

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee: thank you for providing this opportunity for input as you craft the 2022 Water Resources Development Act. I want to thank the Committee for the effort that you have all undertaken to make this Congress a historic one for infrastructure investments. This year's WRDA has the potential to build significantly on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to ensure that one of our most precious natural resources receives the investments and attention it deserves.

I would like to focus my testimony today on the potential to shape this year's WRDA around our broader interest in ensuring resilience for our rivers and the ecosystems they sustain. When people think of the Army Corps' inland work, they often think of projects along some of our country's largest rivers, and rightly so. But the Army Corps also has an important role to play in the stewardship of smaller watersheds, such as those in the Northeast. Through the work of the Army Corps of Engineers, Congress has an opportunity to better understand, and adapt to, the effects of climate change on watersheds.

With that in mind, I would like to highlight three critical rivers in the Second District of Massachusetts, where the Army Corps could explore opportunities for whole-of-watershed approaches to ecosystem restoration and climate resilience.

The Connecticut River flows through the heart of New England, from its headwaters in New Hampshire, through Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The watershed is home to historic communities and some of the most productive farmland in the Northeast. The Army Corps has conducted two studies on the causes, impacts, and types of projects to mitigate widespread and ongoing streambank erosion on the Connecticut River in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, one in 1979 and another in 1991. Erosion continues to be a significant issue, leading to loss of prime farmland; dangerous, steep, and crumbling riverbanks; and habitat loss. Erosion conditions have worsened due to severe storm events caused by climate change and by increased use of the river for hydroelectric generation. An updated study of streambank erosion and the impact of hydroelectric facilities on the Connecticut River would be extremely valuable for preventing further riparian habitat degradation, and the Army Corps could leverage existing data from previous studies.

The Blackstone River played an essential role in our nation's history: it powered the birth of the Industrial Revolution in America. This history of intense use and increased development along the river, however, have led to significant loss of floodplain wetlands, which significantly constrains overall ecological health of the watershed. To identify the location of historic wetlands with restoration potential, the Army Corps studied the main stem of the Blackstone River in 1994, and an updated study could dramatically enhance ecosystem restoration efforts.

The Blackstone River Valley could also benefit from an Army Corps study of water supply and flow. With climate change driving more frequent and extreme drought and altered hydrology, urbanization increasing population, and new hydropower planned for the Blackstone region,

ensuring the amount, rate, quality, and timing of water for designated uses is critical. A study could identify current and potential flow-degraded areas under future climate stress, with the goal of developing a watershed-wide management strategy.

In the northwest portion of my district, the Deerfield River is a natural treasure, main tributary of the Connecticut, and prime example of a river at risk of climate-related impacts. The watershed sustained major flood damage and ecosystem impacts from Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. Major roads and primary evacuation routes were blown out. Other roads, culverts and bridges were washed away, leaving residents stranded for days, and wastewater treatment plants were inundated and forced off-line. With climate change increasing the frequency, magnitude, duration and intensity of hurricanes, tropical storms and rain events, this flood and ecosystem damage will only increase, and the costs post-disaster continue to escalate. An Army Corps feasibility study could identify cost-effective and sustainable flood mitigation, infrastructure damage reduction, and ecosystem restoration projects.

Finally, I would like to briefly mention a smaller project that is just one of many examples around my district of opportunities for the Army Corps to have a significant and near-term impact on local ecosystem restoration. In my hometown of Worcester, Salisbury Pond is a 13-acre body of water amid a densely populated urban environment. Located within a public park, the pond has high recreational and ecological value, but upstream development and urban runoff has severely degraded water quality and wildlife habitat. The Army Corps could assist with efforts to remove excess sedimentation through dredging and help design best management practices going forward.

In closing, I wish to again express my appreciation for the opportunity to testify, as well as your commitment to addressing the climate crisis through our legislative efforts. Rivers quite literally sustain our communities, and the need for proper stewardship will only increase in the years ahead. Thank you.