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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION, RESEARCH,
AND BIOTECHNOLOGY;
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES,
RISK MANAGEMENT AND CREDIT,
COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL ASSETS,
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HEALTH

January 11, 2024

House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee as part of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Member Day. Below are the top three requests I plan to submit for your consideration as you continue your work on this important reauthorization.

The State of Illinois and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) St. Louis District has a history of working collaboratively on flood mitigation efforts in the East St. Louis Metropolitan Area. Studies sponsored by both the State of Illinois and USACE in 1957, 1965, 1976 and 1985 have yielded mixed results, with some projects suggested by the studies being implemented, while other projects were deemed uneconomical based on conditions at that time.

The WRDA 2000 authorized the USACE to perform a General Reevaluation Report of the 1965 Flood Control Act to include ecosystem restoration as a project purpose. The 2000 WRDA authorization resulted in the East St. Louis, and Vicinity, Illinois Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project report which was published in 2003. The State of Illinois supports a re-evaluation of the 2003 report to update this study with economic, rainfall and engineering data.

Additionally, there are projects suggested by the 2003 East St. Louis and Vicinity Report, including the Spring Lake Project, that may economically and substantially reduce flood risk in the region. I, alongside Senators Durbin and Duckworth, request that Congress directs the USACE to complete a Reevaluation Report for the East St. Louis, and Vicinity, Illinois Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project, and complete a Feasibility Study

of the Spring Lake Project recommended in the East St. Louis and Vicinity Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project report to advance this structural project to a Pre-construction Engineering Design (PED) phase.

I also request, alongside our Illinois senators, modification to the scope and authorization ceiling for Madison and St. Clair Counties, Illinois -- Section 219(f)(55) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992. Scope modification is to include Stormwater Management to the existing scope of water and wastewater infrastructure assistance, and the requested ceiling amount would be increased from \$100 million to \$200 million. This modification will enable USACE to provide engineering design and/or construction assistance to places like Cahokia Heights, East St. Louis, Washington Park and Granite City who are dealing with significant stormwater management and flooding challenges.

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funded seven inland waterways construction projects. However, IIJA funds will be insufficient to complete any of these critical projects that Congress intended the IIJA fund to completion. Unless modified in WRDA 2024, the disparity between projected costs reflect in IIJA funding levels and subsequent real world project costs threatens to jeopardize and delay critical ongoing and planned capital improvements that are desperately and urgently needed to modernize our nation's antiquated inland waterways transportation system, further delaying economic and environmental benefits. It will also result in the IIJA failing to achieve an accelerated return on investment, which was the intent of Congress in authorizing 100 percent federal funding for these seven projects, which are especially needed given the uncertainty in global agriculture and energy markets.

To that end, consistent with IIJA congressional intent, I request that the Committee adjust funding levels to ensure that the federal government continues to cover 100 percent of the cost of the seven inland waterways construction and major rehabilitation projects.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I look forward to working with you on these important issues. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nikki Budzinski". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress