

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SCOTT A. SPELLMON
CHIEF OF ENGINEERS**

**BEFORE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT and PUBLIC WORKS**

ON

**WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACTS:
STATUS OF PAST PROVISIONS AND FUTURE NEEDS**

FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am honored to testify before you today along with the Honorable Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, regarding the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and future water infrastructure needs. Most importantly, I look forward to continuing to work with this committee, the Congress, and the Administration to help address the Nation's water resources challenges.

Through the Army Civil Works program, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) works with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and local governments, as well as others, to develop, manage, restore, and protect water resources, primarily through the study, construction, and operation and maintenance of water-related infrastructure projects. The Corps also regulates development affecting waters of the United States, including wetlands, and works with other Federal agencies to help communities respond to, and recover from, floods and other natural disasters.

The authorizations and funding provided to us by Congress will allow us to advance our three main missions of commercial navigation, flood and storm damage reduction, and aquatic ecosystem restoration, as well as support related project purposes, such as water supply, hydropower, and recreation. The Civil Works program is performance-based and focuses on high-performing projects and programs within these three main mission areas. The Corps uses its engineering expertise and relationships with project sponsors and stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to address some of the most pressing water resources challenges facing the Nation. Since 2014, the WRDA has provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with biennial authorizations to advance the Corps Civil Works missions by enabling critical policy transformations to address the changing needs of the Nation's water resources infrastructure.

WRDA 2022 provided the Corps the flexibility to design projects that respond to a wider suite of impacts associated with climate change. WRDA 2022 also provided flexibility to address the water resources needs of urban and rural communities with environmental justice concerns. This is a high priority goal of the Administration. An important next step for Army Civil Works will be the adoption of procedures implementing the Water Resources Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines. The proposed rule is currently available for public review and comment. This rulemaking includes a focus on securing environmental justice and spurring economic opportunity for disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized, underserved, or overburdened by pollution, and may have been left behind in the past in terms of infrastructure development.

The Corps Tribal Nations Program enables the Army to partner with Federally recognized American Indian and Alaskan Native tribal governments to identify solutions to their water resources challenges, which will substantially benefit the people who live in Indian Country or in Alaska Native villages. The Corps works with Native American Tribes as cost-share partners on Civil Works projects through its Tribal Partnership Program, under its Planning Assistance to States Program, as well as through

specifically authorized Civil Works projects. WRDA 2022 supports our trust commitment to Tribal Nations by enhancing the breadth and reach of the Tribal Partnership Program, strengthening tools to provide Tribal assistance, as well as establishing a framework for an advisory committee to further facilitate delivery of water resources projects to Tribal Nations. The Corps reaffirms its commitment to engage in regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal officials in the development of water resources projects and on regulatory actions that have Tribal implications.

WRDA 2022 also included an authorization for the Army Civil Works research and development (R&D) program. Through R&D, we are making investments to tackle future water resources challenges and advance related technological development in support of the three Army Civil Works main missions. This investment demonstrates the Administration's commitment to engineering innovation to deliver enduring water resource solutions for the Nation. This investment will allow the Corps to continue addressing the most pressing knowledge gaps that our practitioners face while doing their jobs in the field, such as operational, data-driven methods to improve navigation channel maintenance, the beneficial use of dredged material, and flood and storm risk management modeling. Investments proposed by the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 include funding to advance longer-term research and development by accelerating the Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations Assessment, which will further our understanding of atmospheric river impacts on flood risk management, water supply, and other water uses; as well as funding to inform and improve our overall asset management strategy, with a focus on work that has the potential to achieve significant cost savings in the Civil Works program. Knowledge gained by the further development of such water management tools and strategies will inform the Corps' ability to respond to severe climatologic conditions, including adaptation for sea level rise and persistent drought.

In September 2023, we issued our Notice of Funding Availability for the Corps Water Infrastructure Financing Program authorized under the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014. This program allows the Corps to accelerate non-federal investments in water resources infrastructure by providing direct loans and loan guarantees to creditworthy borrowers in order to maintain, upgrade, and repair non-federal dams. It is the Corps' first ever loan program and enables local investment in infrastructure projects that enhance community resilience to flooding, promote economic prosperity, and improve environmental quality.

WRDA 2022 also represents Congress's continued commitment to the communities you serve by authorizing numerous projects and studies, including those within your districts. Congress authorized 25 construction projects, 94 feasibility studies, and 131 New Environmental Infrastructure projects. Through our studies and projects, the Corps evaluates the benefits and costs of options to strengthen the supply chain, address the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, invest in Tribal Nations, and assist traditionally underserved communities.

My top priorities include identifying the highest priority potential investments for the Army Civil Works Program, starting with the maintenance of our existing infrastructure, and ensuring that we deliver studies and finish quality projects safely, on time, and within budget. I am focused on delivering projects that will contribute to the effort to enhance the Nation's resilience to climate change. These priorities will ensure a better return on taxpayer investment and improve the lives of all Americans.

Thank you, Chairman Carper and Members of the Committee. This concludes my statement. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.