



Chairman Mike Simpson

*Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and
Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations*

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

I'd like to call this hearing to order. Good morning, everyone. Before we turn to today's business, I would like to take a moment to remember Congressman Alan Nunnelee, who we lost last week and far too soon. He was a great vice-chairman – hardworking, honest, and steadfast in his desire to make our country better. He was a true gentleman and a man of great faith. We will miss him.

We begin this year's budget hearings with a look at the request for the Civil Works program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I'd like to welcome our witnesses, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers Lieutenant General Thomas Bostick. It is good to see you both again, and I look forward to your testimony.

Over the past several years, this Administration has, at times, said all the right things about the economic benefits of navigation and the economic and public safety benefits of flood and storm damage reduction investments. Unfortunately, year after year, the budget falls far short of actually making progress in any of these areas.

Congress, on the other hand, has recognized the importance of the Civil Works program by providing the Corps with funding above the budget request, including significant increases for the past two years. For fiscal year 2015, we added \$922 million above the budget request and for fiscal year 2014, we added \$641 million.

Even though the President's fiscal year 2016 request for all Energy and Water programs is increased by \$1.8 billion over fiscal year 2015, almost every major category in the Corps' budget is cut.

- Navigation funding is reduced by 16 percent;
- Flood and storm damage reduction activities are down 20 percent;
- Harbor maintenance activities are cut 17 percent;
- Construction funding for our inland waterways system is reduced by 17 percent – and that's after industry successfully lobbied to raise its own taxes to help pay for these capital improvements;

- The overall Construction account is slashed 28 percent; and
- Funding for studies and other planning activities is decreased by 20 percent.

This is not the budget request of an Administration that understands the importance of investing in our nation's water resources infrastructure.

My concerns are not limited to only the budget request. The Administration has also been pursuing several policy changes that could have a chilling effect on economic development across the nation. The proposed rule to redefine "waters of the United States" is a prime example. This joint proposal by the Corps and the EPA would expand federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act far beyond what the Supreme Court has said is legal. Using tenuous, at best, connections to navigable waters to force an onerous and expensive permitting process on our agricultural, industrial, transportation, and other business sectors as well as individual property owners will hurt, not help, economic progress.

I would note that I find it interesting that the budget request includes an additional \$5 million specifically to implement this rulemaking. The Administration has claimed that this rule would streamline the permitting process by providing clarity and certainty for applicants. If that were true, the Corps should need *less* money to process permits, not *more*.

Taken individually and in combination, these budgetary and policy proposals paint a troubling picture for the future of our water resources and our national economy. I look forward to further exploring these issues later in the hearing.

Again, I'd like to welcome our witnesses to the subcommittee. Secretary Darcy, please ensure that the hearing record, questions for the record, and any supporting information requested by the Subcommittee are delivered in final form to us no later than four weeks from the time you receive them. Members who have additional questions for the record will have until the close of business Friday to provide them to the Subcommittee office.

With that, I'll turn to Ms. Kaptur for her opening comments.

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