



NEW YORK STATE WATER RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

1123 Bradfield Hall, Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853-1901
<http://wri.eas.cornell.edu>

Tel: (607) 255-3034
Fax: (607) 255-2016
Email: nyswri@cornell.edu

Patricio Gonzalez
Office of Sen. Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Patricio,

The Water Resources Development Act of 2013 currently under consideration in the 113th Congress is an important mechanism that supports various projects related to dam safety, flood control, navigation, coastal management and infrastructure financing. Please find below just a sampling of ways this proposed legislation supports the following activities critical to water resources in New York:

1. Coastal protection, storm clean up and flood control: Previous WRDA funding has supported the Atlantic Coast of NY Monitoring Program, which collects information on coastal processes important for understanding and preparing for impacts from extreme storm events and weathering. This work is important for documenting the impacts of both small and large events (such as Hurricane Sandy), and aids land use policy and decision makers by providing historical data and projections based on what we know of climate change and extreme weather events (County beneficiaries include Suffolk, Nassau, Queens counties – perhaps Kings and Richmond as well). The Act also provides additional support for small flood control projects. The last version of this Act (WRDA 2007) supported flood control projects for Canisteo River (Steuben County), Dry and Otter Creeks (Cortland County), and Sunnyside Brook (Westchester County).
 2. Navigation for ports and commercially important waterways: WRDA funding supports dredging, which is necessary to maintain the NY/NJ harbor, the largest port on the East Coast (providing over 260,000 jobs and \$11 billion in personal income according to the US Army Corps of Engineers). In the past, WRDA has supported inland navigation projects such as the New York State Canal System and Buffalo Harbor.
 3. Water supply protection & ecosystem restoration: WRDA funding supports the New York City Watershed Environmental Assistance program, managed jointly by USACE and NYSDEC, serving the 8 counties within the watershed (Ulster, Westchester, Putnam, Sullivan, Greene, Delaware, Dutchess, Schoharie) . This program helps fund projects on infrastructure such as water supply, storage and treatment, as well as watershed protection projects critical to maintaining the high quality of unfiltered drinking water delivered to the 9 million people served by the NYC system.
 4. Dam safety and flood control: The Act provides additional funds for dam safety through the National Dam Safety Act of 2013. Please find below some relevant information on dams in New York as per your request:
-

- NYS has 5700 dams, including nearly 400 high-hazard dams.
Note: High-hazard refers to the *potential* for human and property damage in case of a dam failure, and does not signify the present state of a particular dam.
- On average, dams in NYS are 60 years old, while the high-hazard ones are 84 years old, signifying the need for consistent monitoring and maintenance of these dams.
- During Tropical Storms Irene and Lee (2011), 31 dams were damaged and 4 low to intermediate-hazard dams failed. Dams significantly impacted include Maplecrest, Nauvoo, and Mitchell Hollow dams in the Batavia Kill watershed (Greene County).
- In 2011, the state allocated \$1.38 million towards dam safety, only half the national average on a per-dam basis. NY also employs roughly half the national average of full-time equivalent staff for dam safety (1 FTE oversees 460 dams in NYS, as against 1 FTE for 205 dams nationally).

Dams require regular maintenance and significant repairs as they age. The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) will enable the Dam Safety Section of NYSDEC to keep better records, hire staff and enable periodic inspection and maintenance of dams across the state, especially ones with disputed or unresponsive ownership.

Please let us know if we can provide any other help on this issue or other water-related issues.

Regards,
Susan Riha, Director NYSWRI

For more information on NYSWRI activity please email nyswri@cornell.edu, or call (607) 255-3034
Website: wri.eas.cornell.edu