioritization of navigation projects and revamping of project delivery processes to achieve on time and within budget performance. Prioritization is based upon risk of failure and benefits to the nation with an emphasis on finishing projects already underway and ensuring that funding is available to efficiently complete work. Ensuring that future Corps' estimates for project costs have a confidence level of at least 80% is also included.

Passage of increased funding for inland port dredging to be released from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund was also welcomed by the industry in the final WRDA bill.

Not included in the Senate WRDA bill is the industry-supported provision to increase the diesel fuel user fee. The Constitution requires that revenue enhancement measures originate in the House of Representatives, therefore this provision must originate in the House version of WRDA or be added to some other revenue measure.

“WCI and its many operators, shippers, labor, port, conservation and agriculture group members are very grateful for the leadership of Senators Boxer and Vitter, and to Senator Bob Casey and S. 407 RIVER Act co-sponsors Senators Alexander, Harkin, Klobuchar, Franken, and Roberts. We also wish to thank the entire Senate for their efforts to pass a WRDA bill that will meaningfully modernize the nation’s inland waterways transportation system. It will also create American jobs, increase exports, keep our nation competitive, and inject billions of dollars into the U.S. economy as we continue to recover from recession,” said Michael Toohey, WCI President/CEO. “We await action in the House and will work to see the provisions of H.R. 1149, WAVE 4, move ahead toward final passage,” he said.

*Waterways Council, Inc. is the national public policy organization advocating for a modern and well-maintained national system of ports and inland waterways. The group is supported by waterways carriers, shippers, port authorities, agriculture, labor and conservation organizations, shipping associations and waterways advocacy groups from all regions of the country. Visit [www.waterwayscouncil.org](http://www.waterwayscouncil.org).*