

Reagan OKs 5 Alaska Corps projects

The Water Resources Development Act of 1986, signed into law in late November by Pres. Ronald Reagan, authorizes but does not fund, construction of five Army Corps of Engineers projects in Alaska.

Called by corps officials the first bill of its kind in 10 years, the act doubles the federal spending ceiling for constructing small navigation and shoreline erosion control projects.

Alaska projects authorized for construction are a \$15 million small boat harbor at Dog Bay near Kodiak; a \$24.8 million harbor at St. Paul Island; a \$19.4 million bank stabilization project at Bethel; a \$1.7 million small hydropower project at Scammon Bay; and a \$45 million hydropower project at Allison Lake near Valdez.

The Kodiak, St. Paul and Bethel projects are in various stages of planning and engineering but the two hydropower projects have been shelved.

That, said Corps District Engineer Col. Wilbur T. Gregory, Jr., is in accordance with Army policy that encourages non-federal development of single-purpose hydropower.

The new law specifies authorization for the projects will be cancelled if Congress doesn't appropriate funds to build them within the next five years.

"The law changes federal policy relating to water development projects and will have significant impact on many corps projects in Alaska," Col. Gregory said.

Federal spending ceilings double on most small navigation, erosion and flood control projects the corps has continuing authority to build for local communities, he explained.

Continuing authority means previously enacted laws authorized projects that meet certain criteria.

Those projects do not need individual authorization from Congress, a requirement for larger projects.

According to the colonel, the new law increases the federal share of construction costs for several categories of small projects:

- navigation, \$2 million to \$4 million;

- flood control, \$4 million to \$5 million;

- beach erosion, \$1 million to \$2 million; and,

- snagging and clearing for flood control, \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Col. Gregory said cost sharing provisions of the act require greater participation from local governments in studies leading to construction authorization.

He explained the federal government will continue to pay for initial reconnaissance, but the cost of the feasibility phase, previously funded by federal dollars, will be split between the federal government and local sponsors.

Those non-federal interests will pay 10 percent of constructions costs for general navigation facilities to depths of 20 feet.

The local share increases to 25 percent for portions of harbor projects between 20 and 45 feet, and to 50 percent for depths greater than 45 feet.

Non-federal sponsors are to pay an

additional 10 percent of the cost of constructing general navigation facilities over 30 years, according to Gregory.

The value of contributed lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocations and dredged material disposal is credited toward this 10 percent, the colonel said.

Because of this provision, the corps will calculate the value of local land more meticulously in the future, he said.

Further, according to the new law, non-federal sponsors will pay at least 25 percent of the total cost of constructing flood control projects, including at least 5 percent in cash.

And, those sponsors must continue to pay for lands, easements, rights-of-way, and relocation of utilities.

For storm and hurricane protection, non-federal sponsors will pay 35 percent, including lands, easements and rights-of-way.

The non-federal share for erosion control is based on the project's pur-

pose, such as recreation or hurricane protection, he said.

The act also deleted authorization for three other Alaska corps projects authorized by Congress many years ago. Those are Myers Chuck Harbor on Cleveland Peninsula near Prince of Wales Island authorized in 1945; a Nome jetty extension authorized in 1935, and a Skagway navigation project authorized in 1938 and 1946.

Nationwide, the bill authorizes about \$16 million in new work. That includes 50 navigation projects, 115 flood control projects, 24 shoreline protection projects, 61 conservation and development projects, 38 planning studies, 63 project modifications and 26 miscellaneous projects.

Consistent with the new funding formulas, the federal share of the cost of the new work is about \$11 billion, with the initial non-federal costs at nearly \$5 billion.

The bill cancels about \$11 billion in previously authorized projects across the nation.