

Congressman Steve Scalise (LA-1)
Member Day Testimony
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

Thank you, Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson, for allowing me to address this subcommittee on the importance of investing in Corps of Engineers projects and feasibility studies that primarily focus on protecting our communities from natural disasters and strengthening our nation's waterways. Specifically, I am here to advocate for projects that are primarily in my district but have a national impact on our economy and energy security. This includes: deepening the Mississippi River from 45-feet to 50-feet, the St. Tammany Parish feasibility study, and Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico hurricane and storm surge protection project. Lastly, I am here to express my support to this subcommittee on investing in the safety and security of our nuclear waste repository.

Louisiana is one of the top five energy producing states in the country and, as home to the mouth of the Mississippi River, my district serves as a critical gateway to the world moving 500 million tons of cargo in international trade. I am asking this subcommittee to consider providing necessary funding that gives the Corps of Engineers flexibility they need to invest in deepening the lower Mississippi River from 45-feet to 50-feet. Getting the Mississippi River to 50-feet ensures our country's ports and trading capacity remain competitive on the international market.

Additionally, deepening the Mississippi River provides a dual benefit of rebuilding Louisiana's vanishing coastline by using the disposed dredged material to create approximately 1,500 acres of new marsh land. It is more urgent than ever to ensure any investments in Louisiana help

protect and rebuild our wetlands, which provide a natural hurricane surge barrier from fierce storms.

In recent years, Louisiana has managed to secure long-awaited Corps project authorizations that were held-up due to bureaucratic red-tape. But as members of this subcommittee, you all know that authorization is only the beginning of turning studies into reality. In 2016, Congress authorized a new start feasibility study for St. Tammany Parish, which would examine the need for hurricane surge, flood, and shoreline protection projects in a vulnerable area of my district. While the southern and western portions of Lake Pontchartrain have received funding for related projects, the northshore of Lake Pontchartrain – which during Katrina saw storm surges ranging from seven to sixteen feet destroy thousands of homes and small businesses – has yet to see a single federal dollar dedicated to flood protection. I ask this subcommittee to consider including necessary funds for new start studies, so projects like these in St. Tammany Parish can move forward.

In the 2014 WRDA bill, Congress reauthorized Morganza to the Gulf, a hurricane and storm damage reduction project located within my district of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. Unfortunately, this reauthorization came after nearly 20 years of studies and spending more than \$70 million...all without the Corps of Engineers putting a single shovel in the ground. Any funding provided to this project would strengthen our community in southeast Louisiana as well as the billions of dollars in economic activity that provide valuable energy resources to fuel our country. It is also important to note that while this project has yet to receive any federal funding, local taxes and bonds have allowed \$400 million to be invested in the project. I ask this

subcommittee to consider providing the Corps of Engineers additional resources for construction projects, like Morganza to the Gulf, to be completed.

Lastly, I want to express my strong support for including robust funding for the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that gives them the ability to complete the licensing process for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository. I'm glad President Trump included \$116 million for the Department of Energy and \$38.5 million for the NRC for this purpose. I urge this subcommittee seriously consider and support this request. These funds would ensure that the State of Nevada, and other stakeholders, have an opportunity to participate in the licensing process and have their views heard. Our decades-long failure to move this project along costs the American taxpayer nearly \$2 million a day. Reports show we've already spent eight billion in taxpayer dollars because of needless delays and our inability to meet our legal obligations to the nation's electric utilities. Failure to provide funding that secures spent nuclear fuel will only cause further financial hardship on the American taxpayer and uncertainty for ratepayers, who in many parts of the country rely on nuclear energy, one of our most reliable sources of electricity generation.

In closing, I want to thank you all for considering these important priorities and for allowing me to come before your subcommittee to discuss issues that impact Louisiana's First Congressional District and our nation's economy.