



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**OF**

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**CHIEF HARBOR ENGINEER**

**PORT OF LOS ANGELES**

**ON**

***“THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2024:  
NON-FEDERAL STAKEHOLDER VIEWS”***

**BEFORE THE**

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS**

**JULY 20, 2023**

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**Introduction**

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, thank you for your ongoing leadership and commitment to maintaining our Nation's ports, harbors, and waterways.

Today, I am pleased to be here to discuss the significant impact Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) has for the maritime industry and the Nation as a whole. We appreciate this opportunity to share our perspectives from the ground level, where we see firsthand how legislation affects the system that moves America's cargo.

In WRDA 2020, this committee unlocked over \$9.3 billion in unspent Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) revenues, established a fair and equitable funding allocation framework, and promoted competitiveness for U.S. ports.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am Dina Aryan-Zahlan, Chief Harbor Engineer for the Port of Los Angeles. With over 20 years of experience in the maritime industry, I have detailed knowledge of the infrastructure needs at our Nation's busiest container port. While the well-worn saying, "If you've seen one port, you've seen one port," continues to ring true, and each port will have a unique set of challenges and needs, the port community has been unified in their need for WRDA.

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WRDA is needed to keep the national multimodal freight system functioning efficiently and cost effectively on behalf of consumers, manufacturers, and farmers. Continuing the regular cadence of WRDA is critical for ports and the rest of the goods movement system to maintain working capacity, stay competitive, and continue to serve as enablers for the American economy.

### [The Port of Los Angeles](#)

The Port of Los Angeles (Port or POLA) is the busiest container port in the nation. In 2022, the Port handled 9.9 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs, the standard measure of container cargo) and facilitated \$311 billion in trade. The operational scale of the Port is immense: 27 terminals, 270 berths, roughly 200,000 unique shippers, over 1,600 annual ship calls, 100 daily trains, 60,000 daily truck moves, 43 miles of waterfront, and 116 miles of on-dock rail and six railyards. We also operate cruise, liquid bulk, and automobile business lines; however, container cargo is our largest line of business.

The reforms you included in WRDA 2020 benefit the Port of Los Angeles—and by extension the entire national supply chain. Together with our neighboring port in Long Beach, we constitute the San Pedro Bay Port Complex and handle nearly 40 percent of all containerized imports and 30 percent of all containerized exports for the United States. Cargo through this complex flows to and from 160 countries across the globe and reaches every Congressional district in the nation (See Attachment 2). In fact, only one-third of the cargo handled at the Port is consumed

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within the Los Angeles region, while fully two-thirds of our cargo is destined for the national market. We estimate that this cargo supports more than 144,000 jobs (about one in 13 jobs) in the City of Los Angeles, 517,000 jobs (or one in 17 jobs) in the five-county Greater Los Angeles region, and 1.6 million jobs nationally. These estimates include direct, indirect, and port-related jobs.

As a donor port, we are grateful that you have recognized our needs. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 directly addressed the donor issue by recognizing donor ports, allowing them a limited expansion of uses (including maintenance berth dredging), and making them eligible for additional funding (along with “energy transfer ports”) via the Section 2106 program. In WRDA 2020, we were encouraged to see a comprehensive framework--developed by the port industry—established, creating minimum percentages of revenue being returned to donor, energy transfer, the Great Lakes system, and emerging harbors, while continuing to support traditional dredge ports. Additionally, for donor ports, both HMTF dollars and Section 2106 funds can now be used for “expanded uses”, such as dredging of channels, in-water infrastructure improvements, berth maintenance, and building seismic resiliency. At the Port of Los Angeles, these funds will be used:

- To repair damaged concrete wharfs at our seven container terminals;
- To replace deteriorated berthing structures at our five marine oil terminals;
- To replace and seismically upgrade dry bulk terminals, our cruise ship, and ferry ship facilities; and

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- For environmental remediation of legacy sites, while also maintaining the authorized depth of the entire Port of Los Angeles complex to support safe and efficient operations.

Until the 2020 reforms, HMTF expenditures were limited to the maintenance of the authorized depths and widths of federal navigation channels. For ports that require frequent dredging to maintain their dimensions this has been critical; however, this excluded other in-water maintenance needs.

Los Angeles does not require frequent dredging, but it does have a major backlog of wharf repairs and seismic upgrades—totaling more than \$6 billion. “Expanded uses” assists donor ports like the Port of Los Angeles by funding the in-water maintenance projects we need most. POLA would not have been able to access the \$26.6 million in unspent Section 2106 funds without this reform, and many other projects around the nation would have to wait due to their ineligibility.

Although we do not require major dredging maintenance at the Port, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) does have on-going projects at the Port, such as:

- Dredging existing berths and public marinas for the purpose of maintaining existing design depths plus a two-foot overdredge depth (Regional General Permit 29); and
- Conducting routine wharf maintenance, including in-kind repairs and replacements of piles, fenders, deck, or other wharf structural components (Regional General Permit 65).

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Additionally, we have upcoming capital projects in coordination with USACE for Berths 177-182 Marine Improvements, Berths 238-239 Marine Oil Terminal, and Berth 306 Wharf. We appreciate our colleagues at the USACE's Los Angeles District Office—their ongoing partnership and collaborative efforts have been crucial to maintaining operations at the Port.

Unfortunately, more work needs to be done to see through WRDA 2020's reforms. The USACE's Work Plan for 2023 did not abide by the framework that this Committee agreed to in the 2020 authorization, allocating only the \$56 million in general fund spending authorized under the Section 2106 program. Full use of HMTF revenues is needed to create a virtuous circle wherein investment in port infrastructure supports additional growth in trade volumes which, in turn, supports more investment in our ports and harbors. The Port of Los Angeles seeks to work closely with this Committee, the Committee on Appropriations, the USACE, and our nationwide port community to correct this. Full implementation of WRDA 2020 is critical to delivering its benefits to the national, state, regional, and local economy supported by our Port Complex.

### **Clean Air Action Plan**

Given our scale and role in the national economy, changes in consumer behavior, trading patterns, and manufacturing supply chains show up in our volumes—along with its environmental impacts. To reduce port-related air pollution and related health risks, while allowing port development – and the job creation and economic activity associated with that

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development – to continue, the Port of Los Angeles and Port of Long Beach, established a landmark air quality plan called the Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP).

The CAAP ushered in a slew of emission reduction strategies including the Clean Truck Program, vessel pollution reduction programs, and advanced new technology, such as the world’s first hybrid tugboat. The plan was originally adopted in 2006, with updates in 2010 and 2017. The CAAP 2017 Update is a comprehensive strategy for accelerating progress toward a zero-emission (ZE) future while protecting and strengthening the ports’ competitive position in the global economy. It calls for the ports to reduce greenhouse gases, from port-related sources—40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The Ports’ goals also include 100 percent ZE off-road cargo handling equipment by 2030 and ZE heavy-duty trucks calling at Port terminals by 2035.

### **National Multimodal Freight System**

WRDA authorizes investment in water infrastructure by authorizing projects, studies and programs led by the USACE. Across the country, USACE plays a critical role in protecting, enhancing, and restoring coastal and inland waterways from climate-impacted flooding and maintains other water resource projects. This supports a more efficient and resilient national multimodal freight system.

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Our robust national multimodal freight system consists of millions of miles of highways, railways, inland waterways, and pipelines, as well as hundreds of ports, airports, border crossing, and intermodal facilities. It supports our economy by lowering costs to businesses and consumers and increasing competitiveness for American exports.

By maintaining our ports, harbors, and waterways, the national multimodal freight system can remain efficient resulting in lower costs for consumers, manufacturers, and farmers. Just as other modes require continuous maintenance, so do our ports. Unmet dredging needs, outdated jetties and breakwaters are all issues facing waterways, and with the help of WRDA, USACE can address those challenges—ultimately enabling imports and exports to ship with ease.

The country has an opportunity to use the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund in a coordinated fashion with investments being made under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act to address capacity and system efficiency.

### [Significance of the Water Resources Development Act](#)

The Water Resources Development Act supports projects of local, regional, and national significance designed to help strengthen the Nation’s global competitiveness, improve the economy, facilitate the movement of goods within the supply chain, protect communities, and increase job growth.



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As a biennial legislation, its regular occurrence provides consistent support from USACE for ports that require frequent dredging to maintain their dimensions, which has been critical for moving cargo through the supply chain. WRDA is continual investment in the lifeblood of commerce, both domestic and international.

America's seaports and inland ports are vitally important to the national economy and intermodal transportation system. Our Nation's ports are gateways for domestic and international trade, while also serving as a significant resource for national defense and emergency preparedness. They constitute economic activity in coastal areas, generating many direct and indirect jobs, and are an important source of tax revenue for communities. The more goods and passengers travel through seaports year-on-year, the more infrastructure, provisions, and associated services are required. Therefore, WRDA is crucially significant for the maritime industry.

### **Moving Forward**

When our supply chains work well, they operate largely unnoticed, delivering essential goods, creating jobs, and driving economic growth and prosperity across the nation. However, congestion at major trade gateways around the world have drawn public attention to widespread supply chain disruptions and their impact on American consumers and businesses for the last three and a half years due to the coronavirus. From our vantage, through

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coordinated efforts between the Biden Administration, Congress, the longshore workforce, and other key stakeholders, we resolved the backlog of vessels at our Nation's ports, handled record-breaking amounts of cargo, and simultaneously are implementing environmental initiatives that move the San Pedro Bay Ports closer towards our zero-emission CAAP goals.

And when the Army Corps of Engineers implements WRDA 2020's reforms, ports and harbors across the country will be able to continue upgrading their maritime infrastructure. Goods movement is essential for the nation's economic vitality, and if its system is fractured due to the lack of infrastructural investment, every node in the supply chain suffers, including American consumers and businesses.

Clearly, a well-functioning supply chain is in the national interest, but effective federal support to improve the performance of our supply chains is dependent on the passage of the Water Resources Development Act every two years.

Thank you for your consideration.