



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2016 Budget Hearing – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works February 11, 2015 Opening Statement As Prepared

Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding, and Assistant Secretary Darcy and Lieutenant General Bostick, I appreciate you taking the time to be here today.

I welcome you to the first hearing of the Energy and Water Subcommittee for Fiscal Year 2016. As this process begins anew, I am hopeful that the Committee can continue its recent track record of working collaboratively, under regular order, to draft thoughtful, responsible bills to fund our federal government.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers certainly has a diverse set of projects to manage – from lakes to rivers to dams – each with their own unique challenges. I continue to be impressed with the talented individuals at the Corps who engineer these projects that stand the test of time and weather. These projects are critical to the national economy, and I have always appreciated the collaborative nature of our partnership with the Corps in planning their work – and working their plan. With such significant potential for economic impact, it is important that we get things right in the budget and set the right priorities with these projects.

In my District in Kentucky, the Corps has protected communities from the threat of constant flooding, enabled the next generation of reliable hydropower, and created numerous recreational opportunities on rivers, lakes and campgrounds for residents and visitors alike. In addition to managing one of the most complex and expensive water resources infrastructure projects in history at Wolf Creek Dam, the Corps has supported numerous communities in smaller-scale flood mitigation efforts. Recently, you've turned your attention to the Town of Martin, KY, which was subjected to years and years of damaging floods and has suffered tremendous loss of livelihood and property as a result. I look forward to working with you to move critical town structures to higher and drier ground, and I appreciate your partnership with the town in this effort. Without a doubt, because of your efforts and expertise, these communities are much safer and more secure.

While the Corps is getting so much right, there are some concerns with regard to the execution of the Corps' mission and its adherence to the direction of Congress. One primary issue is the Corps' commitment to its recreation mandate; Lake Cumberland in my District is a perfect example. The Corps has been reticent to embrace opportunities for recreation on this lake, despite clear direction in the most recent WRRDA bill passed by Congress.

Of even greater concern is the manner in which the Corps is choosing to execute its regulatory authority. The regulations promulgated and enforced through the Corps have a tremendous impact on jobs and economy, and we are feeling this in my District. We have been witnessing this Administration's relentless attack on coal jobs for years, and each new regulation imposed on this industry is making life more difficult and uncertain for the people of my region. Those who depend on the coal industry for work and for reliable energy are seeing jobs disappear around them as their energy bills continue to rise. With each new instance of bureaucratic overreach in this war on coal, we see businesses close and more Americans struggle to find work. It is time for bureaucrats to lay aside their personal animus toward the coal industry and allow for a true "all of the above" energy strategy in this country.

In the same vein, I continue to be dismayed at the efforts of the Corps and the EPA to write new rules redefining "waters of the United States." If they go into effect, these new rules will place stringent standards on thousands of miles of streams across the country, some of which only flow seasonally after heavy rains. Every hollow and valley in Kentucky has a stream running through it, and over-regulating each of them will only further distress economic activity in the region. This means road construction, coal mining, and any other activity that takes place near these newly defined navigable waters will only take place with the say-so of a federal bureaucrat. These new regulations will strangle economic development in Appalachia and place yet another layer of red tape on job creating projects and businesses across the country.

These issues are vital for the people of Appalachia, for other coal producing regions across the country, and for our national economy. I hope that you will touch on these and other important issues in your remarks, so we may better understand how the Corps plans to address these challenges. Thank you.

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