

Barragán Written WRDA Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on my priorities. I would like to outline my in-district WRDA priorities, as well as policy changes I am in support of.

In-District Project Priorities

Dominguez Channel Water Quality Infrastructure Project

One project priority is to improve the water quality of the Dominguez Channel in my district, which has been degraded by industrial pollution. Last fall, many residents in Carson were forced to leave their home for weeks as an odor from hydrogen sulfide emissions from the channel made living near it unbearable. This is an environmental justice issue. It's critical the Army Corps support water quality solutions to Dominguez.

My WRDA submission would support a feasibility study to identify potential actions that can be taken to improve water quality, such as water quality treatment facilities, water resources development projects, or the modification of an existing water resources development project. The request also includes federal support of up to 75% of the cost of the study, design, and construction of any proposed solution. The maximum cost covered by the Army Corps would be \$30 million.

WRD PFAS Remediation Program

Another project priority that would benefit my district is the Water Replenishment District's \$100 proposal to treat water wells affected by PFAS. There are approximately 63 drinking water wells with PFAS levels above their respective RLs in WRD's service area, and thus far, 14 water purveyors have applied for grant funding from WRD to install treatment systems for their PFAS-affected wells. Water purveyors with PFAS-affected wells above the RLs must notify the public about these wells or remove their wells from service.

Some water purveyors have shut down their production wells due to PFAS detections. Without WRD's PFAS Remediation Program, these purveyors would be unable to afford installation of treatment systems. The threat of well closure is especially critical in low-income communities, where well closures can significantly increase the cost of tap water.

The benefit of the PFAS Remediation Program is removal of contaminants from the water and reducing public exposure to PFAS. It also ensures an uninterrupted supply of high-quality groundwater at affordable rates.

Policy Changes

Redressing Environmental Justice

While significant progress was made in the 2020 WRDA bill, much more can still be done to ensure that the Army Corps of Engineers has the tools and capacity needed to advance

community-supported solutions to the entrenched water resources challenges that plague far too many of the nation's most vulnerable communities.

This includes increasing capacity and expertise within the Corps, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public input, increasing opportunities for assistance by expanding the Pilot Program for Economically Disadvantaged Communities, maximizing toxics remediation in ecological restoration, navigation and flood resilience projects, advancing environmental justice innovation, and supporting minority-owned businesses.

I have submitted 6 requests for environmental justice policy improvements, based on a letter to the committee I co-led with Representative Cohen.

Resilience Directorate

Another policy ask I have is for Congress to establish a Resilience Directorate. Congress should establish a Resilience Directorate within the Office of the Chief of Engineers to improve the Corps' ability to reduce flood risks, promote coordinated planning across districts and Corps business lines, and better leverage the benefits of natural infrastructure. The Directorate should be tasked with ensuring that existing programs, authorities, and operations take full advantage of natural infrastructure and adopt modern, comprehensive planning approaches.

Critically, the Directorate should have the resources and budgetary authority needed to work and coordinate across Corps business lines to infuse resilience into every aspect of the Corps' work. Congress should also establish "community and natural systems resilience" as co-equal project purpose for each water resources project to eliminate a perceived barrier to comprehensive resilience planning. These reforms will help the Corps take full advantage of its programs and authorities to improve community and water resources resilience and avoid piecemeal planning that can increase flood risks and recovery costs.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony, and for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to advance these priorities in WRDA.