

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT OF**

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**LIEUTENANT GENERAL TODD T. SEMONITE**

**CHIEF OF ENGINEERS**

**BEFORE**

**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ON**

**Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2020**

**January 9, 2020**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are honored to testify before your committee today at this hearing on proposals for a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020.

Thank you for allowing us the time to address the committee.

The U.S. Army Civil Works Program is the Nation's largest water resources program. It is a program that has three main missions: flood and storm damage reduction, commercial navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration. The water resources infrastructure that the Corps has constructed has contributed towards the Nation's economy, helped communities to reduce their flood risks, supports commercial navigation, and has contributed to the restoration of several significant aquatic ecosystems.

I would like to provide some overarching comments as the committee is considering next steps on WRDA. WRDA provides an opportunity to improve how the Nation invests in water resources, including actions to enable stronger partnerships with non-Federal interests. This Administration believes that this can be achieved by focusing future authorizations of Federal activities to those that are most warranted while encouraging more non-Federal leadership, and removing barriers that can impede the ability of non-Federal parties to move forward on their own with investments in water resources infrastructure they deem priorities.

Given the large number of authorized projects that have not been started or completed, new project and study authorizations should focus on those most likely to provide high economic or environmental returns to the Nation and to those most likely to address a significant risk to public safety within the three main mission areas of the Army Civil Works Program : flood and storm damage reduction, commercial navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration.

A key priority for the Administration is encouraging stronger partnerships between the Federal Government and non-Federal stakeholders. Stronger partnerships will help to leverage a broader range of financial resources for infrastructure investment, encourage more non-Federal leadership, and

remove barriers that can impede the ability of non-Federal parties to move forward with investments in those water resources infrastructure they deem priorities. The Administration has proposed several reforms to help accomplish this goal, some of which are outlined below:

- Extending Section 1043b of WRRDA 2014, as amended. This authority would allow us to transform how we implement projects by transferring federal appropriations to non-federal sponsors to construct projects on their own. This is an important reform to help accelerate projects and create efficiencies.
- Divesting the Washington Aqueduct. The Washington Aqueduct is the only local water supply system in the Nation owned and operated by the Corps. Divesting the aqueduct would encourage a more efficient allocation of economic resources and mitigate risk to taxpayers.
- Establishing an Inland Waterways User Fee. Establishing a user fee would help finance anticipated capital investments on the inland waterways and a portion of the cost of operating and maintaining them to support the transportation of goods along them. The current diesel fuel tax is insufficient to support the users' share of these costs.
- Streamlining permit processes and eliminating duplicative reviews. We have streamlined permissions for modifications to completed Corps projects that has eliminated weeks of review time and reduced pending permissions by as much as 50% in many Districts.

We would like to provide a brief update on the next Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development under Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014. The Corps published a notice in the Federal Register on April 29, 2019, requesting proposals by non-federal interests for proposed feasibility studies and proposed modifications to authorized water resources development projects, and accepted these proposals through August 27, 2019. The Corps received 52 proposals and is working to complete the 2020 report.

This will be the sixth annual report the Corps has done in accordance with Section 7001 of WRRDA 2014. Based on our experience these last few years, we continue to look for ways to improve the future water resources development process. This includes better public notification and education regarding the information required for a proposal. It also involves improving the timeliness of the review of the proposals and ensuring that proposals are properly identified in the main report and the report appendix, consistent with the requirements of Section 7001.

Our testimony will now list the projects proposed in Chief's Reports and Post-Authorization Change Reports since the enactment of WRDA 2018.

Since the enactment of WRDA 2018, 17 Chief's Reports have been signed. Most of these reports are currently under review to determine the Administration's position:

1. Little Colorado River Winslow, Arizona,
2. Sacramento-San Joaquin, Delta Islands and Levees, California
3. Pawcatuck River, Rhode Island Coastal
4. Anacostia Watershed Restoration, Prince George's County, Maryland
5. City of Norfolk , Virginia
6. Souris River Basin , North Dakota
7. Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study - Brandon Road, Will County, Illinois
8. Yuba River Fish Passage (Englebright and Daguerre Point Dams), California
9. Adams and Denver Counties, Colorado
10. Rio Grande, Sandia Pueblo to Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico
11. East Rockaway Inlet to Rockaway Inlet and Jamaica Bay, New York
12. Jefferson County Shore Protection, Texas
13. Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Brazos River Floodgates and Colorado River Lock, Texas

14. St. Louis Mississippi Riverfront, , Missouri
15. Matagorda Ship Channel Improvement, Texas
16. Hashamomuck Cove, New York
17. Willamette River Basin Review, Oregon

On May 22, 2019, Army submitted the report regarding flood risk management for Winslow, Arizona to the Congress. The recommended plan consists of 22,570 feet of new and reconstructed levees within and near the city. The plan also includes a flood warning system and improving conveyance through channelization and removal of saltcedar under the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway bridge. Based upon the October 2019 price levels, the total first cost for this project is \$80.7 million, with the federal share \$52.5 million and the non-federal share \$28.2 million.

Since the enactment of WRDA 2018, nine Post-Authorization Change Reports have been signed:

1. Dry Creek (Warm Springs) Restoration, California
2. Kenai River Bluffs Erosion, Alaska
3. Mount Saint Helens Sediment Control, Washington
4. Albeni Falls Dam , Idaho
5. Willamette Falls Locks, Oregon
6. Passaic Main Stem (Tidal Protection Area), New Jersey
7. Passaic Main Stem (Floodway Buyout), New Jersey
8. Barrow Coastal Storm Damage Reduction, Alaska
9. Pajaro River at Watsonville, California

Mr. Chairman, this concludes our statement. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today. Thank you.