

**Testimony of Congressman Mike Johnson (LA-04)**  
**Submitted to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development**  
**March 6, 2017**

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Thank you Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Kaptur, my colleagues and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify in front of the Energy and Water Development subcommittee on the importance of developing and maintaining Louisiana and the nation's water infrastructure needs.

Today I ask the committee to help fund dredging needs that will provide much needed resources related to flooding, navigation benefits, and not forget the tremendous benefit shallow-draft waterways and ports have in bringing jobs back to the United States. The role our inland waterway systems play is an integral part of our nation's maritime system and is critically important to our prosperity as a country. In Louisiana's Fourth District, some of our biggest challenges, and yet some of our greatest opportunities, revolve around port infrastructure and further development of the navigation of our rivers. There are 4 shallow draft port authorities which service 485 miles of navigable waterways and shallow draft river miles.

As many of you are aware, the Red River in Northwest Louisiana experienced a major flood event in June 2015 which affected 21 parishes. This flood, along with a series of other recent flooding events, have significantly damaged our navigation structures and are threatening the maintenance of the channel and the safety of Louisianans.

An immediate issue that was identified was how far off the actual river's flood stage crest was from the projected crest, which is based on the 1990 flood of record. The flood crest in 2015 was significantly higher than the flood crest in 1990 crest – with less volume of water measured at

the Shreveport gauge. The higher flood stage caused significant damage to homes, agricultural land, businesses, the oil and gas industry, and public infrastructures.

In order to determine the reasons for these discrepancies, **a Sedimentation Survey and Hydraulic Model from the Army Corps of Engineers is necessary.** The \$1.5 million study is authorized under the existing J. Bennett Johnston Waterway Project, Construction General Account. Unfortunately, only \$250,000 was allocated in FY 2016. Robust funding is needed to help projects such as this. If this survey and model are not completed and analyzed, the 350,000 acres and approximately 58,000 residents will continue to suffer from future flood events.

A second major issue concerns the protection of major infrastructure. River levels have come within feet of entering structures in Bossier City. Due to the changed river profile, it is highly likely that levees need to be raised and flood walls constructed to protect existing infrastructure. FEMA has stated that the federal methods used to regulate development of Special Flood Hazard Areas would have to be re-evaluated due to ongoing discrepancies which were on full display during the 2015 flood event. **However, in true-to-form fashion, FEMA cannot provide a final Base Flood Elevation (BFE) or Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) update without the Corp's sedimentation study and hydraulic model.** Funding the Sedimentation Survey will allow FEMA to do their job and further protect the people of Louisiana by completing updates to the BFE and FIRM.

In addition to these studies, the Red River has several other immediate items which are in need of federal action and funding:

I ask the committee to continue to work with me on the ongoing needs related to dredging so that river navigation for a 24/7 industry can be maintained. These funding priorities will not only help protect constituents, but improve business development opportunities for Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. Navigation funds through the Corps are truly needed to ensure and maintain a 9' x 200' channel. Without this, businesses will not only pick elsewhere to invest, those that already have invested in North Louisiana will leave. The planned goal is getting to 12' river depths to ensure adequate competition with nearby rivers, such as the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers. A request for an investigation to change the authorized depth from 9' to 12' channel has been initiated. Repair for damaged buoys, locks, and levees along the Red River are also sorely needed.

The construction features of the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway project are only 93% complete. The Alexandria Front Dike Reinforcement Construction project and the J.H. Overton Lock & Dam 2 Lower Approach project are examples of two projects that can compete for funding within the Construction General Account. Resources for these projects will help to aid in completion of the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway.

Another example of where navigation funds are needed is the Ouchita-Black Rivers Navigation Project. Previously, the FY17 budget request for the navigation project was \$8.5 million. Additional maintenance account funds would allow this project to compete for the additional funds necessary to keep the waterway open for commercial navigation in the next year.

I strongly urge this subcommittee to invest in our ports and waterways so that our local communities can continue to build vibrant economies. I stand ready to work with each of you

and the Administration in developing meaningful solutions to better maintain and enhance our nation's vast water infrastructure system.