

**Congress Approves Major Water Projects Bill** *Bill contains both good and bad elements for the recreational fishing industry*

**Alexandria, VA – December 12, 2016** – Over the weekend, the U.S. Senate passed a comprehensive maritime infrastructure bill that drew a mixed reaction from the recreational fishing industry. By a 78-21 vote, the Senate passed the [“Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act \(WIIN\),”](#) which had been approved by the U.S. House of Representatives earlier last week. The WIIN Act now heads to the President’s desk for his signature. The [American Sportfishing Association \(ASA\)](#), the trade association for the recreational fishing industry, supported many elements in the bill, including the Water Resources Development Act. From ASA’s perspective, the WIIN Act contains many positive, important authorizations ranging from habitat restoration projects to marine transportation infrastructure. Important to the recreational fishing industry is a \$1.95 billion authorization for the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and \$113 million for Picayune Strand water flow restoration. CEPP is a critical step toward facilitating the flow and treatment of water south of Lake Okeechobee in Florida into the Everglades, providing relief for the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuary systems by reducing substantial freshwater releases that have caused significant habitat and fisheries damage, and algal blooms. “In particular our thanks go to Sens. Nelson and Rubio, and the Florida House delegation, for recognizing how important Everglades’ restoration and waterway access is to the state and the recreational fishing industry,” said Kellie Ralston, ASA’s [Florida Fishery Policy](#) director. “The Central Everglades Planning Project and the restoration of Picayune Strand contain key strategies that will help restore the Everglades’ historic southerly flow of water, which will, in turn, improve Florida fisheries and wildlife habitat.” During later stage negotiations in the House, a provision intended to address ongoing drought problems in California was attached that would weaken protections for salmon and other fish. Working with state and its state and national partner organizations, ASA organized a major push to defeat the inclusion of this language, but ultimately it passed as part of the larger bill. “We are deeply disappointed that language was added to the bill that diverts water away from fisheries that are already struggling, puts wild salmon in jeopardy of extinction and targets other sportfish for eradication,” commented Gudes. “Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), and all the Northwest U. S. senators, are to be commended for their efforts to defeat this last-minute water grab which redirects water to agriculture and undercuts environmental protection for fisheries. Unfortunately its passage creates a significant threat to fishing communities, anglers and the sportfishing industry in the state.”