



## ***A WaterLog Message for Congressional Staffers:***

### **Tips on Influencing Which Projects Make it into the FY20 Corps Work Plan**

*By Howard Marlowe, President  
Warwick Group Consultants, LLC*

Every congressional district in the nation has a Corps of Engineers project. Although Congress has banned itself from earmarks, you might be surprised that the President still has that power. For decades, *the President has earmarked the Corps' budget*. I've written [previously](#) urging the return of congressional earmarks for the Corps. But given the fact that Congress has lost the power to decide which projects have priority, you may be wondering: What can my boss and I do for new or existing projects that didn't get into the President's budget?

To find out, let's first look at where Corps funding stands today. We are nearing the end of Fiscal Year 2019, and your only slim hope of getting any of that money is a sweep of unspent money by Corps Headquarters (that is sure to begin any day now) and might turn up some funds that have gone unspent by a project for which they were intended. So, let's focus on FY 2020.

The President's earmarks can be found on [this page](#) under "Program Budget" FY 2020. Since Congress can't name specific projects that it wants added to the Corps' budget, it adds a few pots of "additional funding" which the Administration gets to allocate. At Warwick Group Consultants, we focus on tracking shore protection projects (that's how Congress refers to them). The House released its version of the bill on June 19<sup>th</sup> (see HR 2740). You can see towards the bottom of [this chart](#) how much additional funding was approved for this type of project by the House. If you're interested in other types of projects, such as navigation, you can get the additional funding information in the [House Report](#). *Note that reports on Corps funding bills are more useful than the bill text itself because of their projects lists and explanatory or directive language*

Next, the Senate Appropriations Committee gets the opportunity to come up with its version of the E&W approps bill. While there's been some skepticism that the Senate will act on any funding bill this year, the key development to watch for will be full Senate Appropriations Committee adoption of a bill. Despite what all of us have learned in high school, it's possible for a conference to take place between a House-passed bill and a committee-approved version that hasn't been voted on by the full Senate.

Let's be positive and say that, for the second time in two years, Congress passes an Energy & Water Development Appropriations Bill prior to the end of the current fiscal year on September 30<sup>th</sup>. There are usually 90 days before a Work Plan is released. What's that? It's a list of the

projects earmarked by the President and those that the Administration has approved to receive allocations from whatever “additional funding” pots Congress has provided.

What can you do to influence what gets into the *Work Plan*? First, *start now*. If the project is important to your boss, make sure that both the Corps District and Division that have jurisdiction over it are recommending it to Headquarters for inclusion in the Work Plan. My use of the term “project” also includes plus-ups or additional funding for studies and national programs. There can be no air drops of any Corps project because the only ones that can be funded are those that have been separately authorized to receive funds by Congress. If possible, *urge your constituent interests to come to Washington to meet with the appropriate officials at Corps Headquarters*. Letters and follow-up calls from your boss showing congressional interest sent to the Director of Civil Works, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and to OMB are always helpful.

Does all of this effort count? Absolutely! Since there’s lots of competition for Corps funding, getting the attention of the final decision makers means that your boss has done all that he or she can do to succeed. Good luck!

For more information, please visit [www.warwickconsultants.net](http://www.warwickconsultants.net) or email me at: [Howard.Marlowe@warwickconsultants.net](mailto:Howard.Marlowe@warwickconsultants.net)

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1717 K Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20006 • 202.787.5770 • Fax 202.776.0136 • [www.warwickconsultants.net](http://www.warwickconsultants.net)

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