

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

**WRITTEN STATEMENT
OF**

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**BEFORE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENT
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON**

**PROPOSALS FOR A
WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2026 –
ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIES**

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Wilson, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the development of the proposed Water Resources Development Act of 2026. I am eager to share with you my perspective after six months as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, including what the Corps of Engineers is doing well and where significant reform is warranted. I hope my perspective is valuable to you as you develop proposals for WRDA 2026.

I also wish to share an update on the implementation of past WRDAs, which remains a topic of critical interest to members of this committee. Since my last appearance before this committee, the Army Civil Works Program has finalized implementation guidance for the remaining provisions of WRDA 2020 and 2022 that warranted such guidance, with the exception of provisions from WRDA 2020 that were modified in

WRDA 2024. WRDA is the law, and we are implementing the law. Of the 552 provisions included in those three laws, we are developing additional guidance for 19 provisions to ensure consistent implementation across the Corps. I remain committed to completing the implementation guidance as soon as practicable and look forward to working with this committee to identify opportunities to improve the processes for implementing future WRDAs.

One thing I've observed in my short tenure is that the Army Corps of Engineers is at its very best when responding to emergencies, where it is unburdened by red tape, and enters Army mode. Specific examples that come to mind include the Corps' execution of Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) assignments to clear and remove debris after Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina and throughout Appalachia and after the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. Last August, the

Corps successfully supplemented state and local efforts under PL 84-99 in anticipation of glacial outburst flooding in Juneau, Alaska. Finally, just last month, the Corps executed FEMA assignments in response to winter storm Fern.

But when it comes to our primary missions, for decades, the Army Civil Works Program hasn't really had a plan. The status quo has been to execute everything all at once, moving each project down the yellow brick road of red tape one inch at a time, resulting in inexplicable delays, including projects that are of strategic national importance. Meanwhile, reaching paperwork milestones is elevated as evidence of achievement. This is simply unacceptable for an agency that is so important to the safety and prosperity of the American people. Stacks of important government paperwork have never saved an American life or community, except perhaps in very cold weather when no other fuel is available. We have to change the way the Army

Civil Works Program conducts business, or the next decades will be more of the same.

We have in hand \$45 billion that the Congress has previously appropriated, but the Corps has not yet delivered. Shockingly, \$15 billion of this funding is more than six years old. We also have many ongoing projects, which the Congress has authorized and the Corps is building, which will require significant additional funding to complete. The status quo approach is insufficient, meaning we will never deliver on what you expect of us without fundamentally changing our behavior.

To meet this challenge, we have unveiled a plan comprised of approximately 27 individual but complementary initiatives to reimagine and rejuvenate the Army Civil Works program. This will be the most significant transformation of the program since at least 1986, which was a watershed year for the authorities of the Program.

Through this suite of strategic initiatives, it is my goal to harmonize the Army Civil Works Program and to realign and right-size the incentive structures of the Corps of Engineers, with an emphasis on building infrastructure, not paperwork.

This new plan is driven by a sense of urgency. Our strategy is centered on a fundamental cultural transformation to enhance our effectiveness and restore discipline. We are sharpening our focus on core missions that serve the national interest under a strategic plan that will deliver on the mandate you've given us. To accelerate project delivery, we are implementing smarter contracting practices, upholding higher design standards, and reforming our partnership pipeline to build what America needs, faster and more cost-effectively.

A key component of this transformation is overhauling our internal processes. As President Trump has directed, and bipartisan members of this committee have called for, we are

cutting bureaucratic red tape by reforming the entire regulatory and permitting system to provide fast, clear, and consistent decisions. This will eliminate costly delays and accelerate our economy at a time that we find ourselves in a global competition that will determine whether the United States of America remains the greatest nation in the history of the world.

Internally, we are making the organization leaner and more effective by optimizing our assets, modernizing operations, and ensuring all messaging aligns with our primary missions.

Finally, we are instilling a new culture of fiscal discipline and operational excellence by fundamentally overhauling our financial and operational practices to attack waste and inefficiency. We are committed to executing our mission with a higher standard of integrity, ensuring every dollar is spent with

purpose to achieve clear, measurable results for the American people.

President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and Secretary Driscoll want to deliver infrastructure now, and our partners in Congress are tired of decades-long delays and cost overruns. The time is right for this change, and we have a unique opportunity to transform the way the Corps of Engineers conducts its business to meet this moment in history.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.