

ACT OF MARCH 3, 1899

**[COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE “RIVERS AND HARBORS
APPROPRIATION ACT OF 1899”]**

[As Amended Through P.L. 115–270, Enacted October 23, 2018]

【Currency: This publication is a compilation of the text of chapter 425 of the 55th Congress. It was last amended by the public law listed in the As Amended Through note above and below at the bottom of each page of the pdf version and reflects current law through the date of the enactment of the public law listed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/comps/>】

【Note: While this publication does not represent an official version of any Federal statute, substantial efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of its contents. The official version of Federal law is found in the United States Statutes at Large and in the United States Code. The legal effect to be given to the Statutes at Large and the United States Code is established by statute (1 U.S.C. 112, 204).】

[Sections 9–20]

CHAP. 425.—An Act Making appropriations for the construction, repair, and preservation of certain public works on rivers and harbors, and for other purposes.

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SEC. 9. It shall not be lawful to construct or commence the construction of any bridge, causeway, dam, or dike over or in any port, roadstead, haven, harbor, canal, navigable river, or other navigable water of the United States until the consent of Congress to the building of such structures shall have been obtained and until the plans for (1) the bridge or causeway shall have been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating, or (2) the dam or dike shall have been submitted to and approved by the Chief of Engineers and Secretary of the Army. However, such structures may be built under authority of the legislature of a State across rivers and other waterways the navigable portions of which lie wholly within the limits of a single State, provided the location and plans thereof are submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating or by the Chief of Engineers and Secretary of the Army before construction is commenced. When plans for any bridge or other structure have been approved by the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating or by the Chief of Engineers and Secretary of the Army, it shall not be lawful to deviate from such plans either before or after completion of the structure unless modification of said plans has previously been submitted to and received the approval of the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating or the Chief of Engineers and the Secretary of the Army. The approval required by this section of the location and plans or any modification of plans of any bridge or causeway does not apply to

any bridge or causeway over waters that are not subject to the ebb and flow of the tide and that are not used and are not susceptible to use in their natural condition or by reasonable improvement as a means to transport interstate or foreign commerce.

[33 U.S.C. 401]

SEC. 10. That the creation of any obstruction not affirmatively authorized by Congress, to the navigable capacity of any of the waters of the United States is hereby prohibited; and it shall not be lawful to build or commence the building of any wharf, pier, dolphin, boom, weir, breakwater, bulkhead, jetty, or other structures in any port, roadstead, haven, harbor, canal, navigable river, or other water of the United States, outside established harbor lines, or where no harbor lines have been established, except on plans recommended by the Chief of Engineers and authorized by the Secretary of War; and it shall not be lawful to excavate or fill, or in any manner to alter or modify the course, location, condition, or capacity of, any port, roadstead, haven, harbor, canal, lake, harbor of refuge, or inclosure within the limits of any breakwater, or of the channel of any navigable water of the United States, unless the work has been recommended by the Chief of Engineers and authorized by the Secretary of War prior to beginning the same.

[33 U.S.C. 403]

SEC. 11. That where it is made manifest to the Secretary of War that the establishment of harbor lines is essential to the preservation and protection of harbors he may, and is hereby, authorized to cause such lines to be established, beyond which no piers, wharves, bulkheads, or other works shall be extended or deposits made, except under such regulations as may be prescribed from time to time by him: *Provided*, That whenever the Secretary of War grants to any person or persons permission to extend piers, wharves, bulkheads, or other works, or to make deposits in any tidal harbor or river of the United States beyond any harbor lines established under authority of the United States, he shall cause to be ascertained the amount of tide water displaced by any such structure or by any such deposits, and he shall, if he deem it necessary, require the parties to whom the permission is given to make compensation for such displacement either by excavating in some part of the harbor, including tide water channels between high and low water mark, to such an extent as to create a basin for as much tidewater as may be displaced by such structure or by such deposits, or in any other mode that may be satisfactory to him.

[33 U.S.C. 404]

SEC. 12. That every person and every corporation that shall violate any of the provisions of sections nine, ten, and eleven of this Act, or any rule or regulation made by the Secretary of War in pursuance of the provisions of the said section eleven, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine not exceeding twenty-five hundred dollars nor less than five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment (in the case of a natural person) not exceeding one year, or by both such punishments, in the discretion of the court. And further, the removal of any

structures or parts of structures erected in violation of the provisions of the said sections may be enforced by the injunction of any circuit court exercising jurisdiction in any district in which such structures may exist, and proper proceedings to this end may be instituted under the direction of the Attorney-General of the United States.

【33 U.S.C. 406】

SEC. 13. That it shall not be lawful to throw, discharge, or deposit, or cause, suffer, or procure to be thrown, discharged, or deposited either from or out of any ship, barge, or other floating craft of any kind, or from the shore, wharf, manufacturing establishment, or mill of any kind, and refuse matter of any kind or description whatever other than that flowing from streets and sewers and passing therefrom in a liquid state, into any navigable water of the United States, or into any tributary of any navigable water from which the same shall float or be washed into such navigable water; and it shall not be lawful to deposit, or cause, suffer, or procure to be deposited material of any kind in any place on the bank of any navigable water, or on the bank of any tributary of any navigable water, where the same shall be liable to be washed into such navigable water, either by ordinary or high tides, or by storms or floods, or otherwise, whereby navigation shall or may be impeded or obstructed: *Provided*, That nothing herein contained shall extend to, apply to, or prohibit the operations in connection with the improvement of navigable waters or construction of public works, considered necessary and proper by the United States officers supervising such improvement or public work: *And provided further*, That the Secretary of War, whenever in the judgment of the Chief of Engineers anchorage and navigation will not be injured thereby, may permit the deposit of any material above mentioned in navigable waters, within limits to be defined and under conditions to be prescribed by him, provided application is made to him prior to depositing such material; and whenever any permit is so granted the conditions thereof shall be strictly complied with, and any violation thereof shall be unlawful.

【33 U.S.C. 407】

SEC. 14.

(a) PROHIBITIONS AND PERMISSIONS.—It shall not be lawful for any person or persons to take possession of or makes use of for any purpose, or build upon, alter, deface, destroy, move, injure, obstruct by fastening vessels thereto or otherwise, or in any manner whatever impair the usefulness of any sea wall, bulkhead, jetty, dike, levee, wharf, pier, or other work built by the United States, or any piece of plant, floating or otherwise, used in the construction of such work under the control of the United States, in whole or in part, for the preservation and improvement of any of its navigable waters or to prevent floods, or as boundary marks, tide gauges, surveying stations, buoys, or other established marks, nor remove for ballast or other purposes any stone or other material composing such works: *Provided*, That the Secretary of War may, on the recommendation of the Chief of Engineers, grant permission for the temporary occupation or use of any of the aforementioned public works when in his judgment such occupation or use will not be in-

injurious to the public interest: *Provided further*, That the Secretary may, on the recommendation of the Chief of Engineers, grant permission for the alteration or permanent occupation or use of any of the aforementioned public works when in the judgment of the Secretary such occupation or use will not be injurious to the public interest and will not impair the usefulness of such work.

(b) CONCURRENT REVIEW.—

(1) NEPA REVIEW.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In any case in which an activity subject to this section requires a review under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), review and approval of the activity under this section shall, to the maximum extent practicable, occur concurrently with any review and decisions made under that Act.

(B) CORPS OF ENGINEERS AS A COOPERATING AGENCY.—If the Corps of Engineers is not the lead Federal agency for an environmental review described in subparagraph (A), the Corps of Engineers shall, to the maximum extent practicable and consistent with Federal laws—

(i) participate in the review as a cooperating agency (unless the Corps of Engineers does not intend to submit comments on the project); and

(ii) adopt and use any environmental document prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) by the lead agency to the same extent that a Federal agency could adopt or use a document prepared by another Federal agency under—

(I) the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.); and

(II) parts 1500 through 1508 of title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor regulations).

(2) REVIEWS BY SECRETARY.—In any case in which the Secretary must approve an action under this section and under another authority, including sections 9 and 10 of this Act, section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1344), and section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (33 U.S.C. 1413), the Secretary shall—

(A) coordinate applicable reviews and, to the maximum extent practicable, carry out the reviews concurrently; and

(B) adopt and use any document prepared by the Corps of Engineers for the purpose of complying with the same law and that addresses the same types of impacts in the same geographic area if such document, as determined by the Secretary, is current and applicable.

(3) CONTRIBUTED FUNDS.—The Secretary may accept and expend funds received from non-Federal public or private entities to evaluate under this section an alteration or permanent occupation or use of a work built by the United States.

(c) TIMELY REVIEW.—

(1) COMPLETE APPLICATION.—On or before the date that is 30 days after the date on which the Secretary receives an application for permission to take action affecting public projects

pursuant to subsection (a), the Secretary shall inform the applicant whether the application is complete and, if it is not, what items are needed for the application to be complete.

(2) DECISION.—On or before the date that is 90 days after the date on which the Secretary receives a complete application for permission under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(A) make a decision on the application; or

(B) provide a schedule to the applicant identifying when the Secretary will make a decision on the application.

(3) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—In any case in which a schedule provided under paragraph (2)(B) extends beyond 120 days from the date of receipt of a complete application, the Secretary shall provide to the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives an explanation justifying the extended timeframe for review.

(d) WORK DEFINED.—For the purposes of this section, the term “work” shall not include unimproved real estate owned or operated by the Secretary as part of a water resources development project if the Secretary determines that modification of such real estate would not affect the function and usefulness of the project.

[33 U.S.C. 408]

SEC. 15. That it shall not be lawful to tie up or anchor vessels or other craft in navigable channels in such a manner as to prevent or obstruct the passage of other vessels or craft; or to sink, or permit or cause to be sunk, vessels or other craft in navigable channels; or to float loose timber and logs, or to float what is known as sack rafts of timber and logs in streams or channels actually navigated by steamboats in such manners as to obstruct, impede, or endanger navigation. And whenever a vessel, raft, or other craft is wrecked and sunk in a navigable channel, it shall be the duty of the owner, lessee, or operator of such sunken craft to immediately mark it with a buoy or beacon during the day and, unless otherwise granted a waiver by the Commandant of the Coast Guard, a light at night, and to maintain such marks until the sunken craft is removed or abandoned, and the neglect or failure of the said owner, lessee, or operator so to do shall be unlawful; and it shall be the duty of the owner, lessee, or operator of such sunken craft to commence the immediate removal of the same, and prosecute such removal diligently, and failure to do so shall be considered as an abandonment of such craft and subject the same to removal by the United States as hereinafter provided for. The Commandant of the Coast Guard may waive the requirement to mark a wrecked vessel, raft, or other craft with a light at night if the Commandant determines that placing a light would be impractical and granting such a waiver would not create an undue hazard to navigation.

[33 U.S.C. 409]

SEC. 16. That every person and every corporation that shall violate, or that shall knowingly aid, abet, authorize, or instigate a violation of the provisions of sections 13, 14, 15, 19, and 20 of this Act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof

shall be punished by a fine of up to \$25,000 per day, or by imprisonment (in the case of a natural person) for not less than thirty days nor more than one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment, in the discretion of the court; one-half of said fine to be paid to the person or persons giving information which shall lead to conviction. And any and every master, pilot, and engineer, or person or persons acting in such capacity, respectively, on board of any boat or vessel who shall knowingly engage in towing any scow, boat, or vessel loaded with any material specified in section thirteen of this Act to any point or place of deposit or discharge in any harbor or navigable water, elsewhere than within the limits defined and permitted by the Secretary of War, or who shall willfully injure or destroy any work of the United States contemplated in section fourteen of this Act, or who shall willfully obstruct the channel of any waterway in the manner contemplated in section fifteen of this Act, shall be deemed guilty of a violation of this Act, and shall upon conviction be punished as hereinbefore provided in this section, and shall also have his license revoked or suspended for a term to be fixed by the judge before whom tried and convicted. And any boat, vessel, scow, raft, or other craft used or employed in violating any of the provisions of sections 13, 14, 15, 19, and 20 of this Act shall be liable for the pecuniary penalties specified in this section, and in addition thereto for the amount of the damages done by said boat, vessel, scow, raft, or other craft, which latter sum shall be placed to the credit of the appropriation for the improvement of the harbor or waterway in which the damage occurred, and said boat, vessel, scow, raft, or other craft may be proceeded against summarily by way of libel in any district court of the United States having jurisdiction thereof.

[33 U.S.C. 411, 412]

SEC. 17. That the Department of Justice shall conduct the legal proceedings necessary to enforce the foregoing provisions of sections nine to sixteen, inclusive, of this Act; and it shall be the duty of district attorneys of the United States to vigorously prosecute all offenders against the same whenever requested to do so by the Secretary of War or by any of the officials hereinafter designated, and it shall furthermore be the duty of said district attorneys to report to the Attorney-General of the United States the action taken by him against offenders so reported, and a transcript of such reports shall be transmitted to the Secretary of War by the Attorney-General; and for the better enforcement of the said provisions and to facilitate the detection and bringing to punishment of such offenders, the officers and agents of the United States in charge of river and harbor improvements, and the assistant engineers and inspectors employed under them by authority of the Secretary of War, and the United States collectors of customs and other revenue officers, shall have power and authority to swear out process and to arrest and take into custody, with or without process, any person or persons who may commit any of the acts or offenses prohibited by the aforesaid sections of this Act, or who may violate any of the provisions of the same: *Provided*, That no person shall be arrested without process for any offense not committed in the presence of some one of the aforesaid officials; *And provided further*, That

whenever any arrest is made under the provisions of this Act, the person so arrested shall be brought forthwith before a commissioner, judge, or court of the United States for examination of the offenses alleged against him; and such commissioner, judge, or court shall proceed in respect thereto as authorized by law in case of crimes against the United States.

[33 U.S.C. 413]

SEC. 18. (a) That whenever the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating shall have good reason to believe that any railroad or other bridge now constructed, or which may hereafter be constructed, over any of the navigable waterways of the United States is an unreasonable obstruction to the free navigation of such waters on account of insufficient height, width of span, or otherwise, or where there is difficulty in passing the draw opening or the draw span of such bridge by rafts, steamboats, or other water craft, it shall be the duty of the said Secretary, first giving the parties reasonable opportunity to be heard, to give notice to the persons or corporations owning or controlling such bridge so to alter the same as to render navigation through or under it reasonably free, easy, and unobstructed; and in giving such notice he shall specify the changes that are required to be made, and shall prescribe in each case a reasonable time in which to make them. If at the end of such time the alteration has not been made, the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating shall forthwith notify the United States district attorney for the district in which such bridge is situated, to the end that the criminal proceedings hereinafter mentioned may be taken. If the persons, corporation, or association owning or controlling any railroad or other bridge shall, after receiving notice to that effect, as hereinbefore required, from the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating, and within the time prescribed by him willfully fail or refuse to remove the same or to comply with the lawful order of the Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating in the premises, such persons, corporation, or association shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars, and every month such persons, corporation, or association shall remain in default in respect to the removal or alteration of such bridge shall be deemed a new offense, and subject the persons, corporation, or association so offending to the penalties above prescribed.

(b) No owner or operator of any bridge, drawbridge, or causeway shall endanger, unreasonably obstruct, or make hazardous the free navigation of any navigable water of the United States by reason of the failure to keep the bridge, drawbridge, or causeway and any accessory works in proper repair.

(c) Whoever violates any provision of this section or any order issued under this section, shall be liable to a civil penalty of not more than \$5,000 for a violation occurring in 2004; \$10,000 for a violation occurring in 2005; \$15,000 for a violation occurring in 2006; \$20,000 for a violation occurring in 2007; and \$25,000 for a violation occurring in 2008 and any year thereafter. Each day a violation continues shall be deemed a separate offense. No penalty

may be accessed under this subsection until the person charged is given notice and an opportunity for a hearing on the charge. The Secretary of the department in which the Coast Guard is operating may access and collect any civil penalty incurred under this subsection and, in his discretion, may remit, mitigate, or compromise any penalty until the matter is referred to the Attorney General. If a person against whom a civil penalty is assessed under this subsection fails to pay that penalty, an action may be commenced in the district court of the United States for any district in which the violation occurs for such penalty.

[33 U.S.C. 502]

SEC. 19. (a) That whenever the navigation of any river, lake, harbor, sound, bay, canal, or other navigable waters of the United States shall be obstructed or endangered by any sunken vessel, boat, water craft, raft, or other similar obstruction, and such obstruction has existed for a longer period than thirty days, or whenever the abandonment of such obstruction can be legally established in a less space of time, the sunken vessel, boat, water craft, raft, or other obstruction shall be subject to be broken up, removed, sold, or otherwise disposed of by the Secretary of War at his discretion, without liability for any damage to the owners of the same: *Provided*, That in his discretion, the Secretary of War may cause reasonable notice of such obstruction of not less than thirty days, unless the legal abandonment of the obstruction can be established in a less time, to be given by publication, addressed "To whom it may concern," in a newspaper published nearest to the locality of the obstruction, requiring the removal thereof: *And provided also*, That the Secretary of War may, in his discretion, at or after the time of giving such notice, cause sealed proposals to be solicited by public advertisement, giving reasonable notice of not less than ten days, for the removal of such obstruction as soon as possible after the expiration of the above specified thirty days' notice, in case it has not in the meantime been so removed, these proposals and contracts, at his discretion, to be conditioned that such vessel, boat, water craft, raft, or other obstruction, and all cargo and property contained therein, shall become the property of the contractor, and the contract shall be awarded to the bidder making the proposition most advantageous to the United States: *Provided*, That such bidder shall give satisfactory security to execute the work: *Provided further*, That any money received from the sale of any such wreck, or from any contractor for the removal of wrecks, under this paragraph shall be covered into the Treasury of the United States.

(b) The owner, lessee, or operator of such vessel, boat, watercraft, raft, or other obstruction as described in this section shall be liable to the United States for the cost of removal or destruction and disposal as described which exceeds the costs recovered under subsection (a). Any amount recovered from the owner, lessee, or operator of such vessel pursuant to this subsection to recover costs in excess of the proceeds from the sale or disposition of such vessel shall be deposited in the general fund of the Treasury of the United States.

[33 U.S.C. 414]

SEC. 20. (a) That under emergency, in the case of any vessel, boat, water craft, or raft, or other similar obstruction, sinking or grounding, or being unnecessarily delayed in any Government canal or lock, or in any navigable waters mentioned in section nineteen, in such manner as to stop, seriously interfere with, or specially endanger navigation, in the opinion of the Secretary of War, or any agent of the United States to whom the Secretary may delegate proper authority, the Secretary of War or any such agent shall have the right to take immediate possession of such boat, vessel, or other water craft, or raft, so far as to remove or to destroy it and to clear immediately the canal, lock, or navigable waters aforesaid of the obstruction thereby caused, using his best judgment to prevent any unnecessary injury; and no one shall interfere with or prevent such removal or destruction: *Provided*, That the officer or agent charged with the removal or destruction of an obstruction under this section may in his discretion give notice in writing to the owners of any such obstruction requiring them to remove it: *And provided further*, That the actual expense, including administrative expenses, of removing any such obstruction as aforesaid shall be a charge against such craft and cargo; and if the owners thereof fail or refuse to reimburse the United States for such expense within thirty days after notification, then the officer or agent aforesaid may sell the craft or cargo, or any part thereof that may not have been destroyed in removal, and the proceeds of such sale shall be covered into the Treasury of the United States.

(b) REMOVAL REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 24 hours after the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating issues an order to stop or delay navigation in any navigable waters of the United States because of conditions related to the sinking or grounding of a vessel, the owner or operator of the vessel, with the approval of the Secretary of the Army, shall begin removal of the vessel using the most expeditious removal method available or, if appropriate, secure the vessel pending removal to allow navigation to resume. If the owner or operator fails to begin removal or to secure the vessel pending removal or fails to complete removal on an expedited basis, the Secretary of the Army shall remove or destroy the vessel using the summary removal procedures under subsection (a).

(c) The owner, lessee, or operator of such vessel, boat, watercraft, raft, or other obstruction as described in this section shall be liable to the United States for the actual cost, including administrative costs, of removal or destruction and disposal as described which exceeds the costs recovered under subsection (a). Any amount recovered from the owner, lessee, or operator of such vessel pursuant to this subsection to recover costs in excess of the proceeds from the sale or disposition of such vessel shall be deposited in the general fund of the Treasury of the United States.

[33 U.S.C. 415]

Such sum of money as may be necessary to execute this section and the preceding section of this Act is hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to be paid out on the requisition of the Secretary of War.

[33 U.S.C. 416]

That all laws or parts of laws inconsistent with the foregoing sections ten to twenty, inclusive, of this Act are hereby repealed: *Provided*, That no action begun, or right of action accrued, prior to the passage of this Act shall be affected by this repeal.

[33 U.S.C. 418]