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Water Resources Development Act Includes Wins for Wildlife, Communities

Washington, DC (July 15, 2020) — The Water Resources Development Act of 2020, which is being marked up by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, includes numerous provisions to advance ecosystem restoration and strengthen climate resilience. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee reported out a related bill, America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2020, earlier this year.

“Nature has long been an underutilized tool in the Army Corps’ toolbox. This bill takes important steps to remedy this, with a suite of reforms that remove barriers to using healthy rivers, floodplains, wetlands and shorelines to protect communities from hurricanes and floods,” said Melissa Samet, senior water resources counsel at the National Wildlife Federation. “The National Wildlife Federation is grateful for the strong leadership of Chairman DeFazio, Subcommittee Chair Napolitano, Ranking Member Sam Graves and Subcommittee Ranking Member Westerman for their bipartisan efforts to advance important provisions to protect frontline communities and vital ecosystems including the Everglades, Mississippi River Delta, and Great Lakes.”

The National Wildlife Federation supports many important provisions of this bill, including:

- Provisions that remove barriers to, and drive use of natural infrastructure, including by ensuring that natural infrastructure solutions will benefit from the same cost-share requirements as non-structural measures.
- Careful evaluation of natural infrastructure solutions to protect communities from storms and floods, including a robust pilot program that provides full federal funding for flood and storm risk reduction studies for economically disadvantaged communities and ensures robust evaluation of natural infrastructure solutions.
- Implementation of the Water Resources Principles, Requirements and Guidelines (PR&G) by the Corps, including fully engaging the public in that effort. Effective implementation of the PR&G will bring the Corps’ water resources planning process in line with 21st Century water resources management principles, and improve water resources planning across the board.

- Comprehensive review of the Corps' mitigation record by the Government Accountability Office. Ensuring full compliance with mitigation requirements is critical for fish and wildlife and for the communities and economies that rely on these vital resources.

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