



# NAVAJO COUNTY

## Board of Supervisors

Fern Benally • Alberto L. Peshlakai • Jason E. Whiting • Daryl Seymore • Dawnafe Whitesinger

*"We are Navajo County"*

I am Supervisor Alberto Peshlakai, representing rural District One on the Navajo County Board of Supervisors. On behalf of Navajo County, the City of Winslow and the State of Arizona I deeply appreciate the opportunity to provide you and the subcommittee testimony and the County's perspective as the non-federal sponsor for the Army Corps of Engineers' Lower Colorado River at Winslow flood mitigation project, or the Winslow Levee project as it's known in Navajo County.

While the Winslow Levee was constructed decades ago, the critically important need to repair it dates to the mid 2000's. 2008 was a defining year in the early life of the project: the Federal Emergency Management Agency decertified the levee which financially impacted residents, businesses and property owners in the area – more on that in a moment – and Navajo County and the Army Corps of Engineers signed a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement that initiated a 10 year-long feasibility study which culminated in the recommended plan that is moving ahead today. Before providing an update on where the project stands, I want to touch very briefly on the significance of this project and its importance to the community of Winslow and the northeastern region of the state of Arizona. First, locally, once the levee is repaired and certified and accredited by FEMA, residents will realize financial relief from the approximately \$15M in costly flood insurance premiums they've been forced to endure since the decertification of the levee in 2008. Relatedly, without this essential life safety infrastructure project nearly every one of Winslow's homes, businesses, schools and key services are in harm's way from dangerous flood events. Regionally, completion of the Winslow Levee project is a key to unlocking economic growth in northeastern Arizona – the area is primed for development and construction once the flood mitigation concerns are greatly reduced, as I-40 and the BNSF railroad provide robust transportation infrastructure throughout the region. You'll find more specific project impact information in your handout.

So today, the project's technical pre-construction, engineering, and design work is underway. A joint project development team of our non-federal and Army Corps partners has been meeting regularly and reports that initial survey, topography, and geotechnical analysis is moving forward as planned. Relatedly, another team is working through a process that will determine the most efficient acquisition strategy – Design/Build or Design Bid Build – for constructing the project. The Army Corps and Navajo County are acutely aware that the project has received 100% federal funding for design and construction, and that expectations are high for delivering a completed project expeditiously. While we understand the Corps has its traditional chain of command processes and strict public engineering requirements and regulations to follow, in every interaction we've had with the Los Angeles District Command, both the County and the Corps have expressed a strong commitment to meet or exceed those expectations. I am confident that as the PED and construction phases progress, should significant project challenges arise, our teams will work to solve them at the level nearest the problem. Should that not be enough, my expectation is that both sides will work in good faith to escalate issues for quick chain of

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command resolution, draw on appropriate resources and expertise at the local, state and federal level, and collaborate with our state and federal congressional leadership as necessary.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks and thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works as it relates to our essential life safety infrastructure project in Winslow, and the importance of optimizing our partnership with the Army Corps which is so necessary for delivering a project that means so much to the Winslow community and northeastern Arizona.

