

**Earl Waesche, NBF Legislative Director**  
**ewaesche@comcast.net**  
**October 2016**

**NBF Position Statement Regarding Restrictions on Recreational Boating Use of our Nation's Waterways:** Whereas, millions of recreational boaters throughout the United States enjoy reasonably unfettered freedom to navigate, utilize and enjoy our nation's waterways, and certain authorities have taken it upon themselves to attempt to limit or restrict those freedoms, the National Boating Federation advocates that the Federal government, through legislation and regulations, and that all states within the United States pass legislation and regulations limiting the powers of local municipalities to restrict the safe, free recreational boating usage throughout United States navigable waters and non-navigable waters.

Additionally, the National Boating Federation urges great caution be exercised in balancing interests involved in regulating, limiting, or abrogating the recreational use of our Nation's waterways. If and when that balance favors regulating, limiting or abrogating such recreational boating usages, it should be the stated policy and goal of the regulating authority to return the waterway to recreational usage as soon as is practicably possible. Permanent restrictions on the recreational use of our nation's waterways should be subjected to the utmost scrutiny, and should only be imposed when absolutely necessary for National Security or substantial negative environmental impacts are identified with specificity.

**House and Senate Both Pass the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016:** S.2848 passed the Senate, Sept. 15, 2016 and H.R.5303 passed the House, Sept. 28, 2016. The WRDA authorizes 25 critical U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects in 18 states. These projects, which have undergone Congressional scrutiny and have completed reports of the Chief of Engineers, will strengthen our Nation's infrastructure to protect lives and property, restore vital ecosystems to preserve our natural heritage, and maintain navigational routes for commerce, recreation and the movement of goods to keep us competitive in the global market place.

These bills provide critical investment in the country's aging drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, assists poor and disadvantaged communities in meeting public health standards under the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act, and promotes innovative technologies to address drought and other critical water resource needs. The bill also responds to the drinking water crises in Flint, MI, by providing emergency assistance to Flint and other similar communities across the country facing drinking water contamination.

In addition to the many important projects already mentioned, the **WRDA Act Restores Ecosystems and Promotes Public Access for Recreation.** The bill authorizes numerous projects to restore precious ecosystems and preserve the Nation's natural heritage, including a project critical to the ongoing restoration of the Florida Everglades and a project to revitalize the Los Angeles River. The bill also promotes restoration of nationally significant water bodies and ecosystems, including the Great Lakes, Columbia River, Puget Sound, Salton Sea, Chesapeake Bay, North Atlantic Coast, Rio Grande, Lake Tahoe and Long Island Sound. According the bill's sponsors, "This bill is about strengthening our Nation's infrastructure so we can remain competitive. It's about economic growth and jobs. Water resources infrastructure, is fundamental to a sound economy, and WRDA of 2016 gets Congress back to basics and the business of regularly addressing the needs of our ports, waterways, lock and dam systems, flood protection, and other infrastructure." The Congressional Budget Office estimates that implementing the

WRDA would cost about \$970 million over the next 5 years and \$3.1 billion over the 2017-2026 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized and necessary amounts. President Obama is expected to sign the legislation before the end of the year.

NBF is grateful to the bill's sponsors, Rep. Bill Shuster, Sen. James Inhofe, Sen. Barbara Boxer and to the many others in Congress who voted for The WRDA.