

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESJM 8047

As Passed Senate, February 16, 2004

Brief Description: Requesting the implementation of the plan to maintain the navigation channel and loading docks on the lower Snake River.

Sponsors: Senators Sheahan, Hewitt, Honeyford, Swecker, Hale, Murray and T. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Trade: 2/5/04 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/16/04, 48-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & TRADE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Franklin, Keiser and Mulliken.

Staff: John Dziedzic (786-7784)

Background: The shipping channel of the Snake River between Pasco and Lewiston, Idaho is a primary avenue for shipping agricultural and other products. Over time, naturally occurring sediment movements have decreased the depth of or otherwise restricted the shipping channel.

In September 2002, the Walla Walla District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers announced plans to perform dredging on the lower Snake River and its accompanying berthing areas as part of a 20-year management plan. The dredging is intended to allow fully-loaded barges to navigate the waterway. The plan ultimately received a "no-jeopardy" Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

A federal judge issued a preliminary injunction against the dredging in December 2002. A trial and final decision in that action is pending.

The Corps of Engineers has initiated a proposal for a one-time dredging during the winter of 2004-05, subject to review by the federal judge.

Summary of Bill: The President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and Washington State's congressional delegation are implored to "take all necessary action to expeditiously implement the proposal for a one-time dredging during the winter of 2004-05, to maintain the navigation channel and loading docks on the lower Snake River."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The Lower Snake River shipping channel has not been dredged since 1988. The proposed dredging is limited to returning the channel to the depth required for safe

shipping. Due to the reduced depth of the river, barges can now be filled to only 70 percent of capacity. This dramatically reduces the efficiency of this vital waterway, and adds to the expense of shipment, creating a serious competitiveness issue not only for wheat growers, but also for producers and processors of many other agricultural commodities.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Rick Wickman, Columbia River Steamship Operators; Heather Hansen, WA Assn. of Wheat Growers; Barbara Ivanov, WA State DOT Freight Office.