**Crossroads: Congress, the Corps of Engineers and the Future of America's Water Resources**

There has been recent news coverage about a list of projects that the National Wildlife Federation and Taxpayers for Common Sense called "the most environmentally and fiscally wasteful water projects in the nation. " Here is what we have said about the report that the two groups issued:

- Striving to achieve environmental sustainability is the first of the Corps' environmental principles, and we believe that it is essential to respect the views of others and learn from their perspective to find innovative solutions to the nation's water resources problems.
- We seek solutions that also protect and enhance the environment, and we can achieve these only through the combined efforts of federal agencies, tribal, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual citizens.
- The National Wildlife Federation and Taxpayers for Common Sense have highlighted projects that have stood the test of rigorous public review.
- All our projects, when they ready for implementation, contain changes that reflect concerted efforts to ensure that they achieve a balance of economic and environmental interests. These projects are recommended only after they have been molded to represent a sound investment of federal, state and local dollars.

We have engaged a wide range of constituencies in a dialogue about how best to preserve, protect and manage America's water resources. We hear most often from the National Wildlife Federation and Taxpayers for Common Sense in pronouncements such as the Crossroads: Congress, the Corps of Engineers and the Future of America's Waters Resources reports. We would encourage them to join in a dialogue with us.

When the National Wildlife Federation and Taxpayers for Common Sense issued the Crossroads report, they declared:

"Defiant after four years of scandals that rocked the agency, the Corps of Engineers (Corps) is moving ahead with more than $12 billion in projects that harm the environment and waste taxpayer dollars, according to a two-year investigation that reveals a recipe of politics and pork that has led Congress to turn a blind eye to legislative fixes that could stop many of these projects in their tracks...

"Crossroads reveals a Corps project machine that consistently "cooks the books" with bad economics, lowballs the environmental damage its projects will cause,

relies on outdated approaches, lacks direction in its work, and perpetuates wasteful federal subsidies...

"No federal agency has greater influence over the nation's waterways, wetlands, floodplains, and coasts than the Corps of Engineers. While Congress has recognized that the Corps is flawed and the Corps admits that it has to change, the agency's self-serving claims of reform ring hollow. Crossroads exposes systemic failures within the agency that cause it to push bad projects that continue to harm the environment at enormous taxpayer expense..."

The Crossroads report can be found at http://www.nwf.org/news/

Here is what others have had to say about this report.

"I'm sure this is just the 'first salvo' in the annual charge by the extremist activists to discredit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and waterway stakeholders by discrediting the Corps' primary missions-navigation and flood control," said Worth Hager, president of National Waterways Conference (NWC). "I've seen the new 'Crossroads' report. It appears to be a rehash of previous claims and innuendoes, and is a testament to the willingness of these groups to risk our country's economic base in order to reach the goal of transferring the wetlands decision-making process [Section 404] away from the Corps of Engineers. They mistakenly assume that the full "value" of a project is reflected in the benefit-cost analyses performed by the Corps of Engineers. A benefit-cost analysis only relays the national economic benefits of a project. It is time for honesty and common sense...

"Under law, the Corps is directed to provide a benefit-cost analysis that reflects some of the national economic benefits of a project. Regional economic benefits and social benefits such as reduced air pollution, congestion mitigation, safety, security, reduced transportation rates by other modes, and recreational opportunities aren't included in U.S. calculations," Hager also said. "If those extremist activists were really serious about being 'environmental', they would join their European Green Party counterparts in championing the development of waterways. They would also support the common sense 'Corps reform' measures included in the proposed Water Resources bill from the House of Representatives rather than advancing proposals that will strangle the process."

The complete response from the National Waterways Conference can be found at http://www.waterways.org/NWCpressrelease3-30-04.html

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association said:

"Ignoring every bit of scientific evidence collecting over the past 20 years, the two groups make totally unsubstantiated claims that collecting and distributing sand for beach nourishment projects can be harmful to shallow water reefs and habitat

essential for fish and other species. They go on to allege that the process smothers crabs, mollusks and shrimp, which are sources of food for birds and other marine species. Additionally contend that it buries fragile nesting habitats for sea turtles.

"What they fail to point out is that, before any construction takes place, every beach nourishment project must go through the rigorous environmental analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In addition, every project is reviewed by several State and Federal resource agencies. Further, every project must go through a series of public hearings. All of these hurdles, plus the Corps' internal review process, must be cleared before a beach restoration project can be put in place. If objections are raised and not resolved, the project does not get built. It's that simple. Furthermore, no sand can be taken from an area where it causes environmental damage; nor can sand be placed on an area or at a time of year when it will cause environmental damage.

"Those are the facts. Yet Taxpayers for Common Sense and the National Wildlife Federation are determined not to let these facts stand in their way. Read their report and it is evident that they don't have facts that back up their accusations. "Another example of un-researched, inaccurate information is a reference to a section of Captiva Island, FL better known as the South Seas Plantation which is a private neighborhood with restricted access. The (Crossroads) report claims taxpayers' money paid for 65% of the $3.1 million dollars to place sand on private beaches. In fact, the cost-share for the entire Captiva Island project is 27% Federal and 73% non-Federal. The low Federal cost-share reflects the legal requirement that sand placed in areas lacking public access must be paid for 100% by non-Federal interests.

"In a 2002 study commissioned by OMB, it was estimated that for a single typical beach nourishment project, one million beach tourists annually spend $88.1 million within the beach region. This creates almost 2,000 full-time jobs annually with an estimated $25.5 million in wages and salaries. Looking at the distribution of beach nourishment economic benefits for a "typical beach area," the study concluded that approximately 35 percent of the national economic development benefits (storm damage reduction benefits, recreation benefits, and other national economic development benefits) from a beach nourishment project accrue to people within the beach region and 65 percent accrue to people who reside elsewhere."

The full response from the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association can be found at
http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/hot_topics/ht_2004/6apr_scrutiny.pdf

Additional information about the 10 projects highlighted in the Crossroads report can be found at these sites:

- Eastern Arkansas Irrigation Projects
- Big Sunflower River and Yazoo Backwater: Link 1 Link 2
- Lower Snake River Navigation
- Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway Navigation Study
- Industrial Canal Lock Replacement
- Delaware River Deepening
- Missouri River Navigation
- Dallas Floodway Extension
- Columbia River Channel Improvement
- Apalachicola River Dredging
- Devils Lake Emergency Outlet
- Wichita River Basin Chloride Control