

February 27, 2020  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on  
Water Resources and Environment  
Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) Member Day Hearing  
Testimony of Congressman Tom Rice (R-SC)

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Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves, thank you for allowing me to testify regarding water resource development projects and studies conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In my district we appreciate all of the work the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has assisted us with in the past. I come before you today to discuss two studies that are very important to my district.

Myrtle Beach and the surrounding areas are visited by millions of tourists each year and tourism is a multibillion dollar industry in the state. Unfortunately, our state has been hit by five major disasters in the last five years. These intense storms and natural disasters have led to increased concern for protecting tourists and residents during this time.

Local leaders in Myrtle Beach and Horry County through the Coastal Alliance have requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer conduct a feasibility study to evaluate and reformulate the Myrtle Beach Shoreline Protection Project on the risks to property and public safety. Due to increased number of storms in my district they have asked to evaluate the existing project design to become more resilient to these natural events. They have requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, among other items, to evaluate potential measures from dunes, berm height, permanent structures to beach renourishment as well as review erosion hotspots.

Another project that the U.S. Army Corps has been involved with in my district is the Port of Georgetown. The Georgetown Port continues to experience a build up of silting and material and due to this, maintaining the navigable depths throughout the length of the inner harbor is difficult. It is crucial to our commercial fishing industry and our tourism industry that we find a solution so that the harbor is not constantly in need of dredging. Additionally, maintaining the depths of the port affects the manufacturing industry that is dependent on barging raw materials into and out of the port. The city and county are invested in finding a solution and have commissioned on their own an initial study to investigate the severity and the rate of silting in the inner harbor. However, the city and county have requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the initial report and examine solutions.

Although the Myrtle Beach Shoreline Protection Project and Georgetown Harbor Deep Draft Navigation Project currently need no further act by Congress and are authorized projects, I respectfully recommend that the Committee includes an expedited completion section of feasibility reports in the upcoming legislation. This language would be similar to Section 1203 of WRDA 2018, where it stated: "*Expedited Completion - Feasibility Reports.—The Secretary shall expedite the completion of a feasibility study for each of the following projects, and if the Secretary determines that the project is justified in a completed report, may proceed directly to preconstruction planning, engineering, and design of the project: . . .*"

I respectfully request that the following two projects: 1) “Project for coastal storm risk management, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina” and 2) “Project for navigation, Georgetown Harbor, South Carolina” be included as expedited completion feasibility reports in this legislation. The inclusion of these projects in this section would ensure these projects move quickly through the process and begin providing solutions that will provide public safety and economic prosperity for the areas.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your work to address these issues. And thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.