

REP. KILMER TESTIMONY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
MEMBER DAY HEARING ON WRDA PRIORITIES
February 27, 2020

- Thank you, Chairman DeFazio.
- I want to start by thanking you and Ranking Member Graves for holding this hearing to solicit input from Members as you work to draft the next Water Resources Development Act.
- I also want to thank you for making coastal and climate resilience one of your key infrastructure priorities.
- As you know, I represent Washington's sixth congressional district, which includes the furthest northwestern part of the contiguous United States
- In my neck of the woods, climate change is no longer a threat, it's reality.
- Folks are already experiencing the consequences of climate change – from rising sea levels, to more frequent and severe storms – which are costing our communities their livelihoods.
- In my district, there are four coastal Native American tribes who are actively working to move their communities to higher ground because the places they've called home since time immemorial are no longer habitable.
- And there are cities like Ocean Shores and Hoquiam that are trying to invest in resilient infrastructure to end the annual cycle of road washouts and sea wall failures.
- But these communities need technical assistance and resources to adapt to their changing climate – and unfortunately, there are few federal programs designed to assist with this work.
- And what little federal support is available often can't be accessed until a disaster has already happened.

- As we continue to see more communities grapple with the impacts of climate change, the federal government needs to invest in dedicated resources and technical assistance to support these efforts.
- The Army Corps of Engineers has the expertise to assist these communities – but they need the funding and authority to be able to play an active role in resilience planning.
- As you begin drafting this WRDA, I strongly urge you to include new funding and authorities that will allow the Army Corps to assist communities that are working to proactively invest in resilience.
- The Corps is uniquely positioned to provide the resources that under-resourced communities desperately need to begin addressing the climate impacts they’re experiencing today and to plan for the future.
- As a Member of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee – I look forward to working with the Committee to develop a coordinated strategy that will provide the Corps with both the authorities and funding necessary to fulfill this critical role.
- In addition to bolstering the Corps’ ability to support climate adaptation, I would also strongly encourage the Committee to expand the Army Corps’ existing Section 214 authority to allow non-Federal public entities – including public ports – to contribute funds to support the review and approval of new mitigation banks.
- In the Pacific Northwest, mitigation banks play a key role in ensuring that we can continue to invest in our working waterfronts while also restoring the critical habitat that our iconic species – including salmon and orca – rely on.
- Unfortunately, the Corps’ Regulatory Branch is significantly under-resourced, which has led to years-long delays in the approval of new mitigation banks in our region.
- As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I’ve fought to increase funding for regulatory staff – but there’s still a significant gap to fill.

- This small expansion of the existing Sec. 214 authority would allow the Corps to expedite the review of new mitigation bank applications, without sacrificing resources from other key regulatory programs.
- Given the significant public benefit provided by these mitigation banks, it would be a true win-win.
- Finally, I'd like to end by expressing my strong support for Harbor Maintenance Tax reform that ensures full use of these funds and modernizes the allocation of funds to fairly address the needs of all ports.
- I want to thank Chairman DeFazio for his tireless leadership on this critical issue while working to balance the interests of all ports.
- Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Graves – we have a fantastic opportunity to make critical changes in WRDA to empower the Corps and make great strides to build resilient communities, restore and protect critical habitat, and enable our working shorelines to keep up with the ever-increasing threat that climate change is posing to Washingtonians.
- Thank you