

Testimony of Rep. Earl L. “Buddy” Carter
WRDA Member Day 2022

- Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee today.
- I have the honor and privilege of representing the First Congressional District of Georgia, which contains all 110 miles of the State’s beautiful coastline.
- Between our two Georgia ports, tourism, seafood, and more, the coastline is integral to our economy and quality of life.
- But like most of the east coast, our area has been hit by many hurricanes in the last few years.
- The City of Tybee Island is taking these natural disasters very seriously and is a model for cities around the country that are trying to prepare for these weather events.
- Among other things, the City is working on a major beach re-nourishment project that uses federal funds authorized through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).
- However, the Corps of Engineers, in its latest cost/benefit analysis study, jeopardizes the project’s future beyond 2023.
- Because of language in WRDA, the Corps is forced to use an outdated cost/benefit model which, in Tybee’s case, can only look at damages that might occur within the next 15 years.
- Tybee, though, won’t see damages until 2060, which is largely due to the hard work, and financial investments, they have been putting into the island in order to protect itself from weather events.

- My staff has discussed this issue with the Army Corps of Engineers, T&I Committee staff, and other Member offices and we believe we have some legislative language that would fix this situation.
- The language specifically authorizes the Secretary to recommend that Congress authorize up to 50 years of nourishment to begin on the date of construction and adds general study authority to extend the period of nourishment for up to an additional 50 years after expiration of the original authorized period of nourishment.
- I have submitted the necessary language to this committee for your consideration, which also includes a request that the Corps include an area's tourism impact into its NED (national economic development) assessment for a beach nourishment project's Cost Benefit Ratio (CBR). I would strongly encourage you to include my language in this year's version of WRDA.
- Simply put, we need to ensure that our communities are becoming more resilient in the face of these storms, but with WRDA's current language on cost/benefit analyses, we are punishing communities who are trying to take those steps.
- In addition to the great need on Tybee, I have also offered language to this year's WRDA, along with my friend and colleague, Rep. Sanford Bishop. The language requests a study, which would determine the feasibility of widening the Savannah Harbor in the 1st District. This widening would accommodate a greater throughput of larger vessels that would in turn ensure the South's busiest port can keep pace with the ever-growing demand for maritime shipping.

- Over the years, large vessels transporting containerized cargo have increased in both length and width since design of the existing project.
- In fact, there are multiple locations within the Federal channel where vessels experience navigational challenges due to vessel size. Larger container vessels are experiencing transportation cost inefficiencies due to these restrictions at targeted areas within the confined Federal channel.
- As a result, the current channel conditions limit the available operating times for large vessels and contribute to ship delays and supply chain restrictions.
- If this study were included, it would investigate the possible harbor improvements to the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP) and, I believe, would increase transportation efficiency and improve vessel safety and handling in the harbor.
- This optimization is important since the existing Federal channel was designed to accommodate a vessel fleet dominated by those with an 8,500 TEU capacity.
- Furthermore, the design revision would allow the project to serve a fleet dominated by vessels with nearly twice that capacity, which more accurately represents the vessels currently calling on Savannah's Harbor.
- I know that modifying the harbor to accommodate these larger vessels will help to expand the channel's capacity, accommodate increasing cargo volume demands and significantly enhance global connectivity for American businesses and consumers.

- As mentioned earlier, our District is blessed to have so much opportunity for economic growth and increased quality of life along the coast. We must make the necessary investments, which will not only help many of my constituents, but also so many throughout our country as our seaport continues to grow.
- Thank you, again, for the opportunity to speak today.