DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

WRITTEN STATEMENT
OF

MR. R.D. JAMES
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
FOR CIVIL WORKS

LIEUTENANT GENERAL TODD.T.SEMONITE
CHIEF OF ENGINEERS
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
AND
MS. CHARLOTTE BERTRAND
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ON
WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT: WRDA 2020

OCTOBER 23, 2019

Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the committee. I am honored to testify before you today and thank you for the opportunity to discuss the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works program. I look forward to continue working with this committee and the Congress on water resources issues that are of interest to the Nation. In addition to Lieutenant General Todd Semonite, Chief of Engineers for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I am also joined today by Charlotte Bertrand, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy in the Office of Water at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She is here to answer any questions you may have on the implementation of EPA related provisions in WRDA.

The Army Civil Works Program, which is the Nation's largest water resources program, has three main missions: commercial navigation, flood and storm damage reduction, and aquatic ecosystem restoration. Some of the projects that the US Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) owns and operates also have ancillary purposes, such as hydropower, recreation, water supply, and fish and wildlife. We constructed these projects under Congressional authorizations, such as those provided through Water Resources Development Acts. The Army Corps, with oversight by my office, uses its engineering expertise and its relationships with other Federal agencies, state agencies, our project sponsors, and other stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to address some of the most pressing and complex water resources challenges facing the Nation. Such challenges include facilitating the transportation of commerce goods on the Nation's coastal channels and inland waterways; working with communities to reduce the risks to from devastating flood impacts, and restoring significant aquatic ecosystems. It is critical that we work with nonfederal partners and other federal agencies to develop tangible solutions and get it right. I recognize the importance of deliberative and responsive stakeholder engagement as highlighted by my recent decision to further consider implications posed by the draft water supply rule of the prior Administration.

My focus as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works includes identifying the highest priority investments for the Army Civil Works Program, and ensuring that we deliver studies and projects in a more timely and efficient way. Under my oversight and direction and with the help of Lieutenant General Semonite and his team, the Army Corps is committed to improving the execution of the Civil Works program.

Over the last two and half years, the Army Corps has worked to improve its policies and streamline its delivery of infrastructure. We are speeding up how we do business to deliver projects sooner. We are not only accelerating project delivery, we are also improving permitting processes and reforming regulations to enable projects to be built faster, more cost effectively, and more efficiently.

We are right-sizing decision-making by moving decisions from Washington to where the work is being done and by simplifying unnecessarily complicated and bureaucratic processes. We are completing targeted updates of policies to better deliver infrastructure projects and streamline permitting.

I am committed to ensuring that the Army Corps continues to identify the best ways to manage, develop, restore, and protect water resources in collaboration with our project sponsors and other partners. Our goal is to achieve a high economic, environmental, and public safety return for the Nation, which will benefit all Americans. For example, the FY 2020 Budget promotes increased non-Federal participation in the construction of Civil Works' projects to improve project delivery and to increase cost savings. It includes $150 million in the Construction account for the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014), Section 1043 Non-Federal Construction of Federal Projects program. The Corps would transfer this funding to non-Federal sponsors who have decided to construct an authorized project on their own under Section 1043 of the WRRDA 2014, as amended. The Budget also proposes to extend this program's authorization, which expired on June 10, 2019. The Budget provides $150 million in the Construction account for the Innovative Funding Partnerships program. These funds would be used, in conjunction with funds voluntarily provided by non-Federal sponsors in excess of the non-Federal sponsor's statutory cost share requirements, to accelerate the completion of construction of authorized projects.

Thank you for inviting me to be here today. I look forward to your questions.