

February 27, 2020

Statement of Rep. Linda T. Sánchez

Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2020: Members' Day Hearing

Chairwoman Napolitano and Ranking Member Westerman, thank you for providing this opportunity to testify today on an issue that is extremely important to the safety of Los Angeles County residents. I want to thank the Chairwoman for partnering with me on the restoration of the Whittier Narrows Dam in the City of Pico Rivera, California.

The Whittier Narrows Dam was built in 1957 and is one of the most crucial elements of flood control infrastructure in Southern California. It prevents the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo river banks from overflowing during major storm events which protects millions of downstream residents. As climate change results in more severe flooding, these events will become more frequent and extreme.

In 2017, the Corps designated Whittier Narrows as one of its highest priority safety projects. The Corps found an unacceptable likelihood of dam malfunctions during severe weather events. Should the Dam malfunction or even fail, the disruption and possible loss of life to residents and businesses would be unimaginable.

I was pleased that the Corps included more than \$393 million for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety and Seepage Program in its Budget and Work Plan. I am proud to partner once again with the Chairwoman to ensure strong support for the project in the FY2021 appropriations cycle.

As we work together to move the Whittier Narrows Dam safety project forward, I urge the Subcommittee to help mitigate the project's impact on the surrounding community. The City of Pico Rivera, where the Dam is located, will be permanently disrupted by the project. The City leases its park land from the Corps. Unfortunately, the Corps will have to demolish much of the city's parks and recreation facilities for construction activities and other modifications.

The City estimates the cost to the community will be more than \$100 million. While we can all agree that restoring the Whittier Narrows Dam is the highest priority, the project's impact on working families in a majority Latino community will be heavy. I urge the Subcommittee to consider the City of Pico Rivera's Section 7001 proposal. I also request Subcommittee work with me to minimize disruption to working families in communities like Pico Rivera as a result of Army Corps projects.

I look forward to welcoming members of the Subcommittee to Pico Rivera next week to hear directly from the Army Corps of Engineers why this project is critical for millions of people. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I yield back the balance of my time.