

Rep. Steil
Member Day Hearing 2/27/2020

- Thank you to Chairman Peter DeFazio and Ranking Member Sam Graves of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and to Chairwoman Grace Napolitano and Ranking Member Bruce Westerman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment for holding this hearing.
- The Water Resources Development Act, WRDA, invests in America's water infrastructure, generating economic growth and protecting our communities.
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to shine a light on issues facing Wisconsin and the greater Midwest region.
- Southeast Wisconsin includes Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee counties and Lake Michigan is vital to our communities.
- Why are the Great Lakes so important to Wisconsin and the Midwest?
- Millions of people live along the Great Lakes' coast.
- And the two largest cities in my district sit on the shores of Lake Michigan.
- According to the Census Bureau, 100,164 people live in Kenosha.
- 77,432 people live in Racine.
- If the Great Lakes region was a country, it would have the third largest economy in the world.
- The Great Lakes ports have generated \$1.4 billion in economic impact in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin tourism has a \$477 million impact on Racine and Kenosha counties and much of that is driven by Lake Michigan.
- Today, I'd like to touch on two Great Lakes' priorities to include in the 2020 WRDA: The Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study and the Brandon Road Project.
- First, the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study.
- After experiencing record low water levels in 2013, Lake Michigan is nearing record high water levels.
- Shoreline erosion is becoming a serious issue.
- For example, during a recent storm in January, high winds, combined with high water levels, resulted in significant flooding and extensive damage in Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine counties.

- According to recent assessments, Southeast Wisconsin reported \$30 million in damage to public infrastructure.
- As the state and local governments continue to work through appropriate channels to address the damage, the federal government also has a role to play.
- That is why I am here today.
- As a part of the 2020 WRDA, I ask that you fully fund the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study.
- The Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study brings together the eight Great Lakes states and federal partners to examine our shorelines and prevent environmental hazards.
- The Study area includes more than 5,000 miles of shoreline.
- This is a federal program that helps detect vulnerabilities along the shoreline and improve our communities' sustainability for generations to come.
- Finally, I ask that the Committee adequately funds the Brandon Road Project to prevent the Asian Carp from entering the Great Lakes.
- This species poses a great threat to the viability of the region.
- The Asian Carp are known for their voracious appetites and for decimating native fish populations.
- And, they've been found only a few miles from Lake Michigan.
- The Asian Carp has the potential to hurt the \$7 billion fishing industry of the Great Lakes.
- Preventing the establishment of the Asian Carp in the Great Lakes is an effective approach to sustain our fishing industry.
- The Brandon Road Project, an Army Corps of Engineers program, is a preventive measure to safeguard the Great Lakes.
- Adequately funding the Brandon Road Project in the 2020 WRDA would greatly help states, like Wisconsin, address threats to our ecosystem and economy.
- Again, I want to thank the Chair and Ranking Member for having me here today.

- Your support of the Great Lakes does not go unnoticed.
- I look forward to working with you so Wisconsin's valuable natural resources stay sustainable for generations to come.