



**SUBJECT:** Members' Day hearing  
Water Resources Development Act 2024

**COMMITTEE:** Transportation & Infrastructure

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**Rep. J. Luis Correa – Written Testimony**

Thank you, Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for hosting Members' Day for members to share their requests for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024.

Today, I'd like to highlight two projects that in the heart of my district.

In the 1986 Water Resources Development Act, the Santa Ana River Mainstem Project (SARMP) was fully authorized as a flood-risk management project. The SARMP, which includes the Santiago Creek (Creek) component, also received funding under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA18) so that all components could be completed as designed and approved. The Creek work represents the last component of the SARMP.

My request for WRDA 2024, which was developed after consultation with the Corps, would amend the current authorizing language to better address the *flood control* needs and concerns of the community located on a specific stretch of the Creek component entirely in my District.

Since the US Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) released the proposal for the Creek, there has been a bifurcated response: strong support for work upstream of the I-5 Freeway(I-5) and uniform, emphatic, and consistent opposition to the proposed work between the I-5 and the confluence of the Creek with the Santa Ana River (the River).

Primarily, the affected community supports flood control measures but ardently objects to the wholesale removal of trees in and along the Creek channel section in their neighborhoods that support a wide variety of wildlife, including Bald Eagles.

This language would address the concerns raised by my constituents directly impacted by the proposed plan by enabling the Corps to redesign the plan.

Specifically, the language would separate the Creek component into two distinct sections, one upstream of I-5 and a second downstream of I-5. This would permit and require the Corps to continue work on all other portions of the SARMP, including the work upstream of I-5, by leaving the rest of SARMP unaffected. Through this language, the Corps would not initiate construction in the stretch between the I-5 and the confluence of the River unless and until the Corps redesigns the project to minimize the impacts to existing trees located in or adjacent to this portion of the project. This new plan would be subject to public and environmental review. Moreover, since the entire SARMP is funded by BBA18, all costs associated with minimizing impacts to existing trees shall be met using available BBA18 funds.

I thank the Committee again for this opportunity to discuss making this important flood control project work for the conscientious Santa Ana residents who are eager to retain the wildlife corridor along the Creek in their neighborhood.

My second request is to support the OC River Walk project, located in Anaheim, California. OC River Walk is a dynamic and multi-functioning project with water resource, recreational, and economic benefits. The project aligns with the Corps' Environmental Operating Principles, and the project is structured to avoid detrimental impacts to the important flood resiliency functions of the Santa Ana River and enhance its benefits.

My request is for an expedited review of the Section 404 and 408 permit process from the Corps for the planned OC River Walk. The City of Anaheim has initiated the Section 404 and Section 408 permitting process with the USACE Los Angeles District (South Pacific Division).

Expedited review of the Section 404 and 408 permits and associated studies will allow the City of Anaheim to move more quickly toward construction and allow the region to benefit more quickly from the anticipated project outcomes.

The project has achieved support and engagement from the critical stakeholders, including Orange County Water District, the City of Orange, Orange County Public Works/Flood, and Orange County Parks. OC River Walk will ensure that the Santa Ana River continues to serve as the County's primary flood control

infrastructure and increases the replenishment capacity of the Orange County Groundwater Aquifer, while improving connectivity, recreation, aesthetics, and ecology of the River and adjacent land. The City of Anaheim is eager to begin construction as soon as possible to ensure the project is complete in time for the 2028 Summer Olympic in the region.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter and I look forward to continuing to work with you on these and other issues.