



As Prepared

Chairwoman Marcy Kaptur
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Hearing on the Army Corps of Engineers' and Bureau of Reclamation's
FY 2021 Budget Request
March 10, 2020

The Subcommittee will come to order. We are here today to discuss the fiscal year 2021 budget request for the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I want to extend a special thank you to General Semonite, whose term as Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will end in May. On behalf of the Subcommittee, I would like to thank you for your service to our country. You have demonstrated an unwavering dedication to addressing our nation's water resources needs during a challenging period of environmental reset due to climate change.

Last year, we faced similar circumstances. Your agencies were under pressure from significant flooding in the Midwest and drought in the west. Again, today, Mississippians across that state are still drying out from the Pearl River flood, 45 percent of western states are experiencing some form of drought, the Great Lakes are at an all-time high and precipitation and snowpack have been below average in California so far in 2020. Climate change is accelerating, and communities are caught in the cross-hairs.

Though the water resource needs of our country vary from region to region, there is a constant and essential need to invest in this infrastructure. Without significant investment in our infrastructure, the dichotomy of water surpluses in the Midwest, and water shortages in the West nonetheless threatens Americans from all walks of life.

Although Congress last year rejected the Administration's proposed deep cuts, the Trump administration has once again proposed to slash funding for the Corps and Bureau of Reclamation, this time by 22 percent and 32 percent respectively. When will the White House learn their proposal is flawed and dangerous to our people and our communities?

These proposed cuts are greatly disappointing to this Subcommittee and to our colleagues from both parties. These cuts are divorced from reality. We all know our water resource infrastructure impacts the life and safety of our citizens, as well as America's economic prosperity.

I am particularly incensed about this Administration's lack of attention to the needs of the people of the Great Lakes region. Yes, the Administration has prioritized the Soo Locks, and a broad bipartisan coalition in this House is thankful.

However, the economic and environmental threat that Asian Bighead Carp pose to the Great Lakes – a multibillion-dollar fishery and the economic lifeblood of millions of Americans – is just as great as the threat of failure of the Soo Locks. The continually rising lake levels across the Great Lakes threaten millions more people, ports, and communities and adds to the threat of Asian Bighead Carp sweeping into the Lakes. Yet this Administration has ignored clear Congressional intent by refusing to fund the next phase of work for the Brandon Road and Dam, and by refusing to begin a Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency study.

Worst of all, President Trump reneged on his word. He made a promise to the Great Lakes at a recent Michigan rally, that he would move swiftly, and stop Asian Bighead Carp. But as we have learned, he can be full of empty promises, and when the cameras were turned off, he overruled the Army Corps, and stopped the Brandon Road project dead in its tracks. But this Subcommittee will persevere.

Despite these proposed cuts, rest assured that there is bipartisan support in Congress for the work that your agencies undertake on behalf of the American people. Do not be deterred by these draconian cuts. The Subcommittee recognizes and appreciates the importance of your work. Thank you for being here, and we look forward to hearing from you.

I'll now turn to our Ranking Member, Mr. Simpson, for his opening remarks.