

Secures authorization of two Vermont projects for the White River and Wells River

Washington, D.C. - Rep. Peter Welch and House colleagues Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Thomas Petri (R-WI) were successful in passing the Corps Modernization Amendment to H.R. 1495, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), to improve oversight of Army Corps of Engineers water infrastructure projects.

"We can assure worthy projects benefit the public, protect the environment, and save taxpayer dollars by insisting that Corps projects go through transparent and rigorous review," said Welch

The Blumenauer-Welch-Petri Amendment updates the Army Corps of Engineers principles and guidelines to help ensure that future projects are environmentally, structurally, and fiscally sound. The principles and guidelines have not been updated since 1983.

The WDRA Act authorizes nearly \$14 billion in the construction or study of water projects by the Army Corps of Engineers, for navigation, flood control, ecosystem restoration, and other projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States.

The bill authorizes two Welch-requested Vermont projects: emergency streambank protection for the Wells River in Newbury and aquatic ecosystem restoration for White River in Bethel. The bill also amends language that will now allow the Nature Conservancy to cost-share projects with the Corps for the Connecticut River.

Welch added, "Army Corps projects should meet the goal of being environmentally conscious, cost-effective, and structurally sound. We believe this long-overdue reform is vital to meeting these important goals on behalf of the public," said Welch.

The Amendment also requires the Corps to consult other agencies and the public in their development. Modernized principles and guidelines are critical in developing and implementing sound projects to save taxpayer dollars and address environmental and other national

concerns.

Welch also obtained a commitment from the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee that other Corps reforms, including stronger independent peer review, will be addressed during the House and Senate Conference on this bill. Welch believes that independent peer review will help ensure that the Corps considers the best available science, economics, and engineering in the design and construction of projects in our communities.

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for 1,500 federal water resources projects in the United States. Recent studies by the National Academy of Sciences, the Government Accountability Office, the Pentagon, and others have found that many of these projects have been economically and environmentally questionable, prompting Welch's interest in updating the review process.