

Energy and Water Development Appropriations Member Day Hearing

Rep. Bill Huizenga Remarks - April 9, 2019

- Thank you, Chairwoman Kaptur, Ranking Member Simpson, and members of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, for allowing members to share their priorities and the needs of their district at this member day hearing.
- I am here today to discuss two issues that are critical to West Michigan and to the whole Great Lakes Region: The upkeep of our Harbors and the fight against invasive species
- Harbors and navigation channels are a vital part of our nation's transportation infrastructure and a reduction in their capacity can have significant impacts on local communities, from the coasts to the Great Lakes.
- I am grateful for your efforts to increase U.S. Army Corps of Engineers harbor maintenance funding in recent Energy and Water Development appropriations bills.
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2019 allocated \$1.54 billion for harbor maintenance, exceeding the target Congress overwhelmingly supported from the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014.
- While this is another strong step in the right direction, there is still work which remains
- Full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is urgently needed to support critical maritime economic activity.
- Through a glide path established in WRDA, Congress committed to achieve full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund through incremental increases over a ten-year period.
- We are ahead of this schedule and it is with this spirit that I urge the House Appropriations Committee to stay on the path to full utilization of the trust fund and allocate \$1.59 billion for harbor maintenance in fiscal year 2020.
- During my first year in Congress, our ports and navigation channels were maintained with just 47% of the revenue collected into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Last year we were near 95% - showing just how far we have come.
- Thanks in large part to the efforts of this committee, we have stopped adding to the maintenance dredging backlog.
- U.S. ports serve as a critical link to connect U.S. manufacturers, farmers, and businesses with markets around the world and are indispensable to making the exports of U.S. goods cost-competitive.

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- The inefficiencies resulting from poorly maintained harbors drive up the cost of U.S. exports and imports, which threatens U.S. economic growth. We can't sell more Made-in-America products if they can't leave our harbors!
- Enough Harbor Maintenance trust fund revenue is collected each year to meet the nation's annual authorized harbor maintenance needs for harbors of all sizes in all regions of our country - from the Pacific Northwest to the Gulf Coast and from the Port of Long Beach to Pentwater, Michigan.
- Thank you for the efforts we have made thus far and I urge you to continue on our path of incremental funding increases that will soon unlock all of our navigation channels for the free flow of commerce.
- Additionally - I would also like to take this opportunity to urge your support of our efforts in the fight to prevent the full scale, irreversible inundation of Asian carp into the Great Lakes region.
- Asian carp have huge appetites, can grow to weigh 100 pounds and four feet long, and quickly expand their habitats. They have decimated native fish populations throughout the Mississippi River Basin.
- The importance of protecting our vulnerable Great Lakes freshwater system from this disastrous invasive species cannot be overstated. In fact - the introduction of non-native species to the Great Lakes is currently one of the greatest economic and environmental threats to our region.
- The preventative measures we currently have in place are only temporary obstacles, as Asian carp have been found only a few miles from Lake Michigan.
- However – the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Illinois has been identified as the key choke point in safeguarding our Great Lakes ecosystem and economy
- The timely completion of the work at Brandon Road is an essential next step in the process to safeguard the Great Lakes region – which provides drinking water to over 30 million people and supports a \$7 billion fishing and \$16 billion boating industry.
- The Army Corp of Engineers must act with urgency to complete and release the Chief's Report for the Brandon Road Recommend Plan to prevent the upstream transfer of invasive species into the Great Lakes.
- Furthermore – it is also critical that the Corp prioritizes critical projects, such as the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, to prevent the irreversible spread of invasive species.
- In West Michigan – our identity is directly tied to the health of the Great Lakes. This highly destructive invasive species is a direct threat to our way life and we must take the necessary steps to protect our region.

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- Chairwoman Kaptur, Ranking Member Simpson , and members of the Subcommittee – Thank you again for working with us to maintain our nation’s ports and harbors and for your efforts to safeguard one of our nation’s greatest natural resources.