

WASHINGTON – Republicans and Democrats joined forces today by overwhelmingly voting to override President Bush’s veto of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), handing a significant victory to a key desert ecosystem in Arizona’s Fifth Congressional District. U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell voted to override the veto, and the final vote was 361-54.

The legislation authorizes the Va Shly’ay Akimel ecosystem restoration project along the Salt River, which would restore and improve approximately 1,487 acres of habitat, including 200 acres of wetlands and 24 acres of Sonoran desert scrub shrub.

“Restoring the Va Shly’ay Akimel ecosystem is an important investment in our environment and economy,” said Mitchell. “I appreciate that good people on both sides of the aisle understand the importance of this investment.”

Mitchell, who served as a conferee on the WRDA legislation, sits on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s Subcommittee on Water Resources.

President Bush vetoed H.R. 1495 on Nov. 2. The originally House approved the measure with a bipartisan 381 to 40 vote on Aug. 1. [[Roll Call Vote No. 790](#)]

Restoration in urban setting is particularly important because while riparian areas represent only 1 percent of the Southwestern landscape, 75 to 90 percent of Western wildlife depends on them.

In Arizona, more than 90 percent of riparian areas have been lost due to impacts from European settlement and urbanization.

WRDA authorizes \$23 billion for the construction of hundreds water projects by the Army Corps of Engineers over the next 15 years. The projects primarily aid flood control, navigation and provide for environmental restoration.

The legislation also authorizes \$1.9 billion for hurricane relief projects in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and a new national levee safety program.

In addition to Va Shly’ay Akimel, WRDA authorizes nine other Arizona projects.