

**Testimony of Congressman Mike Johnson (LA-04)**  
**Submitted to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development**  
**April 9, 2019**

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Thank you, Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson and my colleagues on the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am here to express to you the importance of developing and maintaining the nation's water infrastructure needs, particularly as they relate to my district in Northwest Louisiana.

As such, I respectfully request the committee prioritize funding for the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Division for operations and maintenance and general construction. Our inland waterways provide tremendous flood management and navigation benefits, and they provide critical jobs to support our nation's maritime economy. Some of the biggest challenges and opportunities in my district revolve around port infrastructure and further development of the navigation of our rivers. My district is home to four shallow draft port authorities that service 485 miles of navigable waterways and shallow draft river miles.

The J. Bennett Johnston Waterway is a commercially navigable portion of the Red River, and it's by far the most robust waterway in my district. It supports economic development through both recreation and shipping.

The last time I testified before you, I discussed our experience with the catastrophic flooding from the Red River in 2015. Homes, businesses, agricultural lands, and critical infrastructure were severely damaged and destroyed. Four years later, we're still coping with finding resources to repair our navigation structures, and a lack of investment in the waterway poses threats to the maintenance of the channel.

Interestingly, recent severe flood threats from the river have been triggered by relatively lower volumes of water flowing through the channels. In essence, we're experiencing worse flooding from less water. The Army Corps has initiated a sedimentation study to determine the reasons for this discrepancy, and a preliminary report is expected this summer. While the Army Corps hasn't yet released their findings, many experts believe that sediment buildup is the primary driver of the increase in severity of our floods.

To fight this problem, we need robust funding under the Army Corps' operations and maintenance account to perform dredging of the channel. This will preserve the river's navigability and provide an additional buffer for flood relief, as the channel will be capable of holding higher volumes of water. Additionally, operations and maintenance funding will help restore dikes and revetments that have deteriorated from the floods we experienced in 2015, 2016, and 2018.

Second, I respectfully request that the committee appropriate robust funding for the Army Corps' general construction account. The construction features of the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway are only 93% complete, and funds are needed to acquire mitigation lands so that the Army Corps can bring the waterway up to the standards that were originally intended. My understanding is that stakeholders have identified willing sellers of the required mitigation lands, and the Army Corps just needs funding to complete the transaction and move the project forward.

Ultimately, this funding will create a more resilient waterway for my constituents and allow us to expand the economy of Northwest Louisiana. Once the Army Corps is able to dredge the river and complete the construction features of the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway,

we'll be able to explore future developments that will have a greater regional impact that will extend to Texas and Arkansas.

In sum, I strongly urge the Subcommittee to prioritize investments in our ports and waterways as you work your way through the FY20 appropriations process. I stand ready to work with each of you and the Administration to develop solutions that will enhance our water infrastructure system, and I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you on these issues.