

Congressman Tracey Mann
Member Day Remarks
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
March 16, 2022

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Napolitano, Ranking Member Rouzer, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am Tracey Mann, and I represent the Big First District of Kansas, which is the pilot light of America and the breadbasket of this country. We are the largest beef-producing district in the nation, and we are home to more than 60,000 farms, ranches, and agricultural businesses. So, it's easy to see why advocating for Kansas farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers is one of the great privileges of my job in Congress, and when legislation like the Water Resources Development Act comes up, I will always stand up to make sure that the voices of the Big First are heard.

Water is obviously an integral part of agriculture thriving in America – Kansans use it to produce the most affordable and safe food supply in the world. That said, whether it's too much water from a flood, or not enough water from drought, agricultural producers walk a fine line as they ensure that America remains the most food secure country in the world. For agricultural businesses to function well, producers need to be able to transport goods and commodities safely, securely, and promptly; they need smooth commercial traffic to flow through our ports and inland waterways, they need flood control and abatement in both the planning stage and emergency relief, and they need improved infrastructure on our waterways like locks and dams. Accordingly, I believe that WRDA is good for both agriculture itself, and agricultural businesses in this country.

A good reauthorization of WRDA would let the Army Corps of Engineers work to strengthen the infrastructure in communities facing repeated flooding and reduce the cost of water by adjusting existing water supply contracts. These are great moves for our country that will keep people safe and keep money in their pockets. A good reauthorization of WRDA would help protect not only people's livelihoods, but also their actual lives. I've seen firsthand the damage and horrors that can result from flooding – last May it happened in Natoma, KS, when flash floods from heavy rains damaged more than half of the homes in town. Shockingly, Natoma didn't qualify for FEMA relief and only two people had flood insurance. When we allow WRDA to work, it isn't just good for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers – it's good policy for our whole country. WRDA is an effective way to steward taxpayer dollars by responsibly investing in our country upfront, rather than spending even more on the backend with disaster relief funding.

For America to run smoothly, we need to develop strong water infrastructure and water programs to protect homes and businesses and make sure that weather emergencies don't cripple us.

WRDA can help us do just that, which is why I am outlining my priorities here today. When I see a policy like WRDA that protects people's lives and livelihoods, provides for quick and effective responses in the event of disasters, *and* makes sure that people aren't overpaying for their utilities, that's a policy that I can support.