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House of Representatives
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TESTIMONY OF CONGRESSMAN DARREN SOTO
WRDA 2024
FOR THE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, thank you for allowing me to testify before the Committee about my priorities for the Water Resources Development Act of 2024.

Among the requests I am making is to expand and build upon the Army Corp of Engineers' existing authority to create a Florida-specific program that removes sedimentary shoals in Florida waterways and relocates the pristine sand from the shoals to renourish sandy beaches along the Florida coast. Additionally, I request making Osceola County's chain of lakes, rivers, and tributaries be a priority for this program.

In terms of projects, I request the authorization of a feasibility study for East Lake Tohopekaliga, Boggy Creek, and their connected tributaries for sediment and debris management. My environmental infrastructure requests include:

- The Northern Lake Tohopekaliga Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Project, which would allow for flood storage and reduction of nutrient and sediment flow to the Upper Kissimmee Basin of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.
- The Historic Whitted Neighborhood Sewer Connection, which would connect to the City of St. Cloud's sewer system and provide safe and reliable wastewater disposal to approximately 52 residents within the historic African American Whitted Neighborhood located in the Narcoossee area of Osceola County, FL.
- Creation of a Sediment and Debris Management program for East Lake Tohopekaliga, Boggy Creek, and Tributaries to improve flood conveyance. Natural sediment flows through East Lake Tohopekaliga are restricted by controlled water flows resulting in navigational impairments, reduction of surface area in the lake for recreation and crucial littoral habitat, increased flood stages upstream, and increased nuisance vegetation.
- The St Johns River/Taylor Creek Reservoir (TCR) Alternative Water Supply Project, which aims to meet future water supply demands beyond permitted groundwater supplies, serving Central Florida residents in portions of Brevard County, Orange County, and Osceola County. This reservoir/levee construction is the foundation for developing

subsequent phases of the project, including transmission mains, pumping, and a treatment plant.

- Alternative water supply projects in the Central Florida Water Initiative area that provide regional benefits to Toho Water Authority and its member governments and Orange County Utilities. The project is in eastern Orange and Osceola Counties and is being implemented as a regional partnership between Orange County, Orlando Utilities Commission, City of Cocoa, East Central Florida Services, and Toho Water Authority to supply up to 54 million gallons per day (MGD) annual average daily flow of treated surface water for public supply.
- Lake Conway environmental restoration, flood control, and debris removal, including water quality improvement, to mitigate future flooding and clear the lake of existing invasive species such as hydrilla.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Larsen, I look forward to working with you to advance my priorities in this bill and I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you and I yield back.