

Rep. Lance NJ-07 Testimony

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Kaptur, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing and providing me with the opportunity to update you on the Rahway River Basin Flood Risk Management Feasibility Study, a key project that is critical to and affects constituents in many communities in the Congressional District I serve in New Jersey.

The area has experienced significant repeated flooding over the past century, most notably during Tropical Storm Floyd in 1999, a Noreaster in 2007, Hurricane Irene in 2011 and Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Hurricane Irene caused more than \$50 million in damages, impacting 3,000 homes, forcing some families out of their homes for more than a year.

For the last three years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been advancing a study of a project aimed at reducing flooding along the Rahway River. This Subcommittee has generously provided funding through the Investigations Account essential to this work, and for that I remain extremely grateful.

Unfortunately, late last year, the Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters halted the Tentatively Selected Plan prepared by the New York District, a plan that represented a compromise that had consensus support of the affected communities and the Corps officials most familiar with the Rahway River. The pause related to concerns about a key component of the TSP, the Orange Reservoir Dam, which is considered a small dam, that had been proposed for modification or

replacement and which provides much-needed upstream storage allowing for protection from flooding in downstream communities.

Because the TSP was scheduled to lead to a Chief's Report in 2018, my constituents have been dismayed at the impasse and the further delays that the project has encountered.

I have been working directly with the Corps to address their concerns, and am grateful that they have agreed to extend the 3x3x3 rules to continue evaluation of the project, and have also agreed to perform a detailed geotechnical study of the Orange Reservoir Dam in conjunction with the non-federal partner on the project, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

I continue to believe that providing protection from flooding along the Rahway River represents one of the clearest examples of the core function of government – protection of life and property.

While I am not seeking funding in Fiscal Year 2019 to advance this effort, I respectfully ask to continue to work closely with the Subcommittee in its oversight capacity of the Army Corps of Engineers because it is absolutely critical that Headquarters help us advance a project that will provide significant protection from flooding in the affected communities.

Inaction or a plan that does not offer adequate flood protection would be an unacceptable outcome. It would undermine the public trust in fulfilling this core function of government. We have the best minds, the best experts in dams and flood control at the Army Corps, and it is imperative that they determine a project that can advance.

Thank you for the time today and for your prior assistance with helping us to cooperatively advance the Rahway River project.