

**Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer (MO-3) Testimony before the
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment of the House
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

Member Day Hearing, Thursday, February 27, 2020

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Subcommittee Chairwoman Napolitano, Subcommittee Ranking Member Westerman, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to contribute to discussions regarding the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). As the Representative of a Congressional District with thousands of miles of shoreline thanks to the Mississippi River, Missouri River, and Lake of the Ozarks, I understand the importance of having a plan in place that continuously modernizes our levees, locks, dams, channels and ports.

Across the country, our nation's waterways and infrastructure have a tremendous impact. In Missouri, public ports represent about 1/3 of our economy. That supports roughly 290,000 jobs that create over \$100 billion in annual economic activity. It's important that we continue Congress' tradition of reauthorizing the key missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers so we can support our economically vital waterway infrastructure, while also making much-needed policy reforms.

This past year was one of the worst years of flooding in Missouri's history. Entire towns were debilitated and normal life was brought to a halt for many Missourians, especially farmers. Throughout the state, over 1.4 million acres couldn't be planted. This doesn't just affect farmers; it affects the food supply of the entire world.

Without updated flood plans, there is nothing preventing future catastrophes similar to last year's. That is why this year I encourage you to consider updating the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan that was originally authorized in the 1999 WRDA. Outlined in the Upper Mississippi River Flood Control Act, this plan update requires the Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers to submit a flood plan to Congress at an expeditious rate to address both water and land resource problems in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. It also forces the Corps to work with local landowners, agriculture groups, government officials, and other stakeholders while developing that plan. This will ensure the plan is not developed to satisfy the Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., but rather meet the needs of those of us who live near the river and endure the cost of failed flood policy.

An effective flood plan, especially in high-risk areas, will better equip us to prevent future floods and expedite aid, recovery, and rebuilding in the aftermath of the unpreventable. A successful example of this plan model is demonstrated in the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project that has been in place for over 90 years. Strategic, long-term plans go a long way in helping us achieve that goal and ensure our waterways remain navigable while the folks living along our rivers and streams take priority.

Another area of my district that regularly feels the effects flooding is the Lower Osage River Basin. Specifically, the lower 80 miles of the Osage River below the Bagnell Dam have seen increasing erosion, flooding and degradation of habitat. This has led to a huge loss of land resources and is becoming a bigger threat to infrastructure as time goes on. I would like to ensure that the authorization of a feasibility study for the Lower Osage River is included in WRDA. This Lower Osage River authorization will enable the Corps of Engineers to formulate an effective plan to address the serious and progressive erosion and degradation problems we face. Inclusion of this provision in the upcoming WRDA is essential to having a timely path to the necessary corrective actions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today about the needs of the Third Congressional District of Missouri.