

Member Day Hearing Speech

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee **Hearing – Full Committee**

“Water Resources Development Act of 2024”

Thursday, January 11th @ 10:00 – 10:30AM

- Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, thank you for providing me the opportunity to participate in today’s hearing.
- I am here today to discuss critically important water resource issues impacting Central Washington which I hope will be addressed in *the Water Resources Development Act of 2024*.
- The policies, studies, and projects authorized by WRDA and carried out by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers affect the daily life of my neighbors and constituents in Central Washington. This includes locks and dams that enable navigation and boost recreation, hydropower facilities that generate clean, reliable, and efficient power, and levees that reduce the impact of storms on our communities.

- Today, I am going to discuss “urban canals of concern”, the Othello Water Supply Project, and the Lower Snake River Dams.
- Back in November, I introduced *the Urban Canal Modernization Act*. If enacted, this legislation would allow the Bureau of Reclamation to authorize a 35 percent non-reimbursable cost-share to aid in repairing and rehabilitating “urban canals of concern” which are canals through urban areas that could cause significant property damage or loss of life.
- The arduous task of maintaining and modernizing our outdated urban canal systems is necessary for the safety of our local communities. I urge the Committee to include the language from this bill within WRDA.
- Now, I would like to turn to the Othello Water Supply Project. In Central Washington, there is an increasing demand for water with a corresponding limited supply. To address this issue, we must diversify our water supply to alleviate environmental challenges and stabilize water supplies vulnerable to drought.

- The Othello Water Supply Project will do this by creating an aquifer storage and recovery water treatment plant aimed at conveying water underground, storing it, and then recovering it for beneficial use.
- I respectfully request the Committee support the authorization of new resources necessary to enable the development of the Othello Water Treatment Plant to ensure Central Washington has a reliable, long-term, clean water supply.
- Lastly, and most importantly, I want to turn to the Columbia River System Operations, or CRSO, and the Lower Snake River Dams.
- Over the last several years, the Biden Administration alongside dam breaching advocates and several indigenous sovereign states have engaged in litigation and mediation over the CRSO.
- In December 2023, this culminated in a final package of actions and commitments from the Biden Administration which, if implemented will, in my opinion, operationally breach the Lower Snake River

Dams, spur exorbitant ratepayer increases, and cause harm to the salmon population.

- The overall CRSO, especially the Lower Snake River Dams, provide immeasurable benefits to millions of Americans across the Pacific Northwest. From flood control and irrigation to the transportation of agricultural goods to our ports, and more.
- Recreationists, farmers, river-dependent ports and communities, transportation stakeholders, and electricity customers would be irreparably damaged if the Lower Snake River Dams are breached.
- As such, I staunchly oppose the inclusion of any language in WRDA which would operationally or physically breach the Lower Snake River Dams as well as aid any federal agency in implementing the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative.
- In the coming days I will be submitting my formal requests to the committee. And, as you craft the base text for this legislation in the months ahead, I encourage you to take these vital interests into consideration.

- I yield back.