



Water Resources Development Act of 2018

Integrated Water Resources Management Proposal

The Issue

Many communities around the nation are taking a more integrated and innovative approach to managing their water resources as they confront more complex hydrological challenges and extreme weather events today than in decades past. Many of these approaches look to optimize opportunities for managing wet weather events in ways that bolster a community's resiliency. For example, when implementing local stormwater management plans, communities are not only implementing practices to divert stormwater or prevent flooding, but are incorporating best management practices to address other challenges such as groundwater depletion of freshwater supplies or mitigating water quality impairments due to stormwater runoff. In this way, communities are beneficially reusing as much stormwater as possible for such things as aquifer recharge, habitat restoration, and bolstering storage of freshwater supplies. While the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is primarily responsible for undertaking projects that address flood risk management, navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration goals, integrating USACE's work with local municipal stormwater management projects can help ensure broader water resource management goals are met.

Example of Beneficial USACE Coordination

The Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project is a prime example of the beneficial outcomes that can result from such USACE federal-nonfederal partnerships. This project aims to restore 11 miles of the LA River while maintaining existing flood risk management levels. In addition to habitat restoration for ecological benefits, this project also fits into LA's broader water goals of reducing purchases of imported water by 50% by 2025 and sourcing 50% of water locally by 2035. In addition, the USACE-partnered Los Angeles County Drainage Area (LACDA) project also provides multi-use benefits in the area.

Los Angeles County has multiple coordinated local stormwater management plans to capture stormwater to build local water supply capacity and also reduce the community's reliance on imported water. Captured stormwater is used for direct uses and for groundwater recharge. Restoring the LA River will increase groundwater infiltration to aid aquifer replenishment efforts. LA's stormwater management plan is a critical local effort to secure water resources and by working together on the LA River Restoration Project, USACE is able to support the city's local water goal through an integrated approach.

The Los Angeles region example is just one example of a locality implementing stormwater management plans to fortify local water supply. With communities across the country looking to new, innovative ways to stretch and supplement their water supplies, increased coordination between USACE and localities will be important to supporting these efforts.

Policy Proposal

The 2016 House and Senate proposed WRDA bills included language directing the USACE to undertake a coordinated approach in planning and implementing projects with municipal stormwater management agencies. While these provisions were not included in the final package due to procedural issues, they were non-controversial and broadly supported on a bipartisan basis. We urge Congress to include these provisions in the 2018 WRDA bill to help communities benefit from a more coordinated, integrated water resource management approach by the USACE.

Proposed Language

We propose inclusion of language from Sec. 142 of the House-passed 2016 WRDA bill (below) in this year's 2018 WRDA bill. Related language that was included in the Senate 2016 WRDA bill is also listed below for reference. Although the language is different, the intent of the two sections was the same. However, we believe that the House language is clearer in its intent of the types of coordinated efforts communities and USACE can engage in to enhance local water goals such as aquifer recharge or stormwater recycling. Thus we urge both chambers to include the House Sec. 142 language in their WRDA proposals.

House

SEC. 142. INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES PLANNING.

In carrying out a feasibility study for a water resources development project, the Secretary shall coordinate with communities in the watershed covered by such study to determine if a local or regional water management plan exists or is under development for the purposes of stormwater management, water quality improvement, aquifer recharge, or water reuse. If such a local or regional water management plan exists for the watershed, the Secretary shall, in cooperation with the non-Federal sponsor for the plan and affected local public entities, avoid adversely affecting the purposes of the plan and, where feasible, incorporate the purposes of the plan into the Secretary's feasibility study.

Senate

SEC. 1042. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WATER MANAGEMENT PLANS.

The Secretary, with the consent of the non-Federal sponsor of a feasibility study for a water resources development project, may enter into a feasibility study cost-sharing agreement under section 221(a) of the Flood Control Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. 1962d -5b(a)), to allow a unit of local government in a watershed that has adopted a local or regional water management plan to participate in the feasibility study to determine if there is an opportunity to include additional feasible elements in the project being studied to help achieve the purposes identified in the local or regional water management plan.