

The Honorable Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Water Resources Subcommittee
Water Resources Development Act of 2024 Member Day Hearing
January 11, 2024

Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of my Water Resource Development Act priorities. I would also like to recognize my New Jersey delegation colleagues Representatives Payne and Menendez who are fierce advocates for our great state on the full committee.

As a former member of this subcommittee, I have been a strong proponent of the Army Corps of Engineers. They are critical in ensuring that America's infrastructure has the capacity to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond.

Flooding is a recurring problem in my state with severe consequences for communities in the Passaic River Basin. Just last month, my hometown Paterson declared a state of emergency and residents were evacuated from their homes after heavy rainfall caused the river to overflow. I am requesting the Committee support a comprehensive study by the Army Corps of Engineers to examine potential measures to improve flood mitigation, river navigation, and environmental sustainability. This study would explore flood mitigation strategies through vegetation control, dredging and sediment analysis, the potential acquisition of flood-prone properties, and an assessment of the river's carrying capacity.

The Paterson Great Falls was the catalyst of America's Industrial Revolution. Within Paterson Great Falls Park there is the historic water raceway system. The raceways once diverted water from the Passaic River into a series of channels that ran throughout the city, bringing waterpower to the mills. I hope the Committee will honor my request for a needed Army Corps study on how to make the raceway system operable. This would include the impact of removing sedimentation in front of the raceway dam and the upstream flooding conditions to the hydroelectric plant.

The City of Garfield has several issues related to Fleischer's Brook, including flooding, flash flooding, and collapsed water mains. Fleischer's Brook runs through Garfield, and there are several culverts in disrepair that are damaging stormwater and sewer lines. These problems become more acute during rainstorms. An Army Corps study is needed to assess these flooding risks at Fleischer's Brook.

In the Borough of Hasbrouck Heights, the Berry's Creek tributary has been plagued by chronic flooding. Berry's Creek flows through an area close to the city's Department of Public Works facilities, where flooding of the creek has forced the relocation of garbage trucks and other equipment. I hope that the Committee will support my request for a study of Berry's Creek to devise solutions to these issues.

Additionally, numerous municipalities in Northern New Jersey are adversely impacted by flooding that occurs in the lower Saddle River basin area along the Saddle River and Sprout Brook, including the City of Garfield and the Borough of Lodi. The Lower Saddle River Flood Protection Project was authorized in 1986 to study these issues. There are a number of Known Contaminated Sites within the Lower Saddle River project area. Contamination within the project area must be addressed by the non-federal sponsor, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, before any construction can take place. The Army Corps has the capacity to provide remediation

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services to address the contamination. I encourage the Committee to work with my office and relevant stakeholders to explore ways in which the non-federal sponsor could request that the Army Corps perform the cleanup while the non-federal sponsor remains financially responsible. This would support the efficiency and advancement of the project.

Finally, I encourage the committee to support the Army Corps and the non-federal sponsor of the Lower Saddle River Flood Protection Project in identifying separable component parts of the project that may have stand-alone benefits. Recent flooding along the Lower Saddle River has again demonstrated the need to advance this project and provide flooding relief to my constituents who live in the affected areas.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my requests. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that the priorities of New Jersey's Ninth District are sufficiently addressed.

I yield back.