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to the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
"Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2022:
Stakeholder Priorities."

February 8, 2022

Chair Napolitano, Ranking Member Rouzer, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to represent the National Audubon Society (Audubon), to discuss the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. Audubon's mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon represents 1.8 million members and has over 460 affiliated chapters, 23 state offices, and 41 nature centers across the country.

My name is Julie Hill-Gabriel, and I am Audubon's Vice President for Water Conservation, based in Washington, DC. I coordinate Audubon's water strategy across the U.S. Before beginning this role in 2018, I worked in Florida for 11 years as Audubon Florida's Deputy Director for policy, leading our Everglades restoration efforts and working closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) which is the federal sponsor for these restoration efforts. I am also currently serving as the Acting Vice President for our Coastal Conservation Program, which focuses on coastal stewardship, coastal resilience, marine conservation, and Gulf of Mexico restoration.

Birds are telling us that urgent action is needed to increase climate resilience. Extreme weather events, lack of abundant and clean water, degraded coastal resources, and declining bird habitat are all threatening birds and communities across the country. Audubon's *Survival by Degrees* report shows that over 300 species of birds are at risk of extinction due to climate change.[1] But, climate change is not just an ecological threat; last year, the country experienced 20 weather and climate disaster events with losses exceeding $1 billion each. Tragically, these events resulted in the deaths of 688 Americans and continue to economically and ecologically impact the affected communities.[2] We must act now – and quickly – to enact climate solutions for birds and people.

[1] Wilsey, C, B Bateman, L Taylor, JX Wu, G LeBaron, R Shepherd, C Koseff, S Friedman, R Stone. Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink. National Audubon Society: New York.
[2] NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters (2022). www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions.

WRDA 2022 provides an opportunity to drive ecosystem restoration and climate resilience by ensuring that Army Corps policies and projects provide the maximum conservation and community benefits. The Army Corps can play a pivotal role in increasing and normalizing the use of natural infrastructure and nature-based solutions to address the challenges brought on by climate change. The Army Corps' ecosystem restoration efforts provide important lessons that demonstrate the value of replicating natural ecosystem functions. There is also an opportunity, and a need, to rethink flood mitigation and navigation projects to increase the focus on climate resilience and natural infrastructure in other Army Corps mission areas. While a number of new authorities in WRDA 2018 and WRDA 2020 enabled and encouraged the broader use of natural infrastructure in Army Corps projects, there is a need to accelerate the pace of project execution and policy interpretation that incorporate natural infrastructure.

Ecosystem restoration projects can also address historic injustices. Chair DeFazio recently stated that "[o]ur rural, Tribal, and disadvantaged communities cannot be left behind as we work to build and upgrade our water resources to meet the demands of the 21st century".[3] Here at Audubon, we fully support infrastructure investments and restoration projects that not only protect birds and provide wildlife habitat, but prioritize those communities at the most risk from climate change and who are facing economic disadvantages due to historic injustice.

While my testimony today focuses on WRDA and related policies and projects, I want to thank this Committee for its work supporting the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The IIJA, which provides additional authorizations and appropriations for a range of conservation and community programs, included historic amounts of funding for transportation networks, climate resilience and clean energy programs, and numerous conservation and clean water programs across the country. As agencies begin to release their spending plans, the conservation community recognizes the ongoing need to ensure these dollars are implemented swiftly and in line with Congressional intent. I note several areas below where additional IIJA dollars, supplementing regular appropriations, are poised to significantly accelerate the pace and breadth of conservation projects, benefitting local communities throughout the country.

The IIJA provides historic levels of funding for a number of critical programs, but these programs remain dependent on receiving necessary baseline amounts of annual appropriations dollars. FY23 budget requests should maintain funding levels compared to FY22 and, in many cases, include increases in the regular, annual appropriations requests to make up for previous years of funding deficits.

Finally, I urge flexibility in budgeting tools that can enable the Army Corps to efficiently complete projects where relevant. By incrementally funding contracts with annual appropriations, rather than awarding year-by-year contracts based on partial funding amounts, the Army Corps can advance projects with the greatest impact, rather than breaking down projects in smaller pieces. For example, the use of a continuing contracts clause helped save between $50-100 million and 2-3 years of project work on the C-44 reservoir in Florida. Without the ability to utilize incremental funding, the Army Corps has to execute smaller annual contracts, which create additional costs and delays due to administrative, contractual, oversight, design, and mobilization/demobilizations costs. These smaller annual contracts expose the Army Corps to additional liability.

[3] Representative Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Transportation and Environment Committee. Opening Remarks for Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2022: Administration Priorities. January 12, 2022.

## Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Army Corps aquatic ecosystem restoration activities seek to restore significant ecosystem function, structure, and dynamic processes. The Army Corps' ecosystem restoration efforts are positioned to provide significant climate resilience benefits for communities and wildlife and should be prioritized alongside flood control, navigation, and other Army Corps missions. Audubon supports ongoing ecosystem restoration activities across the U.S., including at the Everglades, along Coastal Louisiana, throughout the Mississippi River corridor, at the Great Lakes, in other vulnerable coastal areas, and throughout other iconic ecosystems that are globally significant for birds and people.

*Restoring America's Everglades*

The Everglades is a unique ecological treasure that provides drinking water for one in three Floridians. Clean and sufficient freshwater forms a critical component of Florida's tourism economy and is necessary to support birds like Roseate Spoonbill, Snail Kite, and Snowy Egret. As projected population growth and impacts from climate change put more pressure on South Florida's environment, Everglades restoration is increasingly urgent.

WRDA 2000 authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which represents the Corps' largest aquatic ecosystem restoration initiative. After over 20 years of progress and bi-partisan support, we are seeing returns on the initial investments in CERP as projects are completed and come online. Just this past November, we celebrated the ribbon cutting of the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area, which provides, in total, 60,500 acre-feet of new water storage and 3,600 acres of new wetlands. This project is a component of the Indian River Lagoon system, which is the most biologically diverse estuarine system in the continental United States and is home to more than 3,000 species of plants and animals.

The new investment of $1.1 billion identified in the Army Corps' IIJA spend plan for Everglades restoration will be a catalyst for accelerating a number of restoration projects, benefitting this economic driver for the State of Florida. While more projects cross the finish line and provide important lessons for ecosystem restoration efforts around the world, we must concurrently focus on the additional work that lies ahead.

WRDA 2020 included positive additions to the ongoing work in South Florida, including the authorization of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project and a recommitment to the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir (EAA Reservoir) as part of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). The CEPP provides a clear model for more efficient Army Corps planning. A number of smaller, but inter-related project components were pulled into one larger planning effort, providing a more comprehensive view of the projects' impacts and benefits. At the same time, more robust stakeholder engagement allowed new ideas to be incorporated during the process and helped build a sense of trust. Finally, the plan was developed in just 18 months.

The EAA Reservoir is the single most important project for benefitting multiple parts of the Everglades. When high rainfall levels cause wetlands, lakes, and other water storage areas to fill to capacity, billions of gallons of freshwater are discharged from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. When too much freshwater reaches the estuaries, excess nutrients and changes in the balance of fresh and saltwater can cause massive algae blooms, which harm submerged vegetation, fish, and water birds. Harmful bacteria from the algae blooms

can make the water in some places dangerous for human contact, impacting the local economies and quality of life.

At the same time that the estuaries in the northern part of the Everglades are often impacted by too much freshwater, massive seagrass die-offs have occurred in the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay because of *insufficient* freshwater. Without a source of freshwater from the upstream Everglades, the Southern Everglades is unable to recover from dry conditions that alter the delicate balance of fresh and saltwater, which puts drinking water supplies at risk.

Storing water south of Lake Okeechobee in the EAA Reservoir will provide an outlet for water being discharged to fragile coastal estuaries east and west of the Lake Okeechobee while concurrently holding water that can be cleaned and sent south to the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay, while recharging the Biscayne aquifer.

In WRDA 2022, there is the potential to continue the momentum for America's Everglades with the following items:

- The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is aimed at storing water north of Lake Okeechobee to attenuate water flows into the Lake. This project includes an important element of natural infrastructure, where 3,600 acres of wetlands will be restored in an area called Paradise Run and an additional 1,200 acres of an area called Kissimmee Run. As this project moves forward, Audubon encourages a continued focus on additional options for water storage throughout the full extent of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.
- A number of Post-Authorization Change Reports will help to continue progress, including for the C-44 Reservoir and Adaptive Assessment and Management.
- Audubon also urges that a mechanism for incremental funding like the continuing contracts clause or similar approach be utilized for the EAA Reservoir. The largest and most important contract for that project is estimated to cost $2.1 billion, which is likely to rely on federal funding over a number of years. In order to allow the Army Corps to complete this kind of high-impact project, the flexibility to accommodate this kind of funding mechanisms is critical. It is the most efficient and safest approach to build the reservoir, and will save significant taxpayer dollars in the long run compared with other approaches.

*Coastal Louisiana Restoration*

Louisiana's coastal wetlands represent 40% of all wetlands in the continental U.S. and provide an essential buffer to communities and industries from storms. The Mississippi River Delta supports $9.3 billion in annual ecotourism activity, along with $1.8 billion in recreational fishing spending. Moreover, this threatened landscape accounts for 30% of all commercial fishing landings in the continental U.S. and hosts five of the nation's 15 largest shipping ports by cargo volume. Additionally, coastal restoration in southeast Louisiana has provided 32,000 jobs with an average annual wage of $69,277 per year. Healthy coastal areas provide habitat for birds like Brown Pelican, Tricolored Heron, and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Unfortunately, Louisiana is facing a longstanding, existential land-loss crisis: the equivalent of a football field of the state's coastal wetlands vanishes into open water, on average, every 100 minutes. Since the 1930s, Louisiana has lost over 2,000 square miles of land, an area roughly the size of Delaware. Reversing land loss in Louisiana is a coordinated and major priority at the

federal, state, and local level, in support of endangered coastal communities, economic activity, vital natural systems, and wildlife populations.

Audubon joined with our Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition colleagues earlier this year to highlight three important WRDA 2022 items related to coastal Louisiana. We urge the Committee to include these recommendations in the bill:

- Clarify that the Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Study (Sec. 213 of WRDA 2020) be funded at full federal expense;
- Clarify that Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) ecosystem restoration (Sec. 7013 of WRDA 2007) be funded at full federal expense; and
- Authorize the federal plan for the Southwest Coastal Louisiana Project.

*Mississippi River Restoration*

The Mississippi River is one of the nation's most important natural assets, providing drinking water to over 20 million Americans. The river's watershed encompasses 40% of the contiguous United States and spans 31 states.

The diverse habitats along the river support over 325 species of birds, including rare and threatened species like King Rail, Prothonotary Warbler, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Critical wetlands and flooded forests created by the river and its tributaries are not only vital to birds, but to people, from the headwaters of Lake Itasca where Manoomin (wild rice), the most important cultural and sacred food of the Anishinaabe, is harvested, to iconic cultural centers like St. Louis and New Orleans. The river is a national treasure and boasts tremendous ecological as well as economic importance for the nation.

Unfortunately, the river is in dire need of restoration and recovery for the birds, wildlife, people, and communities who depend on it. From the headwaters to the delta, the Mississippi River suffers from excess pollution, invasive species, wetlands loss and destruction, ongoing disruption to its natural hydrology, and extreme storm events exacerbated by climate change.

Water level management can produce highly effective habitat restoration on the Upper Mississippi River at a fraction of the cost of other types of restoration actions. The Corps has documented that modest modifications to lock and dam operations, known as growing season drawdowns, can produce significant and long-lasting benefits without any adverse impact to navigation. Reducing water levels behind a lock and dam by just one to two feet during the growing season can expose thousands of acres of mudflats, creating optimal conditions for aquatic plants, fish, and wildlife to flourish. The enhanced ecosystem can then process nutrients, trap sediment, and stabilize the shoreline all while maintaining the navigation channel. However, despite the demonstrated benefits of water level management and broad-based support for it, the Corps has resisted efforts to implement it more broadly in the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway Navigation System. To address this problem, Congress should provide the Corps with clear authority and direction to implement a routine and systemic water level management program while avoiding adverse impacts to navigation.

The Army Corps' Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program provides numerous opportunities to restore the waterway. The UMRR program includes projects that improve fish and wildlife habitat, providing protection, nesting, and feeding areas for a highly diverse set of fish, birds, mussels, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, including a number of rare and

endangered species. We urge the Army Corps to include forested floodplains ecosystems for habitat restoration under the UMRR program moving forward.

In addition to UMRR, Congress now has an opportunity to support additional Mississippi River restoration through the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative (MRRRI) (H.R. 4204). This bill, introduced by Rep. McCollum and falling under the jurisdiction of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, would create a voluntary program through the EPA to improve water quality and community resilience by leveraging existing programs along the river. Similar to the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, MRRRI would protect and restore habitat throughout the Mississippi River corridor and prioritize efforts to address disproportionate impacts to communities of color, rural communities, and economically disadvantaged communities. I urge this committee to swiftly consider and pass the MRRRI bill.

*Addressing Asian Carp in the Great Lakes*

The Great Lakes represent 20% of the surface freshwater resources on Earth and are the source of drinking water for 30 million Americans. Threatened and declining bird species, such as Black Tern, Wood Thrush, and Black-crowned Night Heron depend on the Lakes and their coastal habitats. One of the greatest ecological threats to the health of the Great Lakes is the spread of invasive exotic Asian carp. This species poses a serious threat to the ecological health of the Great Lakes, and the people and economies these waters support. Right now, Asian carp have already wreaked havoc on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, outcompeting native fish for food and habitat, and creating a safety threat for people who recreate on these waterways.

Asian carp are a real threat to the Great Lakes that demand quick action. The Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study-Brandon Road Report evaluated options to prevent the upstream transfer of Asian carp. We are encouraged to see that the Army Corps work plan for the IIJA includes $225 million for the Brandon Road project. We urge swift implementation of this project to stop this invasive threat and urge the Corps to increase the federal cost share to 100%.

Furthermore, we were pleased to see the authorization of a Great Lakes coastal resiliency study in WRDA 2020 and we look forward to seeing this study fully funded to identify ways to safeguard coastal communities from erosion, flooding, and other impacts from changing lake levels.

*Western Water and the Salton Sea*

As the historic drought conditions, exacerbated by climate change, continue in the West, increasingly stark impacts are felt by communities, birds, fish, and other natural resources. The combination of drought and heatwaves can push birds to their physiological limits, leading to lethal dehydration. In drought times, birds may also congregate at the remaining dwindling water spots, causing conditions ripe for the spread of disease.

As part of a Whole-of-Government approach, there are opportunities for the Army Corps to become more engaged in addressing drought in the West, especially in a changing climate. Audubon encourages the Army Corps to look into opportunities to address aquifer recharge, strategic water reuse, and other drought response activities, while coordinating with other federal agencies.

One place where the impacts for birds and people are felt severely is in California's largest body of water: the Salton Sea. The Sea serves as a lifeline to millions of migratory birds along the Pacific flyway and is a critical piece of any effort to conserve Colorado River water. The

communities surrounding the Sea were historically excluded from economic opportunities and suffer from multiple environmental injustices. As the Sea shrinks, the dust clouds are expanding, threatening public health. Audubon and our members are invested in on-the-ground efforts at the Sea, dedicating time and resources to science, education, policy, and community engagement. We are regularly the "boots on the ground" at the Sea through our conservation efforts and, over the years, we have been involved with the State of California's various pieces of legislation and plans related to the Salton Sea, most recently the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP).

Audubon supports efforts for the federal government, including the Army Corps, to expand its investments at the Sea and support California's efforts by expediting federal permit reviews and approvals for ongoing and future projects. The Army Corps can provide leadership and foster the prioritization of climate resilient strategies and multi-benefit infrastructure projects in priority places across the country, including at the Salton Sea, to provide water, habitat, and community benefits. At the Salton Sea, we see the need to:

- Provide stable and significant funding to allow for planning and implementation of climate resilience strategies with community involvement;
- Enhance coordination across key federal agencies (e.g., the Corps, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture) to ensure durable and effective mitigation and restoration project implementation; and
- Enhance coordination among federal, state and local agencies on planning and funding with public engagement.

**Facilitating the Use of Natural Infrastructure**

Natural infrastructure provides storm-buffering benefits that can be as or more effective than grey infrastructure. In addition, there are benefits provided by natural infrastructure that are often absent in grey infrastructure, making natural infrastructure an even more appealing approach to floodplain management. Natural infrastructure can:

- Provide habitat that supports the economically vital recreational and commercial seafood industries;
- Improve water quality;
- Be responsive to changing conditions, including sea level rise;
- Provide important habitat for birds and other wildlife; and
- Avoid negative impacts associated with grey infrastructure, like increased erosion.

Provisions in WRDA 2018 and 2020 present important opportunities to incorporate the use of more resilient nature-based and natural infrastructure options to address extreme weather events including flood risk management projects and hurricane and storm risk reduction projects.

Audubon's 2018 *Natural Infrastructure Report* demonstrated how federal investment in natural infrastructure will help increase preparedness of coastal communities and economies, while benefitting fish and wildlife, which also often provide a critical foundation for coastal economies.[4]

[4] Natural Infrastructure Report: How natural infrastructure can shape a more resilient coast for birds and for people. January 2018. https://nas-national-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/audubon_infrastructure_jan192018.pdf.

Natural infrastructure alternatives can include nature-based systems such as restoring sand dunes, wetlands, oyster reefs and coastal forests in place of traditional human-built projects such as seawalls, jetties, levees, groins, bulkheads and riprap. This kind of "grey" infrastructure was traditionally promoted as the best long-term approach to flood management. But, natural infrastructure has been shown to provide significant, long-term and cost-competitive benefits for challenges such as flood reduction. For example, research published in the journal *Ocean & Coastal Management* reported that the average construction costs between natural and grey infrastructure are similar, but there are lower replacement costs with living shorelines, a form of natural infrastructure.[5]

NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) have also identified several flood-reduction and resiliency benefits from a wide array of natural infrastructure systems. Natural features such as coastal marshes and wetlands, dune and beach systems, oyster and coral reefs, mangroves, forests, coastal rivers, as well as barrier islands, help minimize the impacts of storms, rising sea levels and other extreme events on nearby communities and infrastructure.[6]

WRDA 2020 included language changes to:

- Ensure that the Corps considers nature-based approaches for enhancing flood and storm resilience in feasibility studies and if a nature-based alternative is not selected, include an explanation of why natural infrastructure approaches are not recommended;
- Ensure consistent cost-sharing for natural infrastructure projects;
- Allow for development of natural infrastructure projects as part of the Corps continuing authorities program;
- Update planning guidance and require consideration of the best available science on effects of sea-level rise and inland flooding in the development of Corps projects and in the accounting of the long-term costs and benefits of a project;
- Waive cost share and provide important support to produce feasibility studies to assess measures to reduce flood risks in economically disadvantaged and rural communities;
- Require an update to the Principles, Requirements and Guidelines (PR&G) to ensure that the Corps is fully accounting for the regional economic development, environmental quality, and other social benefits that can be delivered by a project; and
- Provide much-needed direction to the Corps requiring consultation with communities of color, economically disadvantaged communities, and Tribal communities and requiring updates to Corps policies, guidance, and regulations to ensure that the Corps is considering the environmental justice and disproportionate impacts to communities from Corps projects and identifying appropriate alternatives to reduce or avoid impacts.

The Committee should ensure the Corps is implementing these policy changes as swiftly as possible to expedite the use of natural infrastructure.

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[5] Bilkovic, Donna M., Molly Mitchell, Pam Mason, and Karen Duhring. 2016. The Role of Living Shorelines as Estuarine Habitat Conservation Strategies. Coastal Management 44(3): 161-174. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08920753.2016.1160201.

[6] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Statement from NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad on the signing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act." Nov. 15, 2021. https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/statement-from-noaa-administrator-rick-spinrad-on-signing-of-bipartisan-infrastructure-investment

**Beneficial Use of Dredged Material**

WRDA 2020 authorized 35 beneficial use of dredged materials (BUDM) pilot projects. Audubon has worked with the Army Corps and state partners to use dredged material to restore habitat that is important to birds and outdoor recreation economies. This work has created islands that provide excellent nesting habitat for birds such as Black Skimmer, Snowy Plover, and Least Tern, and is leading innovations in thin-layer dispersal of dredged sediment to protect tidal marsh habitat in the face of sea-level rise.

Audubon looks forward to building upon our collaborative efforts in Connecticut, North Carolina, Maine, Maryland, Florida, Texas, and South Carolina. Audubon continues working to implement the Crab Bank project that was selected as a BUDM pilot project in 2019.

In addition, Audubon supports on-going efforts within the Corps to develop best management practices that benefit shoreline-dependent species that can be incorporated into beneficial use of dredged material projects. More information can be found in a recent U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center Technical Note.[7]

**Conservation Community Letter**

Finally, on January 24, Audubon joined with our conservation partners in sending a letter to this Committee, outlining additional recommendations to build additional progress to advance natural infrastructure in WRDA 2022 (*attached).* We thank the Committee for considering these suggestions, which include:

- Increasing Army Corps coordination on climate resilience and the use of natural infrastructure through a Resilience Directorate who can have a focus on growing this work across Army Corps mission areas;
- Properly Accounting for Project Costs and Benefits;
- Ensuring Compliance with Long-Standing Mitigation Requirements;
- Prioritizing Levee Setbacks to Advance Floodplain Resilience;
- Improving the Corps' Ability to Redress Environmental Injustice;
- Better Utilizing Federal and State Fish and Wildlife Expertise;
- Supporting Funding for Restoration and Resilience Projects with a Reduced or No Match Requirement;
- Supporting the Silver Jackets Program;
- Supporting Broad Expansion of Corps Technical Assistance Programs; and
- Enhancing Western Water-Related Infrastructure Resiliency through Natural Infrastructure.

**Audubon Opposes the One Lake Preconstruction Engineering Design Demonstration Program**

Audubon has expressed opposition to any projects or activities on the Pearl River that involve destroying wetlands and wildlife habitat that will imperil birds, fish and wildlife, alter local and

[7] Michael P. Guilfoyle, Jacob F. Jung, Richard A. Fischer and Dena D. Dickerson. *Developing Best Management Practices for Coastal Engineering Projects that Benefit Atlantic Coast Shoreline-dependent Species.* Technical Note developed by the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center - Environmental Laboratory, April 2019.

downstream river hydrology, impair water quality, or threaten public and environmental health. In WRDA 2018, Section 1176 sought to establish a demonstration program to advance a 2018 Integrated Draft Feasibility and Environmental Impact Statement for the Pearl River Basin, Mississippi, Federal Flood Risk Management Project, Hinds and Rankin Counties, Mississippi. The preferred alternative is known locally as the "One Lake" project.

Audubon remains opposed to the One Lake/Pearl River project and urges the Army Corps to cancel this detrimental project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on these important issues. Audubon is ready to work with the Subcommittee and others to advance important water and coastal conservation issues looking ahead to the next WRDA in ways that will help protect birds and the places they need. We know that where birds thrive, people prosper.