

Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment – WRDA Member Day
Congressman Bradley S. Schneider

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to testify. I appreciate the chance to advocate on behalf of my district as the subcommittee considers additions to the Water Resource Development Act.

First, I want to talk about climate resiliency. Our region is already seeing the severe impact of climate change. We have faced three 100-year floods in the past twelve years, overwhelming our water infrastructure and causing millions in damage. As you consider future investments in our water resources and infrastructure, I urge the subcommittee to make climate resiliency a top priority. Our current infrastructure has already been pushed beyond its capacity – and we know that climate change will only exacerbate this challenge. We need to make sure our investments today are mindful of tomorrow’s challenges.

Second, I want to talk about the Army Corps of Engineers’ Section 219 authority regarding water-related environmental infrastructure for Lake County. I represent parts of both Cook and Lake Counties. As you may know, Cook County, Illinois is a designated geographic area eligible for Section 219 assistance to help local municipalities with environmental infrastructure. However, Lake County is not currently covered as an eligible area under Section 219. I am advocating that the subcommittee consider expanding Section 219 authority to include Lake County. With the help of then-Senator Obama, the 2006 WRDA bill included designation of Lake County under Section 219—but that legislation never became law. For an area facing increased flooding, designating Lake County under Section 219 would help these communities enact long-term solutions to address the issue.

Finally, I would like to discuss the historic lake levels we are seeing in Lake Michigan and across the Great Lakes system. Currently, Lake Michigan levels are more than four-feet above average levels and well above records set in the late-1980s. The Army Corps projects that lake levels are expected to remain at historic highs in the coming four to five months. High lake levels alone are cause for concern—in terms of increased erosion and property damage—but when combined with fierce winter storms like those seen in my community in January, the damage to both public and private property can be significant. In one community alone, the Park District of Highland Park estimates damage to public property along the shoreline to be as much as \$1.1 million. As the subcommittee considers investments in the Great Lakes region, I encourage you to think about the significant impact high lake levels are having for shoreline communities like mine. I strongly support funding to address the damage wrought by high lake levels and invest in long-term approaches to prevent this damage in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of my district. I yield back.