

conor lamb

17th District, Pennsylvania

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
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Subcommittee on Health
Subcommittee on Technology Modernization

House Committee on Science, Space
& Technology

Subcommittee on Energy
Subcommittee on Environment

House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure

Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines,
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April 1, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
Chairwoman
House Water Resources & Environment
Subcommittee
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Water Resources & Environment
Subcommittee
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen DeFazio and Chairwoman Napolitano and Ranking Members Graves and Westerman:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my priorities on behalf of Pennsylvania's 17th Congressional District for your consideration as you draft the 2020 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Representing southwestern Pennsylvania, I have seen firsthand the pivotal role the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) plays in my district, from facilitating inland navigation of critical resources and supplies, to supporting clean drinking water and safe wastewater management, to aiding districts like mine with flooding and stormwater management.

Largescale federal infrastructure investments, including through WRDA, comprise an opportunity for economic stimulus needed now more than ever to respond to COVID-19 as well. I appreciate your consideration of the local priorities outlined here and stand ready to work with you and our colleagues on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on WRDA 2020.

Keeping our Inland Navigation Systems Afloat and the Upper Ohio Navigation Project

The Upper Ohio Navigation project through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works Program, Investigations Account for preconstruction, engineering and design (PED) has received \$18 million in funding to date. Most recently it received \$7.7 million to finish PED in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 2020 Work Plan. The project now needs a New Start designation to

move into the construction phase. I appreciate the Committee's authorization of the project and past support for it.

The three locks on the Upper Ohio River, the Dashiels, Emsworth, and Montgomery Locks that are included in the Upper Ohio Navigation Project, are the oldest of the entire Ohio River system. They are all more than 70 years old. The current condition of these locks is a state of critical structural and operational degradation. They are increasingly at risk of structural or operational failure that could halt navigation for a year or longer. This type of a major failure would effectively close the entire Port of Pittsburgh and would greatly impact the steel and energy industries that are essential to our national security and our regional economies in Western Pennsylvania, the Great Lakes Region, and beyond. In addition to impacting commercial freight, pool loss from a failure would affect municipal and industrial water intakes, recreation, and wildlife habitats in several congressional districts, especially in mine.

I believe the best step to move this crucial project forward in the next WRDA would be adjusting the cost-share model for funding construction of inland navigation projects from 50% General Revenue and 50% Inland Waterways Trust Fund to 75% General Revenue and 25% Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Fellow Transportation & Infrastructure Committee colleague, Rep. Babin (R-TX), and I also led the attached letter to you advocating for the cost-share adjustment too. This letter was signed by over 75 House colleagues, many of whom serve on this committee. We believe that adjusting the federal cost-share would allow these critically important projects affecting our districts and our national economy to be finished more quickly, efficiently, and it could reduce additional project costs incurred when projects are unnecessarily drawn out over long periods of time as we saw with the Olmsted Lock. This is my top WRDA 2020 priority.

Safeguarding our Water Systems by Investing in Environmental Infrastructure in Sec. 219

Section 219 provides authority for the Corps to assist non-federal partners in executing water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection and development projects. Examples include waste water treatment and related facilities; water supply and storage; water treatment; and water distribution facilities. Projects generally consist of technical, planning, design, and construction assistance provided by the Corps. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District has provided crucial environmental infrastructure support to our local water authorities in Southwestern Pennsylvania, including the West View Water Authority (WVWA) for water system improvements within their supply system through WRDA Section 219.

Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN) is currently seeking support under this section to facilitate combined sewer overflow stream separation, which is vital to making sure ALCOSAN is able to comply with its modified consent decree to follow the Clean Water Act. This consent decree is designed to address claims by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Allegheny County Health Department that ALCOSAN violated the Clean Water Act by discharging excessive amounts of sewage into the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers in southwestern Pennsylvania. This primarily occurred during wet weather where combined sanitary and storm water sewers were quickly overloaded. This is just one example of why Section 219 remains crucial to the communities I serve.

Authorized funding level thresholds must be increased through WRDA to \$200 million for the Corps to be able to continue providing requisite assistance to non-federal agencies that carry out water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection projects in Allegheny County under this section.

Preserving Access to Water by Investing in Water Resource Protection Projects in Sec. 313

WRDA Section 313's goal is to address widespread problems specifically in rural and small communities pertaining to inadequate wastewater treatment, contaminated drinking water, and insufficient water supply. These challenges left unaddressed can cause public health and safety hazards, environmental damage, and hindered economic growth. Section 313, accordingly, authorizes the Corps to support communities for projects related to waste water treatment; water supply, storage, treatment, and distribution; and surface water resource protection and development in 16 counties in South Central Pennsylvania.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District, Section 313 is rapidly approaching its authorization limit of \$200 million, although interest from other non-federal sponsors for critically needed projects remains strong. Therefore, I urge the committee to raise the authorization threshold for Section 313 in the 2020 WRDA to \$400 million. Two other Pennsylvania counties, including Beaver County in my Congressional district as well as Jefferson County, should also be added to the list of counties eligible to receive support under this section.

West View Water Authority Neville Island Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project

West View Water Authority (WVWA) is a municipal water authority that supplies water to over 200,000 residents in northern Allegheny County, southern Butler County, and eastern Beaver County in my district. It has been in contact with the Corps' Pittsburgh District regarding Section 219 and Section 313 assistance to carry out the Neville Island Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project. The project has an estimated cost of \$15,650,000. It would provide necessary upgrades to the Neville Island Treatment Plant and result in construction of an additional water intake facility in PA-17 in Beaver County to increase capacity. Other items that WVWA plans to address through the project include: general building repair and renovation; a clarifier replacement; addition and replacement of two pumps, variable frequency drive (VFD) retrofitting of raw water pumps; installation of a sodium permanganate feed system; replacement of chlorination feed equipment; tank mixing system improvements; and filter trough replacement. I support WVWA's project and efforts to ensure access to clean and reliable water in my district.

Other Important WRDA Considerations for Southwestern Pennsylvania

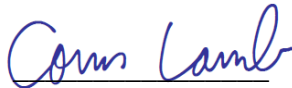
Lastly, I would like to mention several other items of importance pertaining to WRDA in southwestern Pennsylvania. My district has faced significant and repeated flooding challenges in recent years, and therefore I urge continued strong support for the Corps' Floodplain Management Services (FPMS), Planning Assistance to States (PAS), and Silver Jackets Program activities.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District is currently seeking authority to conduct a study on the feasibility of automating locks on the Ohio River and tributaries, including the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, especially in low-use areas. They feel this would allow better staff and resource allocation while allowing locks to remain open on-demand around the clock, which would benefit shippers and others relying on lock access. So long as any study include workforce impacts to ensure that this process would not result in job loss for constituents, I support this request. Related to protecting the waterways workforce, I also support efforts to designate certain U.S. Army Corps of Engineers functions as inherently governmental and oppose any efforts to privatize Corps' functions including those of Corps' park rangers.

Finally, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission has brought concerns with Asian carp to my attention. I support efforts to ensure the Ohio River has adequate Asian carp control measures in place through WRDA and support federal technical assistance, coordination, and resources for state and local governments looking to address this invasive species and its impact on aquatic ecosystems.

Thank you again for the opportunity to outline my priorities regarding the forthcoming 2020 WRDA legislation. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to move this important legislation forward in a bipartisan manner to the benefit of our constituents.

Sincerely,



Conor Lamb
Member of Congress