

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, thank you for this chance to share how vital the Water Resources Development Act is to America's communities, and especially for Floridians.

The Army Corps of Engineers has major ongoing projects throughout South Florida, from restoring the Everglades and investing in our ports, to fighting rising seas by nourishing beaches and managing flood risk. Obviously, the Corps' work is vital in Florida, on many urgent fronts.

Real Time Emissions Monitoring

To meet the Biden Administration's ambitious goals for reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, it is imperative that we adopt a comprehensive approach.

One effective lever within reach is the optimization of fuel efficiency in the Corps' existing vehicle fleet.

And we don't need to invest billions in new boats and vessels to achieve this.

By incorporating real-time emissions' measurements, and recommending operational and technical efficiency improvements, we can achieve substantial cost savings for American taxpayers, while also contributing to environmental conservation.

I propose that we include language in this WRDA encouraging the Corps to consider investing in this new technology and to brief Congress on potential opportunities to leverage this technology in the future.

Western Everglades Restoration Project

The second topic I want to bring to the Committee's attention is the Western Everglades Restoration Project.

Within the boundaries of the Western Everglades is Reservation land that is home to the Miccosukee and Seminoles Tribe of Florida.

You'll also find Big Cypress National Preserve and a portion of Everglades National Park there.

With this watershed providing 40 percent of the water flowing into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, it is crucial to authorize the construction of this project in the water resources bill.

Beach Renourishment

Next, I want to highlight that the Corps recently implemented new shore protection policy guidelines.

The beach renourishment work the Corps performs along our nations coastlines is invaluable to our local communities, especially in South Florida.

A wide, nourished beach system absorbs wave energy, protects upland areas from flooding, and mitigates erosion.

Before the Corps performs work, they need easements from adjacent landowners. That makes sense. We don't want to strip landowners of their property rights.

But the Corps changed their policy and now requires non-federal sponsors to acquire perpetual construction easements from 100% of the upland owners within a project footprint.

This is a different interpretation than was used in the past and it has placed a number of projects in Broward County at risk, because getting these easements can be difficult.

I ask the Committee to work with the Corps on finding a solution moving forward that works for everyone, because we cannot let these important projects stall and fail.

Everglades Restoration

The last issue I want to bring to the Committee's attention is Everglades restoration work performed by the Corps.

I ask the Committee to include language authorizing the Corps to continue to use and implement the Incremental Funding Clause for large CERP projects like the EAA Reservoir.

Using incremental funding demonstrably reduces project delivery timelines and costs – saving American taxpayer dollars, while also preserving America’s Everglades.

I also ask the Committee to direct the Corps to provide a report to Congress on the modifications that were made to the design of the EAA Reservoir, including the depth and size of the reservoir.

Closing

I appreciate the work you put into this legislation and look forward to helping you pass the bill this year.