

Hundreds of Overdue Corps Projects To Restore Our Waterway System Are Unfunded

by Richard Freeman

America's waterway system is at a critical phase, where if something is not done to reverse policy decision-making, it could, due to age and obsolescence, experience a grievous breakdown. Already its condition is causing critical and growing delays in moving cargo of all kinds to ports or markets. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has Congressionally-mandated oversight to maintain America's 12,000 mile waterway system, including its 241 locks and dams, and thousands of miles of levees. It oversees the maintenance of the nation's 300 commercial harbors, through which pass 2 billion tons of cargo annually, and 600 smaller harbors; maintains 600 dams and reservoirs, including a significant amount of the nation's hydro-electric power; and monitors water flow levels in all. All these sectors have repair needs which require billions of dollars.

Half of the major lock chambers on America's inland waterways system exceed their design life of 50 years, causing periodic unscheduled shut-downs and paralysis. It is urgent that the upgrade and repair of the system take place. One quarter of these lock chambers are more than 70 years old. During the past 5 years, lock gates and chambers have broken down at choke points on the waterways system; and some of the concrete lining of some of the river system's banks have "spalled"—broken apart in chips or chunks.

The Cheney-Bush Administration has pursued and intensified the policy of gross underfunding of water projects that has been in force during the past three decades: Stated in 1996 constant dollars, the Corps' Civil Works appropriations has collapsed from a level of \$7.2 billion in FY 1975, to a level of \$4.1 billion in FY 2007, a drop of 43%. Driven by the cost-benefit voodoo at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the administration incorrigibly complains that the Congress has authorized too many water projects. The preface to the FY 2007 budget for Army Corps' Civil Works avers, "In recent years, many more construction projects have been authorized, initiated, and continued than can be constructed efficiently. . . . To remedy [!] this situation, and achieve greater value to the Nation from the Civil Works construction program, the budget focuses funding on projects that yield the greatest economic and environmental return. Work on low priority projects would be considered for suspension, and for those projects the budget provides funding either to complete each ongoing contract, or to terminate it and pay the Federal

share of settled claims, whichever is estimated to be less costly."

This has generated emotional debate in the Senate. Senate Majority leader Bill Frist—on Bush Administration orders, according to a well-placed source—has refused for 13 months to allow the FY 2005 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) to come up for a vote. The WRDA, which traditionally authorizes water projects, contains new necessary water projects. In April, 81 Senators from both parties sent a letter to Frist demanding that he free the WRDA for vote—setting the stage for a showdown.

Lyndon LaRouche has called for a great expansion of water projects. In May, he forcefully called for rebuilding the U.S. Military around a Corps of Engineers function, rebuilding the Army from its current 12 divisions to the 18 divisions it had before Donald Rumsfeld's insane transformation downsized it. The troops of the added six divisions would carry out Army Corps of Engineers and related reconstruction functions. Driving this mission, would be the retooling of the now-discarded sections of the U.S. auto industry, so that its critical machine-tool capacity and skilled labor force would produce capital goods to reconstruct our nation's water systems—as well as transportation, power generation, etc. This would be financed with large infusions of cheap directed Federal credit.

EIR has discovered, tucked away at the end of the FY 2007 budget for the Army Corps, 350 water projects—for flood damage reduction, and navigation—that were appropriated in the FY 2006 budget, but suspended from the FY 2007 budget on a cost-benefit basis. Collectively, all these projects would generate hundreds of thousands of jobs, requiring capital goods and large quantities of semi-finished and raw material goods. This article presents an inventory of some of the most important water projects.

The Necessity of America's Waterways

The efficient U.S. inland waterway system transports 450 billion ton-miles of goods annually, about 15% of U.S. intercity freight transport (excluding petroleum going through a pipeline). Rationally, 25% or more of America's internal freight should go through water transport. But water transport's strong suit is not for goods that require delivery within 48 hours, but for those—usually bulk goods like

FIGURE 1

Critical Ready-To-Go Waterways Projects



Sources: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Waterways Council, Inc.; EIR.

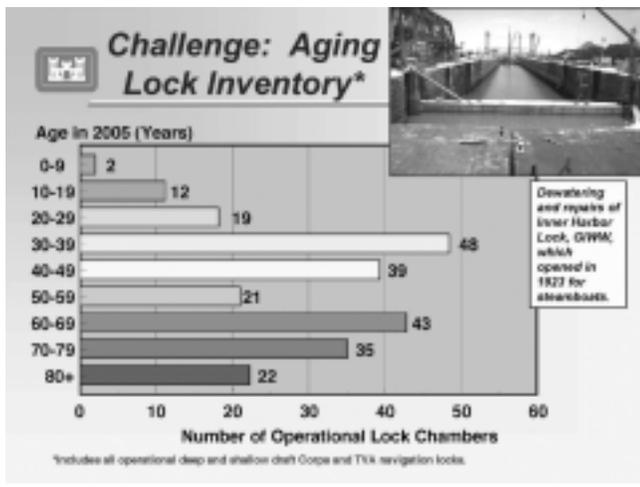
grain, coal, petroleum, etc.—which can be delivered in a time range of half a week to several weeks. An Army Corps engineer reported, “The waterway network is plied by commercial towboats, which push barges lashed together as tows, with each barge capable of holding 1,400-1,800 tons of cargo. A single tow of 15 barges carries the freight cargo equivalent to 870 tractor-trailer trucks.” Due to the fact that water provides natural buoyancy, it is a low-cost, fuel efficient freight mode.

During the 1933-45 Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency, in particular, a full array of locks and dams, levees, spillways and causeways, etc., were built up and down the Mississippi River system, as well as the Ohio and Tennessee River systems. This development under FDR culminated an American System river development program which had been ongoing for 200 years.

A waterway network like this cannot stand still: it must be constantly repaired and upgraded. However, starting in the

FIGURE 2

Challenge: Aging Lock Inventory



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

1970s, financial circles bent on de-industrialization, constricted the funding which maintains the system; the spectral grip of age and obsolescence took hold.

The process of Congressional approval of water projects is of special importance. To be built, a project has to undergo two steps. First, the Congress must *authorize* it, stating that the Congress approves of the project; which conveys to the responsible agency—like the Army Corps of Engineers—that it is okay to go ahead. But in a second step, the Congress must *appropriate* the funds, so that there is money extended, the *sine qua non* for the project’s construction.

The Dick Cheney-driven Bush Administration has waged an all-out war against Army Corps water projects on both ends of the process: It has blocked the authorization of projects it wanted to kill; and when projects that the administration opposed have been authorized by Congress, the White House has acted to kill the appropriation of federal funds.

Figure 1 shows several projects that are crucial for the U.S. water system to survive. One of the most important projects shown there, is the integrated Upper Mississippi River system replacement (Locks and Dams 14-18, 20-22, 24-25) and Illinois River system (LaGrange and Peoria). The nearly 2,000 mile (3,333 kilometer) Upper Mississippi system comprises that section of the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Illinois rivers. Most of the inland trade that flows into and out of such major Midwestern cities as Minneapolis, Chicago, and St. Louis—and trade from a good part of the Midwest is first concentrated in those cities—travels on this system. All but seven of its 38 locks and dams were built before 1940—under FDR’s Presidency—and thus are 65-70 years old. Moreover, as a result of their age, most of the lock chambers

are only 600 feet long, whereas today’s tow-barges are routinely 1,100 feet or longer: the tow-barges must break in half to pass through these aged locks, an unduly time-consuming procedure.

For these Upper Mississippi system locks and dams to be efficient, the construction of new replacement 1,200 foot lock chambers and 1,200 foot guidewalls is imperative.

Here one meets head-on the divide-and-conquer tactics of Dick Cheney and the OMB. For years, they have resisted building several of the locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi system. In the Water Resources and Development Act of 2005, S.726, the sponsors introduced authorization of several critical components, authorizing work projects on Locks and Dams 20-22, and 24-25 on the Upper Mississippi, and the LaGrange and Peoria Locks and Dams on the Illinois River. The Water Resources Development Act is the omnibus bill vehicle for water project authorization. The 2005 bill’s original sponsor was Senator Kit Bond (R-Mo.), and more than half of the bill’s original co-sponsors were Republicans. But Senator Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) used his power to run roughshod over the budgeting process. Though the bill was introduced in April 2005, Frist has devised ways, month by month, to stonewall the bill from getting to the Senate floor for a vote, even after 81 Senators wrote a letter this April telling Frist to stop his shenanigans and allow a floor vote on the WRDA. As of this writing, this still has not occurred.

How can this nation be committed to water development, if it will not allow this broad project to go through?

A reading of the 2005 WRDA shows that this is but one of several water projects that have not been authorized. Other projects contained in the Act which have not been authorized, and their price tags, include:

- The Bayou Sorrel Lock in Louisiana: \$9 million.
- The Akutan and Haines Harbors in Alaska: \$19.5 million.
- Storm damage reduction for Imperial, California: \$38 million.
- Hurricane and flood damage reduction from Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico: \$788 million.
- Flood damage reduction, Middle Creek, Lake County, California \$41.8 million.

The list goes on. By law, unless a project is authorized, appropriation of funds is out of the question. *The above are an exemplar of perhaps one hundred or more projects that are unauthorized, and accordingly, unappropriated projects.*

Authorized, but Unappropriated

However, one must consider the other great mass of water projects: those that are authorized, but unappropriated. Authorization is the first step. But there are hundreds more projects that were authorized, but the Wall Street-Cheney-OMB forces swarmed in to kill off appropriation of funds for them. These projects include some of the most

FIGURE 3

Partial List of Unfunded Projects

FY 2006 APPROPRIATIONS NOT IN FY 2007 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET			
INVESTIGATION (I), CONSTRUCTION (C) and OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE (O) APPROPRIATIONS			
Business Line	Appr	MSC	Project Name
FDR	C	SAD	Dare County Beaches, NC
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Bay Coastline, DE & NJ Reeds Beach to Pierces Point
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Bay Coastline, Pt. Mahon, DE & NJ
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Bay Coastline, Villas, DE & NJ
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Coast Protection, DE
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Coast, Bethany Beach to South Bethany Beach, DE
FDR	C	NAD	Delaware Coast, Cape Henlopen to Fenwick Island, DE
FDR	C	LRD	Dover Dam, OH — Dam Safety Assurance
FDR	C	MVD	East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
FDR	C	MVD	East St. Louis & Vicinity (IFC), IL
FDR	C	NAD	Embrey Dam, VA
FDR	C	SAD	Folly Beach, SC
FDR	C	SAD	Fort Pierce Beach, FL
FDR	C	NAD	Fox Point Barrier - Narrangansett Bay, RI
FDR	C	MRT	Francis Bland-Eight Mile Creek, AR
FDR	C	SWD	Graham, TX (Brazos River Basin)
FDR	C	MVD	Grand Isle and Vicinity, LA
FDR	C	NAD	Great Egg Harbor Inlet and Peck Beach, NJ
FDR	C	LRD	Greenbrier River Basin (Marlinton), WV
FDR	C	POD	Hawaii Water Management, HI
FDR	C	SWD	Hunting Bayou, Houston, TX
FDR	C	POD	Iao Stream Deficiency Correction, HI
FDR	C	LRD	Indiana Shoreline, IN
FDR	C	LRD	Island Creek, Logan, WV, Local Protection Project
FDR	C	NAD	Jennings Randolph Lake, MD & WV (Dam Safety)
FDR	C	NAD	Joseph G Minish Historic Waterfront Park, NJ
FDR	C	SPD	Kaweah River, CA
FDR	C	NAD	Lake Merriweather, Goshen Dam and Spillway, VA
FDR	C	MVD	Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, LA (HP)
FDR	C	MVD	Larose to Golden Meadow, LA (HP)
FDR	C	SAD	Lee County, FL (Reimbursement)
FDR	C	LRD	Levisa and Tug Forks of the Big Sandy River and Upper Cumberland River, WV, VA, and KY

Office of Management and Budget

The White House FY 2007 budget again denies appropriation of funds to 11 pages worth of Army Corps infrastructure projects—some are shown here—which Congress has authorized. (In this list of projects, FDR indicates Flood Damage Reduction.)

vital, but also many smaller ones. They all won authorization, but lost the appropriations battle. These can be seen in Figure 1:

- **The Greenup Locks and Dam**—This Lock and Dam, built originally in 1959, is strategically situated on the Ohio River, at Greenup County, Kentucky, 24 miles downstream from Huntington, West Virginia. It is America’s eighth-busiest inland navigation lock, with a lot of coal passing through it. The main lock chamber is constantly in need of repair, shifting traffic into the auxiliary lock. The WRDA of 2000 authorized doubling the length of the auxiliary lock chamber to 1,200 feet; rehabilitating the main lock chamber; building a spare mitre gate system; and building a dry dock for construction. The total project cost is projected to be \$230 million (not counting rehabilitation). The President’s FY 2007 budget request for the project: \$0.

- **The John T. Myers Locks and Dam**—This Lock and Dam, built in 1969, is situated on the Ohio River, cutting between Posey County, Indiana on one river bank, and Union County, Kentucky on the other river bank. Coal, in addition to petroleum, iron, steel, chemicals, and grains, pass through

this heavily trafficked lock. The WRDA of 2000 authorized doubling the length of the auxiliary lock to 1,200 feet, so that it can be used more extensively. The total project cost is projected to be \$225 million. The President’s FY 2007 budget request for the project: \$0.

- **The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock**—This lock, also known as the Industrial Canal Lock, is located in the New Orleans Industrial Canal, just off the Mississippi River. This canal connects the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain. The current lock was built in 1923, making it more than 80 years old, and its small size causes delays ranging up to 24 to 36 hours for vessels using it. A replacement lock, that would double the length to 1,200 feet, has been authorized. This lock has been sorely neglected, simultaneously as New Orleans flood control protection was undermined, leaving the city vulnerable to Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock’s total project cost is projected to be \$655 million. The President’s FY 2007 budget request for the project: \$0.

The Congress has fought to overturn the Cheney-OMB lock-down, and has put some funds into these projects, although grossly inadequate.

These are some of the more considerable projects that have been authorized, but have been appropriated insufficient or no funds. And beginning page 105 in the President’s FY 2007 budget for the Civil Works program of the Army Corps of Engineers, there exists, a table entitled, “FY 2006 Appropriations Not in FY 2007 President’s Budget.” This list lists authorized projects from all 50 states that have been suspended, cut off from funds. Generally, these are smaller projects. Just adding up those which need to be undertaken for navigation, flood damage reduction, and hydro-electric, there are over 350 projects. This represents an inventory of infrastructure that, in the main, is worthy of Army Corps building. A copy of part of one page of this list in **Figure 3**. These are in addition to the large projects cited above.

Bringing to an end this Cheney-OMB era of slashing water projects, the passage of LaRouche emergency legislation can vigorously launch, *in toto*, 400-500 water projects, that will restore the integrity of America’s waterways and harbors, and put hundreds of thousands of people to work.