



## **Congress Should Not Apply Earmark Limitations to Federal Water Resources Projects**

### **The Problem:**

**Earmarks are equated with pork.** Often that is a fair equation. They are generally added as a line item in a funding bill by a single Member of Congress to benefit only one state or district. Without authorizing legislation or other justification, they have funded unneeded highways and bridges to nowhere. Absent scrutiny by Congressional committees, federal agencies, or the public, they raise the specter of wasteful spending.

### **The Facts:**

#### **Congressional Funding Instructions for Water Resource Projects Differ from Earmarks.**

Congress provides project-specific authorizations and funding instructions for federal water projects, addressing site-specific variables, including topography, hydrology, socioeconomic benefits, and environmental effects. Unlike earmarks, water projects proposed by agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation must pass comprehensive reviews with merit-based criteria and public participation, and they usually require local cost-sharing.

**Water Resource Projects are Invaluable to our Nation.** Beyond the host communities and regions they serve, federal water resource projects provide widespread ***national*** benefits, including flood control; waterborne navigation, the most fuel-efficient transportation mode; hydropower; recreation; and, in many areas, water storage and supply critical for surrounding municipalities and industries.

#### **Without Funding Instructions, Congress Would Give the White House Exclusive Power to Determine Project-Specific Funding.**

Earmark reform must not take place in a vacuum. Existing projects must continue to operate, and water resource agencies must be able to continue to investigate and build new projects to meet our vast infrastructure needs. Our national economic well-being depends on this happening and some level of funding for those activities is required. “Who decides which projects get funded and at what levels?” are critical questions. OMB applies metrics that would reduce or eliminate vital federal funding for many water resource projects and leave local cost-shares as stranded investment. Project-specific funding instructions enable Congress to review and revise assumptions included in the Administration’s budget request. Without Congressional instructions in the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bills, OMB would trump the will of the Congress. Congress should not unilaterally relinquish to the White House the exclusive power to determine funding levels and project priorities for federal water resource projects.

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*The National Waterways Conference, established in 1960, is dedicated to a greater understanding of the widespread public benefits of our nation’s water resources infrastructure. Our mission is to effect common sense policies and programs, recognizing the public value of our Nation’s water resources and their contribution to public safety, a competitive economy, national security, environmental quality and energy conservation. Conference membership is comprised of the full spectrum of water resources stakeholders, including flood control associations, levee boards, waterways shippers and carriers, industry and regional associations, port authorities, shipyards, dredging contractors, regional water districts, engineering consultants, and state and local governments. [www.waterways.org](http://www.waterways.org)*