

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Hearing on “WRDA 2020: Member Day”
10:00 AM
2167 RHOB
Rep. Bill Flores
2020 0227

Testimony

-) Thank you Chairwoman Napolitano and Republican Leader Westerman for holding this member day hearing to discuss WRDA priorities for off-committee members.
-) I would like to take this opportunity to discuss potential improvements to this year’s WRDA that would positively impact projects located in the district I represent in Central Texas.
-) Specifically, the City of Waco, home to over 130,000 Texans, has two projects that fall within federal jurisdiction and the purview of WRDA. With a few changes to statutory language, these projects could enjoy a more streamlined, proactively managed approach to avoid potentially catastrophic mishaps. If these projects do not receive federal attention, they may end up costing the federal government a substantial amount of funding in reconstruction and emergency response.
-) The first issue I would like to discuss is erosion and instability of Lake Shore Drive along Lake Waco. This road is deeply unstable and presents serious risks of deep landslides and shallow slope failures. These infrastructure failures would result in flood risk, a disruption of surrounding recreational areas, and devastation to local water quality.
-) In fact, recent engineering reports done by the City of Waco confirmed that “...the entire embankment of Lake Waco on which Lake Shore Drive is located is unstable and in danger of slides and potential catastrophic failure. The City can make repairs to

Lake Shore Drive but the instability of the embankment (owned by the Corps) will continue to endanger Lake Waco and public welfare.”

-) Mitigating potential disaster on such a project would directly support the mission of the US Army Corps of Engineers, which includes managing flood risks and providing environmental stewardship.
-) I have been working with local officials and the Corps to address this issue for over four years, continuing dialogue between stakeholders to reiterate the importance of Lake Shore Drive to the greater Waco area. I secured appropriations committee support language in FY18 to highlight the importance of this project, but the project still lacks proper statutory authority for the Corps to fix Lake Shore Drive.
-) Now, it is my understanding that the City of Waco is more than willing and able to work with the Corps to address these problems in a cost-efficient manner. To that end, I request the inclusion of a number of cost-effective and efficient additions to 2020 WRDA that would enhance Corps’ existing Continuing Authority Projects and better utilize partnerships with non-federal entities.
-) Specifically, I ask support to –
 - o Reauthorize Section 1043 of 2014 WRDA for the Non-Federal Implementation Pilot Program and to include language supporting Corps’ ability to apply it to Continuing Authority Projects.
 - o To amend Section 13 of the 1946 Flood Control Act to allow non-federal entities to receive in-kind credit for performing in advance of federal funding to offset non-federal share of the project costs.
 - o To extend authority of the Corps to address issues of embankment on federal lands.

- And the inclusion of Lake Waco restoration under Section 7001 of the 2014 WRDA to clarify Corps authority.
-) The next issue I would like to discuss is arsenic levels in community drinking water systems in McLennan County. As the committee is aware, in 2001, the EPA lowered the safe drinking water Maximum Containment Level (MCL) standards for arsenic from 50 parts per billion to 10 ppb. These ground-water systems in McLennan County no longer meet EPA's revised arsenic MCL and will soon begin receiving fines of non-compliance. To solve this issue, affected water systems are working with the Brazos River Authority, Texas Center on Environmental Quality, and EPA officials to find grants that are available to the state through the State Drinking Water Revolving Fund.
-) Should the committee consider any improvements or alterations to the State Drinking Water Revolving Fund in WRDA, I would encourage you to continue the program's flexibility to address the needs of rural systems in times of changing administrative actions, and consider doing so in a way that does not add considerable financial burdens that disproportionately harm smaller water systems.
-) Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of these important improvements.