



Chairwoman Marcy Kaptur
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Oversight Hearing on Innovation and Investment in Water Resources
Infrastructure
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Let me extend a warm welcome to our Members and distinguished witnesses. My goal as Chair is to help provide a better future for generations to come. I hope you will join me on this journey to sustain life on earth - starting in our nation, with a focus on freshwater - to help seamlessly address the challenges of a new era.

The United States is a vast network of interconnected streams, rivers, and watersheds, comprised of 18 major river basins. These systems have sustained the American way of life for generations. They serve as the backbone for feeding our people and growing our economy. This continent was explored and developed on these same inland waterways that now annually carry 630 million tons of cargo.

Unfortunately, we now face a historic dichotomy of disasters –water scarcity in the West – and water surpluses in the heartland and the Mississippi River system.

Headlines tell the story. In the arid West, millions of people are threatened by water shortages that may upend their daily way of life. In areas like the Mississippi Valley and in my home region of the Great Lakes, water surpluses threaten to swamp our cities’ drinking water systems as toxic algal blooms proliferate. Along the Gulf Coast, stronger hurricanes batter our shores more frequently.

In 2020, the West endured an unprecedented year. The occurrence of historic wildfires, heat waves, and drought caused billions of dollars in damage. In Arizona, planes were grounded during 100 days of temperatures over 100 degrees. 2021 be no different. Most areas from California to Colorado are under “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions.

In my region, the Great Lakes hold 84 percent of our surface freshwater. Climate change has resulted in harmful impacts that have disrupted delicate ecosystems that have sustained life in our region. My District is located on the far southwest of Lake Erie, at the bottom of this map. Agricultural producers are located to the west of the lake – the dark blue area – which is now threatened by ag runoff.

Our regions face challenges that look nothing like one another, but we all have common enemies—a changing climate and a rapidly deteriorating infrastructure.

We must act boldly and reinvigorate investment in our infrastructure. Doing so we will spur economic recovery, create jobs, and protect the environment and public health.

Let me applaud the water resources agencies under our jurisdiction – the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation – for all they have done to meet the needs of our nation.

The Corps is moving forward by prioritizing the “Engineering With Nature” initiative, which seeks to create new ways to develop a more resilient water resources infrastructure. In the photo, you see a proposed design of a nature-based jetty. It would use natural features such as marsh grasses to benefit the surrounding ecosystem.

Reclamation is also doing its part by incorporating climate change information into its planning process. I can’t thank Reclamation enough for prioritizing basin studies to meet the demands of climate change.

On your screen you see a photo of Glen Canyon dam. This dam was constructed in 1963 to harness the Colorado River and provide for water and power needs to millions of people in the West. As we move forward, projects like this must adapt and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of the next generation.

The challenges we face are daunting, but it is the American spirit and ingenuity that will see us through these perils and into our next period of even greater prosperity and ecological sustainment.

Our witnesses bring a wide array of expertise. Our Subcommittee looks forward to hearing from them. In many instances, the magnitude of what is required falls to federal responsibility because it is interstate and sometimes binational.

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