

Testimony of
The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairwoman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development,
and Related Agencies

Before the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

United States House of Representatives

Hearing entitled “WRDA Member Day Hearing”

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Thank you Chairman Rouzer, Ranking Member Napolitano, and your respective staff for the hard work you have put in to developing the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA). On a bipartisan basis, your Committee has now completed work on five consecutive WRDAs since 2014 – advancing significant progress to meet our nation’s needs.

The Committee’s authorization of new U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects, studies, and policies supports local, regional, and national priorities that have a lasting impact. As Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the Corps’ budget, it is an honor to partner with you in this mission.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you here today the important water resources development needs of the communities in my district and the Great Lakes Region as a whole. Chief among them is the need to advance the Corps' critical work maintaining and improving the harbors and waterways on Great Lakes in a manner that improves water quality in the largest fresh surface water system on earth. In Lake Erie, which borders my district, meeting that goal will require the Corps and its non-federal partners to maximize the beneficial use of dredged material from federally authorized harbors.

Thanks to your Committee's inclusion of section 8130(b) in the WRDA 2022, the Corps is now making progress on dredged material management plans for the Lake Erie harbors that will not involve open lake disposal. However, Corps financial assistance for the design and implementation of dredged material placement facilities in the State of Ohio continues to fall short of what is authorized by law. The State of Ohio and the individual Lake Erie port authorities have made tremendous investments in beneficial use placement sites and confined disposal facilities over many years, and it is time for the Corps to step up and cost-share these improvements in accordance with standing authorities. I urge the Committee to direct the Corps to expedite the completion of cost-sharing agreements for the beneficial use placement sites and confined disposal facilities on Lake Erie that are currently being planned and designed by non-federal partners at their own expense.

Protecting our freshwater kingdom of the Great Lakes also requires completion of the interbasin invasive species barrier at Brandon Road Lock and Dam. Located on the Des Plaines River near Joliet, Illinois, Brandon Road is a central connection

point through which invasive Carp species frequently move between the Illinois Waterway system into Lake Michigan and the four other Great Lakes, severely harming native fish species. \$225.8 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will fund the construction and deployment of state-of-the-art technologies and innovative programs that interrupt the movement, but local cooperation requirements remain a challenge to implementation. Thanks to your Committee's work on the WRDA 2022, construction of the interbasin invasive species barrier now requires a 90 percent Federal contribution. The Committee can further ensure implementation by modifying the cost sharing for operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation of the measures.

I would also like to thank the Committee for its continued focus on another ecological problem that we face in the Great Lakes region: harmful algal blooms (HABs). The expertise of Corps scientists and engineers is invaluable in the fight against the devastation wrought by HABs. The Corps provides resource management, water flow design, and engineering solutions for HAB prevention, mitigation, and control. I urge the Committee to continue supporting the ongoing work of the Corps for testing HAB controls and encouraging continued interagency cooperation.

In particular, I urge the Committee to expand the scope of the Harmful Algal Bloom Demonstration program authorized in the WRDA 2020 to address not only HAB associated with water resources development projects but also HAB that adversely impact large bodies of water of regional, national, or international significance. This will ensure that demonstration projects designed to address HAB

in Western Lake Erie, some of the most frequent and severe in the nation, will be eligible for funding under the Corps' program. Additionally, I urge the Committee to emphasize the importance of demonstration projects designed to develop and deploy advanced monitoring tools and networks and to address the nutrient loading that is the root cause of HAB at the source of the problem.

Finally, I ask the Committee to consider authorizing a new Environmental Infrastructure program for the City of Toledo. In 2014, the City's drinking water service was interrupted due to contamination from a HAB. While the City has invested vast amounts of funding since then to mitigate the risk of contamination in the future, a secondary water source will ultimately be required to ensure that the 2014 crisis is not repeated.

Thank you again for your dedication to pursuing another WRDA on a bipartisan basis.