

**Rep. Wasserman Schultz – Infrastructure Law Workshop
Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 11:00a.m. | Opening Remarks – 4 minutes**

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, thank you for this chance to share how vital the Water Resources Development Act is for Florida.

And a special thanks to the Chairman for his leadership on this committee over the years. His knowledge and expertise will be sorely missed by everyone in Congress.

Chairman DeFazio was critical in developing the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act which authorizes Army Corps of Engineers civil works activities.

From restoring the Everglades and investing in our ports, to fighting rising seas by nourishing beaches and managing flood risk, Florida engages with the Army Corps of Engineers on so many urgent fronts.

Few are more critical than the deepening and widening of Port Everglades in my district, a project that will dramatically improve supply chain efficiencies and port operations.

And while I could spend an hour on the ups and downs of this project, here's the bottom line:

In an effort to protect vital coral reef and other environmental assets, the cost of the Port Everglades deepening and widening rose significantly, well above the authorized limit approved by this Committee in WRDA 2016.

Typically, the Corps would produce what's known as a Post Authorization Change Report to substantiate their increased cost.

However, my colleagues and I ask that the increased cost be approved through this WRDA bill – as was done for previous projects, as recently as the Water Resources Development Act of 2020.

Because without the language now, the Port will be on the hook for the entire increased cost of the project, or it will stop while we wait for WRDA 2024.

As America wrestles with supply chain issues, neither option is acceptable.

One reason for the increased costs is because we learned lessons from other widening and deepening projects.

Our port professionals and the Army Corps learned from experiences that we must take the time to understand potential impacts this could have on our cherished coral reefs.

Despite the cost increases and setbacks, we **have** made substantial progress already.

The revised supplemental EIS is currently open for public comment and the reconfiguration of the Coast Guard Station Fort Lauderdale – the first construction portion of the project – is scheduled to break ground next spring.

This will be a brand new, state of the art facility for our Coast Guard. It's badly needed and long overdue.

It's hard to believe that the Port Everglades project began in 1996. That's 26 years ago!

Under ideal circumstances – including this authorization being included in this WRDA bill – construction won't be complete before 2032, another ten years from now.

We cannot wait any longer for the Port Everglades deepening and widening project to begin.

I look forward to working with you further on this and getting the project authorization increase approved in this WRDA bill.

Another issue I want to bring to your attention is related to the extension of two beach renourishment projects in Broward County, both of which expire soon.

The recently introduced SHORRE Act would reauthorize both projects as well as other projects in Florida and elsewhere for an additional 50 years.

I support reauthorizing these projects in this WRDA bill and appreciate your ongoing attention to the extension of shore protection projects that will expire soon.

And finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of the Everglades, which many of us refer to as the River of Grass.

Thanks to the Biden Administration—we secured \$1.1 billion in funding for Everglades restoration through the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

To continue this recent historic progress, we must continue to advance projects that remove the barriers to sending water south and restore the historic flow paths.

To do this, the Army Corps needs flexibilities to fund large scale projects.

For example, Army Corps could fund larger CERP projects by utilizing an incremental funding approach.

We can help advance these projects by providing this flexibility in WRDA. I look forward to working with you on this.

Thank you for your efforts to develop and pass a new WRDA bill in the 117th Congress.

I appreciate the work you put into this legislation and look forward to helping you pass the bill this year.

Remarks: AJ
Edits: LW, DD
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