

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

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

BEFORE

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

ON

**PERSPECTIVES ON ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROJECTS IN
SMALL, RURAL, AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Cramer, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to testify before you today at this Arizona Field Hearing regarding U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) projects in small, rural, and underserved communities in Arizona.

Through the Army Civil Works program, the Corps works with other Federal agencies, Tribal Nations, State agencies, and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, to develop, manage, restore, and protect water resources, primarily through the study, construction, and operation and maintenance of water-related infrastructure projects. The Corps is helping to advance the Administration's environmental justice (EJ) goals by working with Indian tribes and other underserved and disadvantaged communities to help them address their water resources challenges. One avenue has been the Los Angeles District's work to deliver environmental infrastructure projects to small, rural, and underserved communities in Arizona through our Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Section 595 program.

The Corps has three main mission areas, which are flood and storm damage reduction, commercial navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration. Some Corps projects also provide ancillary benefits, such as municipal and industrial water supply or recreation.

I would like to highlight two specific flood risk management projects in Arizona that illustrate how the work of the Corps can benefit small, rural, and disadvantaged communities: the Rio de Flag at Flagstaff and Little Colorado River at Winslow projects. These projects will help the Cities of Flagstaff and Winslow manage their flood risks. I will also discuss the Pascua Yaqui waterline project near Tucson, which is an environmental infrastructure project within our larger 595 program.

The Rio de Flag project is a few steps from these Council Chambers. This project will benefit the City of Flagstaff and surrounding communities, to include underserved and disadvantaged populations. This project includes flood channel modifications, bridge enhancements, a detention basin, and floodwalls that will substantially reduce flood risk. Three features of this project are complete. The Los Angeles District completed the Butler Tunnel and Clay Avenue wash. The City of Flagstaff completed the Thorpe Road Bridge. Remaining features include additional channels and box culverts designed to convey floodwaters away from the city. This is a complex project that the City of Flagstaff is incorporating in concert with other environmental infrastructure projects.

We expect to complete the initial phase of our design for the next phase of this project, a reach that extends from Clay Ave Wash detention to Butler Tunnel, in September 2024. This phase will require the City of Flagstaff to acquire certain lands and easements and negotiate a Construction Maintenance Agreement (CMA) between the City and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF).

The second effort I would like to highlight is the Little Colorado River at Winslow flood risk management project. In 2006, due to the condition of a locally constructed levee on the western bank of the Little Colorado River, FEMA decertified this levee. This had a

dramatic and immediate effect on an already predominantly underserved and overburdened community, causing property values within the flood plain to plummet and stymying economic growth and development for the past 18 years. In FY 2022, Congress appropriated \$2.5 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding for inland flood risk management projects. Out of that amount, the Department of the Army allocated \$65.75 million to this project. I recently had the opportunity to visit the project area with some of our partners here today along with other City of Winslow and County officials. Being there and seeing firsthand the impact that this project will have on the community is astounding and I am honored to serve with the team that will make it a reality. The first items we will accomplish include an update to the project topographic survey, a geotechnical survey, and we will model the hydrologic and hydraulic conditions to refine project design characteristics to prepare plans and specification. This brings us one step closer to construction.

With respect to the Pascua Yaqui project, we executed a Project Partnership Agreement with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in September 2021. The Tribe has since completed their design, received Federal reimbursement for this work, and expects to award a contract for construction in fall 2024. This project will allow the Tribe to reduce its dependance on water currently imported from Tucson, reducing costs for an important cultural hub within the community. The estimated cost for this project is \$1.97 million, which includes a federal cost share of \$1.47 million. The project would support the historically underserved Tribal community.

The Pascua Yaqui project is an example of a section 595 project. WRDA 2022 amended WRDA 1999 Section 595 for Environmental Infrastructure projects, increasing the authorization of Arizona projects from \$150M to \$200M. This program can help underserved communities in Arizona to improve efficiencies in water use and stewardship and to reduce dependence on imported water. The Corps and the L.A. District, specifically, is excited and honored to be able to partner with the State of Arizona and our local sponsors on these great projects.

Thank you, Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Cramer, and Members of the Subcommittee. This concludes my statement. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and look forward to answering any questions you may have.