

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

“Water Resources Development Act of 2024: Members’ Day Hearing”

Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 10 a.m. ET
2167 Rayburn House Office Building

Hearing Statement by Rep. Susie Lee (NV-03):

Thank you, Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano, for holding today’s hearing — and for this opportunity to highlight the three top priorities for Nevada’s 3rd Congressional District as you continue to craft the *Water Resources Development Act of 2024*.

No one knows better than a Nevadan just how precious our nation’s water resources truly are — especially in Southern Nevada, where we get about 90 percent of our water from the Colorado River. For the community of Laughlin specifically — located in the rural, southernmost portion of my district — that number jumps to 100 percent.

Laughlin’s water treatment and delivery system is the only such system managed by the Las Vegas Valley Water District that both lacks a secondary water source ***and*** lags in water storage capacity. This would already be concerning enough if not compounded by the fact that Laughlin, like many communities in the Southwest, continues to have to contend with the effects of the worst drought in at least 1,200 years.

My first request is for authorizing urgent environmental infrastructure assistance for Laughlin’s water system in WRDA 2024 to facilitate the construction of additional storage tanks to ensure adequate reserves, fire flow, and system redundancy — as well as the construction of a new groundwater well to provide a secondary source for the Laughlin community to be able to meet emergency water needs.

I am also asking that this year's WRDA bill include my legislation to raise the funding cap of the Las Vegas Wash program.

The Las Vegas Wash is the primary drainage channel for the Las Vegas Valley watershed, carrying around 200 million gallons of water to Lake Mead daily — a key resource that makes it possible for Southern Nevada to recycle nearly every drop of water that goes down our drains.

The federally backed Las Vegas Wash program has been essential to protecting and enhancing the Wash by supporting erosion control efforts as well as biological and other restoration activities. Originally authorized more than two decades ago in WRDA 2000, raising the program's funding cap in WRDA 2024 will ensure that vital federal assistance for the Wash can continue.

Finally, I am pleased to join Ranking Member Napolitano in seeking to elevate water supply and water conservation to primary mission areas of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For too long, these priorities — which only grow more pressing for Southern Nevada with each passing day — have been regarded as ancillary or secondary to other responsibilities of the Corps, such as navigation and flood control.

Requiring the Corps to give water supply and water conservation equal priority moving forward will strengthen numerous initiatives that stand to benefit Nevada, the West, and the nation as a whole, including:

- Measures to promote the use of innovative technologies and practices — such as forecast informed reservoir operations and managed aquifer recovery — to maximize the availability of water supply opportunities; and
- The development of drought contingency plans for communities served by Corps water supply projects.

Thank you again to the Chairman and Ranking Member for the opportunity to appear today to speak on this critical legislation. I yield back the balance of my time.