

Proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2020 - Testimony by Rep. Adam Schiff

Chair Napolitano and Ranking Member Westerman, thank you for the opportunity to testify at this Member's Day hearing on proposals for a Water Resources Development Act of 2020.

One of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' important missions is to plan, design, and build projects to restore aquatic ecosystems across the country. In my district in California, the Corps is currently undertaking planning and design work to begin restoring an 11-mile stretch of the Los Angeles River. This project—decades in the making—will restore the river's original natural beauty and revitalize over 700 acres of aquatic ecosystem to provide much-needed greenspace for wildlife and residents alike.

I am thrilled that the Corps included significant funding for the LA River project in its Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2020, and I will continue working with the City of Los Angeles and the Corps to build further momentum on this project.

At the same time, I have also heard from many constituents and community organizations in my district over the past several years who have shared concerns regarding the health and safety implications of using the herbicide glyphosate (commonly known by its trade name, Roundup) in the Los Angeles River, as well as on other federally managed lands.

Many state and local governments have reviewed the medical research on human exposure to glyphosate and have limited or banned its use. The State of California has added glyphosate to its Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to cause cancer, and the County of Los Angeles recently prohibited County departments from using the chemical. International expert bodies have similarly linked glyphosate to cancer, including the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer which has found the chemical "probably" causes cancer.

I believe that Federal agencies should always strive to respect the desires of the local communities in which they work, particularly when using potentially harmful chemicals on public lands. I have repeatedly called on the Army Corps to cease using glyphosate in the Los Angeles River, and have proposed amendments to Appropriations legislation to require the Corps to do so.

The Corps and other federal agencies should continue to seek out alternative vegetation management procedures that do not require the use of potentially harmful chemicals, and use these procedures to the maximum extent possible. However, I also recognize that the Corps uses glyphosate to manage

vegetation in part to reduce flood risk—an essential task—and that in certain situations, an appropriate alternative may not be immediately available.

Accordingly, the Committee should include in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 language to restrict the use of glyphosate within aquatic ecosystem restoration projects—including the Los Angeles River and other similarly sensitive ecosystems around the country—except in cases where both the Corps and the local non-Federal sponsor concur that using the chemical is necessary to address an immediate threat to human health or environment.

This balanced approach would ensure that the Corps respects local wishes regarding the use of chemicals in public lands, while also providing flexibility in cases where alternatives are not available.

I urge the Committee to consider such a provision as it drafts a Water Resources Development Act for 2020, and I remain committed to supporting the Corps' important work maintaining and restoring the Los Angeles River. Thank you for your work on this legislation and your attention to my requests.