

**Rep. Buddy Carter Written Testimony  
House Committee Transportation and Infrastructure  
Water Resources Development Act Member Day Hearing  
January 11, 2024**

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

Thank you both for considering my testimony as the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continues its work this Congress, especially with the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

As the representative of the entire coast of Georgia, WRDA is extremely important piece of legislation for my constituents. U.S. Army Corps of Engineer projects throughout our district have allowed us to grow and prosper over the years.

The most significant project, of course, has been the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP), which has been an extraordinary success story for our state and region. Completed in March of 2022, SHEP deepened the Savannah Harbor to 47 feet to allow larger ships from all around the globe to access the Port of Savannah.

This has allowed the Port of Savannah to be the single largest and fastest-growing container terminal in America in addition to being the second largest port on the East Coast by volume.

In FY2022 it moved 5.8 million TEUs (Twenty Foot Equivalent Container Units) in throughput, an increase of 8.1% when compared to the previous year.

None of this would be possible without the work done here on the T&I Committee and the authorizations for SHEP through WRDA.

I thank the Committee for its continued support for a project that is bringing true benefits to our country.

According to a Corps of Engineers study, the project is expected to net more than \$291 million in annual benefits to the nation, or approximately \$7.70 for every dollar invested in the project.

Georgia's deep water ports and inland barge terminals support nearly 561,000 jobs throughout the state annually and contributes \$33 billion in income, \$140 billion in sales, and \$3.8 billion in state and local taxes to Georgia's economy.

However, for all the benefits this project has already brought, the world is changing rapidly, and ships continue to only get bigger and bigger.

That is why I am asking for the Committee to include authorization for a new feasibility study or modification to an existing study authorization to authorization to examine the benefit of both widening and deepening the harbor at the Port of Savannah to better accommodate today's commercial demands and to prepare for meetings tomorrow's trade needs.

The recently completed dredging under SHEP was designed for vessels with an 8,200-TEU capacity and the Port of Savannah is currently accommodating ships holding more than 16,000 TEUs on a tidally-restricted basis.

With the Georgia DOT raising the height of the Talmadge Bridge, the Port of Savannah's air draft capacity increases significantly - opening the door to serve even larger vessels and increase its significant positive impact on America's economy.

My next request for the Committee is for Tybee Island, which sits down river from the Port of Savannah and is an important barrier island for our coast. While the growth of the Port of Savannah has been welcome, the federal channel has directly contributed to erosion on the island and are in persistent need of renourishment.

That is why I am requesting authorization for a new feasibility study, incorporating the results of the Chanel Impact Study, that would lead to the development of a project to adequately solve or mitigate the erosion of Tybee Island's beaches.

Next, I would like to request that the Committee consider the authorization of a GAO on the benefits of digital project delivery for the US Army Corps. With the savings that digital infrastructure tools provide and the hundreds of different studies and projects that the Corps engages in each year around the country.

Digital infrastructure technologies are cloud based, open data, computer platforms that integrate digital technology throughout the lifecycle of an infrastructure asset.

These technologies are proven and utilized around the world for infrastructure projects to reduce project costs, accelerate project delivery, and build more innovative, resilient, and sustainable assets, including water infrastructure projects.

Today, digital infrastructure technologies are used by all 50 state Departments of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and owner-operators of critical infrastructure throughout the country.

Such a study should hopefully demonstrate the savings that digital infrastructure tools can provide to the hundreds of different studies and projects that the Corps engages in each year around the country.

Lastly, I ask that the Committee to provide Environmental Infrastructure Assistance authority for the coastal Georgia counties of Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, and McIntosh.

Under WRDA, the US Army Corps is authorized to provide assistance with design and construction of infrastructure in specified municipalities, counties, and states. This assistance supports publicly owned and operated facilities, such as water distribution works, stormwater collection, surface water protection projects, and environmental restoration, among others.

This environmental infrastructure is becoming increasingly important in our district as we experience significant growth from the activity at the Ports that I've already mentioned and new manufacturing coming to the area.

Adding authority for Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, and McIntosh would provide an opportunity to help these communities with some of their drinking, stormwater, wastewater, and other flooding problems.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important issues for my district, state, and the country.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to ensure the inclusion of these requests that will bring significant benefits to our communities and country.