

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (CA-18) Testimony
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Member Day Hearing for
2024 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and members of the full Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and for your work as the Committee prepares the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. As you consider WRDA proposals, I strongly urge the Committee to support the following requests on behalf of the communities I represent.

First, I am requesting an U.S. Army Corps of Engineers feasibility study regarding expanding the capacity of Soap Lake in San Benito County to prevent and mitigate flooding in the region. Soap Lake currently acts as a holding basin during the rainy season and helps regulate water flow to the Pajaro River and surrounding tributaries. For decades, there have been several major floods along the Pajaro River that have destroyed homes and displaced residents. Most recently, in March 2023, the Pajaro River levees were breached, causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. The County of San Benito, which would be the non-federal partner on the study, is interested in expanding Soap Lake to reduce downstream flood risks along the Pajaro River during high rain events.

I am also requesting authorization of two important Environmental Infrastructure projects in my Congressional District. The first is for the City of San Juan Bautista to upgrade its drinking and wastewater system by connecting to regional water and wastewater systems. Due to excessive

groundwater salt content, the City is not able to provide adequate drinking and wastewater treatment services to its residents. The City has identified the project as its highest priority public infrastructure project. Without access to adequate drinking and wastewater systems, it is extremely challenging for the City to attract new residents or businesses. Additionally, with a population of approximately 2,000 people, it is extremely challenging for the City to meet its water infrastructure needs without additional sources of assistance. This project is a sound investment and will ensure that San Juan Bautista residents have access to safe water resources.

The second Environmental Infrastructure project I am requesting would replace cast iron water lines in the historic downtown of the City of Hollister. The City experiences frequent earthquakes from the nearby Calaveras fault line, and the City's aging water lines have experienced multiple significant water line breaks over the years, disrupting residents, businesses, and local traffic. Many of the old water lines also do not provide enough flow to meet fire code standards for fire hydrants, which the project would also address. This project would help secure reliable water supply in the City and reduce public safety risks in the event of an earthquake or fire.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests that are so crucial to the safety of residents in Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and along the Pajaro River.