

Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva Statement - Arizona 03
WRDA Statement
February 25, 2020

Thank you for your long-standing commitment to improving transportation and infrastructure of our nation, and your work on the reauthorization of WRDA.

International Outfall Interceptor

There is perhaps no more pressing time to address the needs of communities when it comes to accessing clean and safe water and sanitation. As these needs continue to grow, I ask you to include language to settle a longstanding issue of the International Outfall Inceptor (IOI) pipeline which transports wastewater from Nogales, Sonora to the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

I encourage you to work directly with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to include authorization and full funding to repair the IOI, and to include the *Nogales Wastewater Fairness Act* within the WRDA reauthorization. This bill is needed to clarify that the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) is responsible for the much-needed infrastructure repairs and future maintenance of the IOI to prevent raw sewage from spilling into waterways. After years of neglecting much-needed repairs, the periodic leaks and overflows of the IOI continue to threaten the public health of my constituents in Nogales and the surrounding areas.

A core component of USACE work is to be on flood risk mitigation and there is clear precedent for including IOI language in WRDA. The project was originally authorized for \$11,100,000 by WRDA 1990, Section 101(a)(4), Public Law 101-640. The project was again authorized for \$25,410,000 by WRDA 2007, Section 3008. Recently, S. 2848, WRDA, included Section 8008 International Outfall Interceptor Repair, Operations and Maintenance. Additionally, last year the House recognized this as a public health priority by overwhelming supporting my amendment to dedicate funding to the project in the FY2020 appropriations bill.

Unfortunately, needed repairs have not been made over the years and the city of Nogales, Arizona has been subjected to numerous occasions of raw sewage spilling into waterways, including in July 2017, after which Arizona was forced to declare a State of Emergency.

I am sure you will agree — it's absurd to leave a city in the United States susceptible to the risk of raw sewage spills, especially when preventative rehabilitation improvements have already been studied and designed. I greatly appreciate you and your staff's past support of inclusion of the IOI and encourage you to once again work to provide a final remedy for this situation.

Reclamation Water Settlements Fund

Another pressing issue relating to clean water access is the need to extend the existing Reclamation Water Settlements Fund. Today, many tribal communities across the country live without running water and basic water infrastructure, even though the federal government has a trust responsibility to help ensure tribal water access. Congress created the Reclamation Water

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Settlements Fund to help pay for tribal water rights settlements, which fund clean water infrastructure across Indian Country.

Several tribal water rights settlements have been included in previous WRDA bills and a permanent extension of the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund will be needed to ensure that future tribal water rights settlements can be successfully carried out. There are over 280 federally recognized tribes in the West alone, and water settlements have only been completed for a fraction of these tribes over the past 40 years since settlements became the preferred policy of the federal government.

Extending the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund has widespread, bipartisan support. A ten-year extension recently passed the Republican-controlled Senate Committee of jurisdiction without opposition and an extension of the fund is supported by every major western water stakeholder group, including agricultural water users, urban and municipal water users, Republican and Democratic governors, environmental and conservation organizations, and tribal stakeholders. Your assistance in moving this broadly supported water infrastructure priority would be greatly appreciated.

Border Wall

Finally, I appreciate your efforts to stop the administration's attempt to redirect USACE funds toward a wasteful and ineffective border wall. I respectfully request that you include language in WRDA to ensure that USACE funds go toward funding the backlog of USACE projects that actually meet the real needs of the American people and not toward the administration's destructive border wall.

Thank you for your leadership, and consideration of my proposals. My staff and I stand ready to work with you to ensure these items are included.

Sincerely,

/s

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress