

**Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure**  
**Member Day**  
**Rep. Eric Sorensen (IL-17) Proposed Testimony**

I want to begin by thanking Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen for convening this hearing and for welcoming member testimony as you craft the Water Resources Development Act of 2026.

For every American, WRDA represents one of the best federal opportunities to respond to disasters, protect our waterways, and support clean water and healthy ecosystems.

I am proud to represent the 17<sup>th</sup> district of Illinois. My district sits along the upper Mississippi River and is home to dozens of agri-businesses and farmers that rely on the Mississippi to move their goods to the global market.

The Army Corps of Engineers and local communities along the river work hand in hand to maintain and upgrade the locks and dams as well as other essential infrastructure. Last year, I joined my fellow colleague's Rep. Budzinski and Senators Baldwin, Duckworth, Durbin, Klobuchar, and Smith in submitting a funding request for the Navigational Ecosystem Sustainability Program, or NESP, to the Appropriations Committee. I was proud to see this program funded at \$18 million in the drafted Energy and Water appropriations bill.

Part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was intended to fund the construction on Lock and Dam 25 and six other projects to completion. However, the funding is not sufficient to cover the full costs. Without additional clarification from Congress, completion of these products will be delayed, as local funding sources cannot bridge the gap. I urge the Committee to include language in the upcoming WRDA to clarify that all seven projects be fully federally funded as intended under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

My district is home to dozens of drinking water and wastewater agencies that serve the people of Central and Northwestern Illinois. These agencies are in desperate need of funding to support necessary system upgrades and repairs to protect the communities they serve. For this reason, I am pleased that the Committee will accept Environmental Infrastructure requests for WRDA.

The need for these critical authorizations—especially in rural regions—is clear.

For example, South Pekin, a village in my district with a population of less than 1,000, received an EPA violation due to the dangerous levels of manganese naturally occurring in their water. High manganese exposure in drinking water has been linked to lower IQ scores, cognitive impairments, and behavioral problems in babies and children. The village must construct a manganese filter plant to address the contamination which will cost them over \$18 million. This small village cannot absorb these costs and without any financial support, households will see their water bill increase to an additional \$52 per month until the project is funded.

In Rock Island, the Big Island River Conservancy District must replace a levee gatewell and culvert which is at the brink of failing. With a population less than 100, this tiny jurisdiction

doesn't have the option to tax themselves out of this situation. Should the levee fail, their homes will be underwater.

WRDA authorizations ensures these critical, high-priority projects are strategically well-positioned to receive federal funding in the future.

I look forward to submitting these and other worthy projects for consideration.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee on matters that directly affect the families and communities of Illinois' 17th district.