

Statement of Congressman James Comer

April 9, 2019

Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee Member Day

Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the 1st Congressional District of Kentucky's priorities in the Fiscal Year 2020 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Paducah, Kentucky, is home to the Paducah Department of Energy Cleanup site. From 1952 to 2013 the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant enriched uranium in support of America's nuclear weapons program and provided fuel for commercial nuclear power plants. The work that was done there was critical to both the defense and energy security of our nation. However, this important work left behind significant soil and water contamination. Deactivation and cleanup work has been underway since 2014, but there is still decades of work to be done to fully remediate the site.

In FY 2014, approximately \$320 million was appropriated for cleanup activities, unfortunately that funding has dropped to about \$270 million in subsequent fiscal years. Increased funding of \$300 million would expedite the cleanup activities, including:

- Removal of 8.5 million pounds of R-114 refrigerant from the site. This is the world's largest concentration of the chemical, as well as one of DOE's largest environmental risks.
- Removal of motors, compressors and converters from buildings prior to demolition, reducing future surveillance and maintenance costs for these structures.
- Complete the demolition of various dilapidated buildings on the site, reducing DOE's environmental liability for future years.

The 1st Congressional District of Kentucky is also home to the barge industry, which according to recent estimates, transports more than 600 million tons of cargo on our inland waters every year. Unfortunately, more than half of the locks in the system are more than 50 years old and far past their design life. Failures of this aging infrastructure lead to bottlenecks of river traffic delaying shipments and costing American shippers hundreds of millions of dollars.

It is crucial that we continue to provide funding to upgrade our river infrastructure. That is why I ask the committee to provide adequate appropriated construction funding to match the full potential of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Of that funding, at least \$330 million should be specifically provided for the three priority projects identified by the Corps of Engineers, including \$66.1 million for the Kentucky Lock Expansion. I also ask the committee to continue to support the Corps of Engineers' work to clear its backlog of operations and maintenance projects by providing O&M funding equal to or even greater than the \$3.74 billion provided in FY19. Finally, I ask the committee to provide \$10 million from the Corps of Engineers Investigations account to continue pre-construction and design for the Navigation and Ecosystem

Sustainability Program (NESP). NESP serves purposes we can all support of both upgrading our locks and dams while restoring or preserving more than 100,000 acres of wildlife habitats at the same time.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with you to fund these priorities that will help not only my district but reduce the overall liabilities of DOE and improve the efficiency of our entire inland waterways system.