

Rep. O'Halleran
Member Day Testimony—2/27/2020

CHAIRMAN DEFAZIO, RANKING MEMBER GRAVES, THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS TO SPEAK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT AND THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS.

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN MY THANKING GENERAL SEMONITE (“SEEMON-ITE”) AND COLONEL BARTA FOR PRIORITIZING THE “RIO DE FLAG” PROJECT IN THIS YEAR’S WORK PLAN. COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT WILL ENSURE DOWNTOWN FLAGSTAFF AND NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE TREAT OF MAJOR FLOODING.

I WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR THE CORPS TO KEEP WORKING WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES TO REDUCE THE THREATS THEY FACE FROM CATASTROPHIC FLOODING.

FOR EXAMPLE, NAVAJO COUNTY HAS BEEN WORKING WITH THE ARMY CORPS ON THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER LEVEE PROJECT, ABOVE THE CITY OF WINSLOW AND THE TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE, MANY OF WHOM WERE FORCIBLY RELOCATED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

SIMILARLY, THE SOUTHERN TRANSCONTINENTAL LINE OF THE B-N-S-F RAILWAY RUNS JUST BELOW THE LEVEE. A MAJOR FLOOD COULD DISRUPT RAIL ACTIVITY BETWEEN THE PORTS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THE EASTERN U.S.

SUCH A DISRUPTION WOULD SLOW OR STOP THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY. I ENCOURAGE THE CORPS TO WORK WITH THE COMMITTEE TO ENSURE THAT PROJECTS LIKE THIS ARE CONSIDERED IN WAYS THAT MEASURE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENTIRE NATION.

I ENCOURAGE THE CORPS TO WORK WITH SMALLER RURAL COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS ISSUES SUCH AS PERMITTING FOR TAMARISK REMOVAL OR PERMITTING FOR SMALL BRIDGE MAINTENANCE.

LASTLY, I ENCOURAGE THE COMMITTEE TO REMEMBER THE FUTURE NEED OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AS THEY GROW. FOR EXAMPLE, PINAL COUNTY IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING COUNTIES IN THE COUNTRY AND A FLOOD IN THE LOWER SANTA CRUZ WATERSHED WOULD DEVASTATE THE COMMUNITIES.

I URGE THE COMMITTEE AND THE CORPS TO ENSURE THAT FUTURE PROJECTS LIKE THIS ONE RECEIVE TIMELY ATTENTION AND EQUAL TREATMENT TO CURRENT AND URBAN PROJECTS.

AGAIN, I THANK THE COMMITTEE FOR HEARING FROM ALL MEMBERS AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU TO ENSURE THAT THE ARMY CORPS SUPPORTS RURAL COMMUNITIES.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. I YIELD BACK.