

Water Resources Development Act of 2020: Member Day Hearing

Remarks as prepared for Rep. Huizenga on February 27, 2020

- Thank you, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, for allowing members to share their priorities and the needs of their district at this member day hearing.
- As we meet today, the current state of erosion and high-water damage is at a crisis point throughout the Great Lakes region.
- In my district – along the shores of Lake Michigan – the high-water levels are a threat to people’s homes, public infrastructure, and the overall ecology and economy of the Great Lakes.
- As we continue to see the shoreline erode and the water levels rise, government at all levels must be prepared to step in.
- Whether it is roads, bridges, breakwaters, or wastewater treatment facilities, the potential for damage due to high-water levels is grave.
- Furthermore - the amount of debris that has fallen into the lakes as a result of this erosion also poses a significant threat to shipping, public beaches, and recreational boating.
- As the committee develops the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, I urge the members to include provisions that would protect and restore the resiliency of the Great Lakes shoreline for today, tomorrow, and generations to come.
- Additionally, I am also here today because Asian carp – an invasive species with voracious appetites – are on the doorstep of infiltrating the Great Lakes system.
- The importance of protecting our vulnerable Great Lakes freshwater system from this disastrous invasive species cannot be overstated. In fact - the introduction of non-native species to the Great Lakes is currently one of the greatest economic and environmental threats to our region.
- The preventative measures we currently have in place are only temporary solutions, as Asian carp have been found only a few miles from Lake Michigan.
- However – the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Illinois has been identified as the key choke point in safeguarding our Great Lakes ecosystem and economy
- The timely completion of the work at Brandon Road is an essential next step in the process to safeguard the Great Lakes region – which provides drinking water to over 30 million people and supports a \$7 billion fishing and \$16 billion boating industry.

- We have a small but critical window of opportunity to prevent the upstream transfer of this species
- In 2019, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers delivered its Chief's Report on the Brandon Road Lock and Dam project to Congress. This lock is a logical point to install both structural and non-structural control measures to prevent this movement into the lake.
- Additionally, in my conversations with President Trump, he has expressed his support for protecting and preserving the Great Lakes for future generations.
- Congress needs to make protecting and preserving the Great Lakes a national priority – it can do this by authorizing this project through WRDA, so that the control measures can be implemented with the necessary urgency.
- Further delay only increases the likelihood that this threat becomes a full scale, irreversible inundation of this highly destructive invasive species.
- Finally, I would like to thank the committee for your work to maintain the harbors, ports, and navigation channels around our nation - from the coasts to the Great Lakes.
- These harbors and navigation channels are a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure and a reduction in their capacity can have significant impacts on local communities.
- American ports serve as a critical link to connect U.S. manufacturers, farmers, and businesses with markets around the world and are indispensable to making the export of U.S. goods cost-competitive.
- I encourage you to continue to provide valuable resources and support to maintain our harbors and navigation channels in the Great Lakes and on the coasts.
- In West Michigan – our identity is directly tied to the health of the Great Lakes. It is critical that Congress take the necessary steps to protect against erosion, high water, and invasive species, while also working to protect and restore our channels and harbors.
- Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the committee – Thank you again for offering this opportunity and for working with us on these important endeavors.