

Congressman Jeff Van Drew (NJ-02) – Homeland Appropriations Testimony

Good X Chair Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Fleischmann and thank you for providing the opportunity to testify before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.

I am here today to advocate for an incredibly important and urgent project. I respectfully request that this committee provide \$4.6 million in Community Project Funding for the Lake Lenape Dam Rehabilitation Flood Mitigation project, through the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program account.

This project is necessary, eligible, of merit, and has unparalleled community support. My testimony today will consist of three parts:

- 1) The clear and present danger of flooding presented by the dam.
- 2) The eligibility of this project to receive funding through the PDM account.
- 3) The merits of this request for Community Project Funding.

The Lake Lenape Dam, located in Mays Landing, New Jersey, is a High-Hazard, Class I Dam, currently rated in POOR condition in an August 2020 inspection. The Lake Lenape Dam is in very real danger of total failure. Here is a flood map of the potential flooding from such an event.

(Show Map)

Immediately downstream of the Lake Lenape Dam is dense residential and commercial development. As Mays Landing is the County Seat, many key government offices are located within what would surely be a flood path created by a failure of this aged and deteriorated dam. In the most catastrophic scenarios, the resulting flood would inundate nearly half of Mays Landing, resulting in almost certain fatalities, millions of dollars of property damage, and severe damage to critical infrastructure. The threat of failure of the Lake Lenape Dam is imminent, the potential impacts are calamitous, and the time to address this is now.

To achieve an effective remedy to flooding, the County's Engineer has concluded that the spillway must be completely replaced with a modern solution. The County is prepared to receive any PDM grant funds in FY22 and immediately obligate them to begin construction of the already-developed designs.

In the most recent BRIC funding round, one of the priorities was to increase funding to applicants that facilitate adoption and enforcement of the latest published building codes and Dam Safety Standards. The proposed Lake Lenape Dam and associated infrastructure components have been engineered to the latest building codes to rectify the current mitigation concerns of a structure that has exceeded its useful life.

The Pre-Disaster Mitigation BRIC program aims to categorically shift the federal focus away from reactive disaster spending and toward research-supported, proactive investment in community resilience. The Lake Lenape Dam project is such a project and as such would be eligible for BRIC funding. This sentiment is echoed by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management.

As elaborated in NJ OEM's letter of endorsement:

“This project's overall risk reduction goals are consistent with the goals and objectives of the New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the successful completion of the plan will result in a more resilient and viable community.”

In furtherance of the project's eligibility, it has been determined to have a positive Cost-Benefit ratio of 1.42. This was calculated with the official FEMA Benefit-Cost Calculator v 6.0.0. This rating places it well within the range of viability.

Finally, and most importantly for Community Project Funding, this project has unparalleled community support. Nearly 2,000 residents of the local community have signed a petition in support of this project. The project has letters of support from local governments, local businesses, and local residential organizations. The County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution committing to providing the 25% standard match to complete funding for the proposal. This project has total and passionate support from the entire community.

This project has unparalleled community support, is eligible and meritorious of funding, and is critically needed. Chair Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Fleischmann, I urge you to provide this grant funding so that the community can quickly and decisively address this existential threat.