

**Testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations
Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers
May 27, 2021**

Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee today on some of Eastern Washington's priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

This year's Community Project Funding process has allowed Congress to bolster its Article I "power of the purse." I appreciate the commitment to transparency that the committee has brought to this process, and I think it allows for Congress to better direct how taxpayer dollars are spent...ensuring resources go where needed the most.

Based on the Community Project Funding requests that my office received, it is clear that many areas in Eastern Washington have major water infrastructure needs. You'll see that my Community Project submissions include drinking water projects in Airway Heights and the Town of Cusick, and wastewater projects in Stevens County, the City of College Place, and the Town of Malden.

As you've seen by the submission information and letters of support, all of these projects would help meet a critical need. Today, I'd like to share more information on the challenges facing the Town of Malden.

You may not know that over Labor Day of last year, the Babb Road Fire devastated the Towns of Malden and Pine City in Eastern Washington. I visited Malden and Pine City soon as the fire was still smoldering, and the devastation took my breath

away. The city hall, post office, and fire station were all gone. Eighty-five homes and surrounding farmland were destroyed. Miraculously, the community church up on the hill stood despite fire damage.

In the days and weeks following the fire, the residents of Malden and Pine City rolled up their sleeves and got to work on assessing the damage, piecing their lives back together, and focusing on long-term recovery. The level of devastation met the threshold for a federal disaster declaration, which was not granted until February 2021... months after these towns lost nearly everything. As Malden has worked to rebuild, it has become clear that a large on-site sewer system is needed to help advance the recovery efforts.

Many of the residential lots in Malden are small and do not have the required space for a modern septic system, and much of the town is built on gravel soils with pine tree vegetation, which further complicates sewer system installation. A large on-site-sewer system that serves the whole town is critical for Malden's recovery. It would also protect the nearby Pine Creek and all aquatic life living in it and the riparian zone. Pine Creek flows year-round. It is a natural catchment area for winter snow and spring rain runoff, so the upgraded sewer system is critical to protecting the local environment and tributary waters. The Malden sewer project has been deemed eligible for EPA STAG Grant funding under Section 601(c)(1) of the Clean Water Act. I believe it is exactly the type of project the STAG Grant program was designed to support, and as Malden Mayor Dan Harwood said in his letter of support for the project, "I cannot stress how important the sewer system is to Malden's very future...It is essential if the town is to rebuild, grow, and thrive."

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate your consideration of the important projects I have submitted on behalf of Best Buddies Eastern Washington, the City of Airway Heights, City of College Place, City of Spokane, Spokane County, City of Cusick, Columbia Basin Development League, Stevens Public Utility District, and the town of Malden. I yield back the remainder of my time.