



May 17, 2022

Peter A. DeFazio Chairman
U.S. House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6256

Sam Graves Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6256

RE: H.R 7776 - WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2022

Dear Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Graves:

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – the business association of the nation’s engineering industry – strongly supports the Committee’s work to undertake the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 (WRDA 2022, H.R. 7776).

ACEC supports provisions to improve information, data, mapping, and modeling (Sections 106 and 226). These provisions provide useful information with stakeholder input, including the engineering community, to help deliver projects that advance climate resilience. ACEC supports provisions to assess levees (Sec. 114) and dams (Sec. 116) to advance public safety and increase resilience to extreme weather events.

ACEC encourages climate-related risk management based on robust data, information, and modelling. Movement towards a more strategic risk management approach to riverine and coastal flood resilience and sea-level rise is important to engineer long-term performance under changing land-use and climatic conditions.

ACEC also encourages Army Corps tracking and reporting on various aspects of NEPA reviews. We note that broad data collection on permitting processes would also be helpful. It is difficult to incrementally improve NEPA review and permitting processes without basic process performance data. Often the length of time and depth of backup information required to obtain federal permits for federal and non-federal levees can result in significant delays to project execution (for both existing and new levees). Streamlining and standardization are urgently needed – along with reliable timing for permit reviews.

ACEC encourages the Committee to consider approaches to provide for a more realistic standard of care for levee inspections to address liability concerns. Congress directed the Corps of Engineers to develop recommendations on various aspects of dam and levee safety as part of WRRDA 2014, including policy recommendations to reduce liability risks associated with levee designs, inspections, and “certifications” by engineering firms. This issue remains a concern affecting the industry and the public and private clients we serve, and we urge the Committee to consider reforms that protect firms conducting essential inspections of the nation’s levees.

ACEC strongly supports WRDA 2022 and particularly efforts to improve information, data, mapping, and modeling systems. ACEC encourages movement towards a risk management strategy aimed at riverine and coastal flood protection, sea-level rise, and reporting of NEPA reviews and permitting processes.

Thank you for moving this important legislation forward, and we look forward to collaborating with you to address the nation’s water resource needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Linda Bauer Darr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Bauer Darr
President & CEO