



THE INTERNATIONAL
PROPELLER CLUB
of the United States

Inland Waterways Infrastructure



This Fact Sheet examines the construction and maintenance of infrastructure on the inland waterways of the United States – such as dredging and the construction and expansion of locks and dams.

Approximately 11,000 miles of the inland waterways of the United States that are maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). While everyone knows that this system includes the Mississippi River system – it also includes the Columbia and Snake River system as well as the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

It is the Corps responsibility to maintain a channel depth of 9 feet in the inland waterway system to accommodate commercial tug and barge traffic. Dams have been constructed to help maintain this channel depth during period of high and low water flow. Locks at the dam allow the tugs and barges to bypass these dams.

Between 2006-2017, the Corps obligated \$690 million annually for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) on the inland river system. In addition, the Corps has obligated approximately \$240 million annually for new construction and rehabilitation projects.

Economic benefits of inland waterways system:

Cargoes transported on the inland waterway system include grain and soybeans, coal, petroleum, and chemicals. According to the Corps, the value of these commodities exceeds \$194 Billion. There are more than 541,000 jobs that are related to the inland waterways system – valued at more than \$29 billion.

The inland waterways system is the most environmentally friendly method of transporting goods. One ton of cargo can be moved 647 miles on a one gallon of fuel and eliminate million of truck movements that would be required if the inland waterways system is not maintained.

Infrastructure Funding:

Funding for infrastructure on these waterways come from 2 sources: The General Revenues of the United States and the Inland Waterway Trust Fund.

- The General Revenues (Treasury) of the United States pays for 100% of the operation and maintenance (O&M) costs on these waterways.
- Construction and major rehabilitation projects for locks and dams that cost more than \$20 million are funded from 2 sources: 50% from the General Revenues of the U.S. and 50% from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF).

The IWTF is funded by a tax on the fuel used by commercial vessels on the 11,000-miles inland IWTF system. In 2014 the tax was increased from \$.20 per gallon to \$0.29 per gallon. The revenues to the IWTF annually is approximately \$116 million.

The Corps prioritizes projects based on the projected costs and benefits of the projects.

The Inland Waterways User Board (IWUB) is a Federal advisory board created to make recommendations to the Corps and Congress on investment priorities for projects funded from the IWTF. The IWUB issues an annual report that includes their recommendations for the prioritization of projects on the inland river system. The 2019 report can be found at this link: [IWUB 2019 Report](#)

ISSUE BEFORE CONGRESS:

Some users believe that construction and major rehabilitation projects can be completed in a shorter time period if the General Revenue (i.e. Corps budget) pays for 65% of the project cost and the IWTF pays for 35% (rather than the current 50/50 cost split). Other users of the inland waterway system are concerned that if more funding for these projects must come from the general Corps budget – then there will be less funding available from that budget for other Corps projects such as flood control projects.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION:

Legislation regarding Inland Waterways Infrastructure is typically included in the Water Resources Development Act – which is acted upon on a 2-year cycle.

The leadership of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works released a draft of their proposed legislation on April 21, 2020.

Read the one page summary of the draft legislation [here](#).

Read the text of the draft AWIA 2020 [here](#).

Read the section-by-section of the draft AWIA 2020 [here](#).

Additional information can be found at:

[National Waterways Conference](#)

[Waterways Council, Inc.](#)