

I am here today to join my colleagues in underscoring the critical role of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 for my state and district and to convey my specific priorities on behalf of my district and the state of South Carolina.

I applaud the leadership of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and wish to thank Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Subcommittee Chairman Rouzer, and Ranking Member Napolitano for this opportunity.

I am proud to represent the Seventh Congressional District of South Carolina, which ranges from the upper half of the South Carolina coast, known as the Grand Strand, and the inland rural community of the northwest corridor of the state, known as the Pee Dee.

I have submitted several priorities to the Committee on behalf of my constituents. Today, I want to highlight some water infrastructure investment projects in South Carolina's Seventh Congressional District.

In the Pee Dee region, the City of Florence is taking the necessary steps to address the growth and increasing needs of the citizens and community by providing significant water, wastewater, stormwater, and environmental restoration.

The ability to provide safe, reliable drinking water and necessary water and sewer infrastructure upgrades is only attainable through expansion and upgrades to their water system.

With new industry in the city, approximately 4,300 residential units will increase the capacity needed for water distribution. Additionally, this will require expansion of wastewater management and a more efficient sanitary sewer collection system.

I have requested authorization through the Army Corps' Environmental Infrastructure program for the City of Florence to help in this effort.

These projects would authorize a sanitary sewer collection system expansion, a wastewater management facility expansion, and a water distribution expansion and upgrades needed for increased water quality.

Unfortunately, residents in the Florence area face water challenges daily. For example, their drinking water will turn red and leave a dusty ring around their toilets, and sometimes laundry turns brown or yellow due to the discolored water.

I am grateful for this opportunity to hopefully find solutions to this problem that my constituents across the Pee Dee face regularly.

North of Florence lies the Town of Cheraw, which faces significant water, wastewater, stormwater, and environmental restoration needs.

I have requested authorization through the Army Corps' Environmental Infrastructure program to enable access to funding for water, wastewater, and other environmental infrastructure through this program.

The Town is taking an aggressive approach to updating its water infrastructure to improve water quality, upgrade critical facilities, and expand capacity to accommodate future growth.

Cheraw needs to construct a new water treatment plant and a wastewater treatment expansion and implement a stormwater master plan over the next decade.

Without the construction of a new water treatment plant, the residents of Cheraw are at risk of losing access to safe and reliable drinking water supplies.

This request also aids in the effort to reduce the impact of increased localized flooding while increasing capacity in existing stormwater and drainage systems.

This authorization is crucial for the Town of Cheraw to grow and provide a place for South Carolinians to live and work.

Similarly, I have requested authorization under the Army Corps' Environmental Infrastructure program for the Town of Chesterfield, located in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina.

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence destroyed a sewer line crossing Thompson Creek near Buchanan Bridge, allowing raw sewage to spill into Thompson Creek.

The Town of Chesterfield rented a pump until 2023 to pump around the destroyed sewer line.

Due to the increasing cost of renting a pump and insufficient grant funds to complete the project, the Town purchased a pump and hoses as a temporary solution.

The Town has been trying to get the necessary funding for a permanent solution since 2018 to replace the temporary sewer line and pump, install a pump station, and attach the sewer line to the bridge.

Utilizing the Army Corps' Environmental Infrastructure Authority, the Town of Chesterfield could experience significant relief and aid in its ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricane Florence, which occurred over five years ago.

Lastly, I have submitted requests in support of our state's ports.

The health and prosperity of South Carolina's economy – and our people – are intricately linked to our state's ports and waterways.

In our state, major infrastructure and investment initiatives are managed or spearheaded by the South Carolina Ports Authority, which owns and operates public marine terminals at the Port of Charleston and two separate Inland Ports in Greer and in my district, Dillon.

The South Carolina Ports Authority is an economic driver, not only for our state but for the Southeastern region and the U.S. as a whole.

A recent study conducted by the University of South Carolina Moore School of Business found that the total economic impact of our state's ports system is over \$86 billion annually.

This translates to supporting over 260,000 jobs related to the maritime industry alone – and one in nine jobs in the state – and an annual statewide economic impact of \$87 billion. That is nearly \$18 billion in annual labor income.

The commerce afforded by our ports system directly supports state companies and businesses as our state continues to grow as a major global competitor for advanced manufacturing and other leading export-oriented industries.

Over 70 percent of all cargo exported through S.C. Ports originates from companies located in the state. In a region projected to experience significant population growth, South Carolina is vitally important to the broader economy.

This growth directly results from state, federal, and private partnership investments in our port infrastructure, including the deepened Charleston harbor and increased cargo capacities.

These projects rely on the investments and resources made possible through the Water Resources Development Act.

Specifically, I am advocating for three priorities in this year's bill.

First, to adjust the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Donor Port designation requirements to more effectively capture and recognize the scale of a port's impact within a state and region – such as that of South Carolina Ports Authority and the Port of Charleston.

Second, to align cost-share for maintenance of harbors with modernized harbor depths by increasing eligible depths to 55 feet, as Charleston and other major East Coast ports have invested in deepening their harbors beyond 50 feet to meet both commercial demand and the increasing size of vessels calling on the U.S. ports.

Third, and lastly, to authorize a Feasibility Study for the Army Corps' Charleston District to equalize the federal navigation channel segment of the North Charleston Terminal to 52 feet.

I am proud to submit my priorities for South Carolina to the Committee for consideration as you craft a responsible and effective Water Resources Development Act for 2024.

Thank you again for your consideration, and I look forward to working with you on behalf of my state and district.