

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Hearing on “WRDA 2020: Member Day”
10:00 AM
2167 RHOB
Rep. Bill Flores
2020 0227

Testimony

-) Thank you Chairwoman Napolitano and Republican Leader Westerman for holding this member day hearing to discuss WRDA priorities for off-committee members.
-) I would like to take this opportunity to discuss potential improvements to this year’s WRDA that would positively impact projects located in the district I represent in Central Texas.
-) Specifically, the City of Waco, home to over 130,000 Texans, has a two projects that fall within federal jurisdiction and the purview of WRDA. With a few changes to statutory language, these projects could enjoy a more streamlined, proactively managed approach to avoid potentially catastrophic mishaps that would otherwise cost the federal government a substantial amount of funding in reconstruction costs and emergency response.
-) The first issue I would like to discuss is erosion and instability of Lake Shore Drive along Lake Waco. This road is deeply unstable along the lake and presents serious risks of deep landslides and shallow slope failures. These infrastructure failures could result in flood risk, a disruption of surrounding recreational areas, and devastation to local water quality. Mitigating potential disaster on such a project would directly support the mission of the US Army Corps of Engineers to manage flood risks provide environmental stewardship.

-) I have been working with local officials and the Corps to address this issue for over four years, continuing dialogue between stakeholders and reiterating the importance of this project to the greater Waco area. We secured appropriations committee support language in FY18 to highlight the importance of this project, but still lack proper statutory authority for the Corps to fix Lake Shore Drive, and supplemental authority that would better leverage the relationship between federal and non-federal stakeholders.
-) Now, it is my understanding that the City of Waco is more than willing and able to work with the Corps to address these problems in a cost-efficient manner. To that end, I request the inclusion of a number of cost-effective and efficient additions to WRDA 2020 that would enhance Corps' existing Continuing Authority Projects and better utilize partnerships with non-federal entities.
-) Specifically, I ask support to –
- Reauthorize Section 1043 of WRRDA 2014 for the Non-Federal Implementation Pilot Program and to include language supporting Corps' ability to apply it to Continuing Authority Projects.
 - To amend Section 13 of the 1946 Flood Control Act to allow non-federal entities to receive in-kind credit for performing in advance of federal funding to offset the share of non-federal share of the project costs.
 - And to extend authority of the Corps to address issues embankment on federal lands.
-) A proactive approach to issues along Lake Shore Drive will avoid the need for emergency response and serves the greater mission of the Corps.
-) The next issue I would like to briefly discuss is arsenic levels in community drinking water systems surrounding the Waco area in

McLennan County. As the committee is aware, the EPA lowered the Maximum Containment Level (MCL) standards for arsenic from 50 parts per billion to 10 ppb. These ground-water systems in McLennan County no longer meet EPA's revised arsenic MCL and are working with the Brazos River Authority, Texas Center on Environmental Quality, and EPA officials to find a solution to this problem. At the direction of these entities, the various water systems have applied for state grants that receive funding through State Drinking Water Revolving Fund.

-) With access to these funds, the affected rural water systems in McLennan County should be able to lower their MCL to acceptable levels and continue servicing their Central Texas constituencies.
-) Should the committee consider any improvements or alterations to the State Drinking Water Revolving Fund in WRDA, I would encourage you to continue the program's flexibility to address the needs of rural systems in times of changing Administrative Safe Drinking Water Act standards, and consider doing so in a way that does not add considerable financial burdens that disproportionately harm smaller water systems.
-) Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of these important improvements.