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Chairman Capito Leads Oversight Hearing of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.

"Today, we will conduct oversight of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works Program and examine the agency's implementation of prior Water Resources Development Acts.

"Since 2014, this Committee has kept to a biennial schedule of passing this bipartisan legislation and look forward to keeping on track with that record. WRDA authorizes water resources studies and projects and sets national policies for the Civil Works Program.

"The Corps does critical work across the nation through its navigation, flood risk management, and ecosystem restoration missions. This work protects the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans, and facilitates commerce throughout our country and internationally. So, the timely implementation of these laws consistent with congressional intent is essential.

"The Corps is actively working on a number of studies and projects that I'm going to mention, because they are critically important to my state of West Virginia. The

Lower Mud River Flood Risk Management project in Milton, West Virginia, has been a priority of mine. In WRDA 2022, I was able to increase the federal share of that project from 65 percent to 90 percent. This change brought in the support we needed without creating financial strain on our state.

"In 2023, I also secured an additional $190 million for the project. This brings the total to $287 million in federal funding, delivering on the federal side of the funding equation to make this project happen.

"Last month, West Virginia signed an amendment to the project partnership agreement to formalize the new cost sharing agreement which allows the project to resume. Secretary Telle, thank you for being there, I know that was your first visit in your new official position, and I thank you for joining us in Milton for that ceremony. The state of West Virginia recently committed to matching the federal funds that I have secured for the Upper Guyandotte and Kanawha River Basin Flood Risk Management studies.

"Just over nine years ago, in June 2016, West Virginia experienced flooding at historic rates, leading to tragic deaths and devastation. The Kanawha River Basin study is a direct response to this flooding. I championed a provision in WRDA 2024 that increases the federal cost-share for future projects identified by this study.

"WRDA 2024 also increased the ability of the Corps to carry out smaller projects for debris and obstruction removal, which is critical to reducing the severity of flooding in many areas of – I'm sure everybody's state, but particularly ours. The fifth and final phase of Bluestone Dam Safety Assurance Mega-Project, in the City of Hinton, continues to make significant progress.

"In September of 2024, Hurricane Helene led to high water levels in rivers and streams across the East Coast, well beyond the areas hit directly by the storm. The New River was among those affected and resulted in historic water levels against the Bluestone Dam. The dam was able to withstand the rising waters and prevented an estimated $577 million in damages. Once completed, the project will protect more than 150,000 people and $20 billion worth of infrastructure. Unfortunately, there is more to be done.

“This year alone, several parts of West Virginia have experienced devastating flooding. In February, flooding in McDowell County resulted in the loss of lives and necessitated major rescue and recovery efforts. The damage wiped out the only route to the Welch Community Hospital, and caused major infrastructure issues in Wyoming and Mingo counties.

“Ohio and Marion counties also experienced significant damage and loss of lives following flash flooding on Father’s Day weekend. My congressional colleagues and I supported Governor Morrisey’s requests for presidential disaster declarations, and I am grateful to President Trump for his approval of these requests. I will continue to work with the Corps and local government officials to determine if additional authorities are needed to help mitigate the impacts from future flood events.

“Thank you again to the witnesses for being here.”

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