

**GABE AMO**

1ST DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE,  
AND TECHNOLOGY**



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE**  
2233 RAYBURN BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4911  
(202) 225-3290 (FAX)

**PAWTUCKET, RI OFFICE**  
1070 MAIN STREET, SUITE 300  
PAWTUCKET, RI 02860  
(401) 729-5600  
(401) 729-5608 (FAX)

amo.house.gov

Chairs Sam Graves and David Rouzer and Ranking Member's Rick Larsen and Grace Napolitano, I thank the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the below priorities of Rhode Island's First Congressional District for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024.

Each WRDA is important to ensuring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) fulfills its mission. If drafted with the below priorities, this upcoming WRDA would help strengthen water resource infrastructure in Rhode Island and across our nation by energizing our economy, supporting resiliency projects and initiatives, creating good-paying jobs, protecting our environment and modernizing our water infrastructure.

Given the increased threat that the climate crisis poses, the mission of the Corps is more important than ever to protect our coastal communities. There remains an increased risk of extreme weather events such as floods, hurricanes, and storms that continue to threaten our economy and the lives of Rhode Islanders.

According to the latest data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States experienced direct losses from 18 separate billion-dollar disasters total[ing] over \$170 billion in 2022.<sup>1</sup> This worrying trend grew in 2023 to 25 confirmed weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each to affect the United States.

Coastal communities like those in Rhode Island are facing unprecedented risk from these threats, which is why the Corps work to reduce flood and storm damage, restore vital aquatic ecosystems, and improve our resilience is vital.

I look forward to working with the Committee on the WRDA of 2024. Below are specific requests that I submitted to the Committee for consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>

**Congressman Gabe Amo (RI-01)**  
**Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Testimony for**  
**Members' Day Hearing on Water Resources Development Act of 2024**  
**January 11, 2024**

- Authorization of “Rhode Island Coastline, Coastal Storm Risk Management” Project
  - According to the Corps: The Rhode Island CSRSM study was conducted due to frequent flooding from high tides, spring tides, and coastal storms in the study area. The study’s purpose is to identify a plan to reduce the risk of coastal storm damage along a large portion of the Rhode Island coastline while contributing to the resilience of communities, important infrastructure, and the natural environment. The study area includes significant critical infrastructure at risk of damage from future flooding and coastal storms including police, fire, and emergency support service facilities; schools; energy production facilities; water and wastewater facilities; nursing homes and assisted living facilities in addition to communities and businesses. These areas that experience frequent flooding are considered at high risk of coastal storm flooding with an associated threat to life safety; and are susceptible to relative sea level change.
  
- Reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program
  - Dams play a vital role in Rhode Island’s infrastructure and contribute to the economic development of our nation. This vital program is an essential partnership between states, federal agencies and other stakeholders to encourage and promote the establishment and maintenance of effective federal and state dam safety programs that reduce risk to human life, property, and the environment from dam related hazards. Unfortunately, formal authorization for the National Dam Safety Program lapsed on September 30, 2023. I hope this program will be reauthorized to ensure states like Rhode Island have the resources and support needed to monitor dams in our communities and reduce the risks associated with dam failure.
  
- Technical assistance to States for identifying ownership of unsafe dams
  - A major barrier to identifying and repairing dams in our state and across the nation is insufficient legal expertise to efficiently identify owners of derelict dams. I urge the committee to consider including language that will provide states and the Corps with sufficient legal technical assistance to expedite title research, especially in coastal states with high numbers of unidentified dam owners.
  
- Modify the formula for the High Hazard Potential Dam (HHPD) Rehabilitation Grant Program
  - As you know, HHPD provides grants for technical, planning, design and construction assistance for rehabilitation of dams that fail to meet minimum safety standards and pose unacceptable risk to life and property. The current grant formula favors states with a proportionally high number of HHPDs by providing the majority of funds to these states, regardless of necessity or requested funding amount. To better ensure federal funds are more evenly distributed, I urge the Committee to change the formula. A proposal worthy of consideration is: one half equal distribution between all states that apply, and one half distributed based on a proportion of eligible HHPDs of the given state in relation to eligible HHPDs of all states that apply.

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- Increase Federal Limit and authorizations for Continuing Authorities Programs (CAP)
  - The last time Congress increased the per-project federal expenditure limit for the CAP was 2014. Construction costs have drastically increased in the last decade. Increasing the federal limit and authorization for the CAP to account for the per-project adjustments would better allow the Corps to meet its mission.
  
- Use of Innovative Materials and Associated Techniques
  - I applaud President Joe Biden's administration for mandating the Corps aim to design infrastructure projects with 100-year life spans. This long-term horizon is important to building resilient infrastructure that can withstand the threat climate change poses to our communities. The Corps has completed several pilot projects using innovative materials, which can be more durable and lightweight than traditional building materials and are less likely to corrode or degrade. I urge the Committee to allow the Corps to improve research, review standards, and deploy innovative materials and associated techniques for composite material because it could reduce costs, improve climate resiliency, and reduce carbon emissions. I hope these materials will be produced domestically to help good paying jobs across the United States and Rhode Island, especially because our state has a burgeoning composites industry whose growth would be accelerated by further federal investments.
  
- Improved Connectivity Between Federal and State Initiatives and Planning
  - Rhode Island has been a leader in developing a state-approved coastal management plan. By improving the connection between federal and state partners for state-approved projects, strategies, and plans, the Corps could expedite the uptake of projects. Requiring GAO to detail how the Corps currently operates in conjunction with state-approved management plans would better inform how to improve this process.

In addition to the above priorities, I would also like to echo my support for the importance of better understanding the funding disparity we have seen between coastal and inland projects. I look forward to an expeditious completion of the Government Accountability Office results on this matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests that will benefit Rhode Islanders. Please do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions.

I yield back.



Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress