

SHARICE DAVIDS

3RD DISTRICT, KANSAS

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INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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June 30, 2020

Chairman Peter DeFazio
House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairwoman Grace Napolitano
House Subcommittee on Water Resources
and Environment
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs DeFazio and Napolitano,

I write today to express to you the potential impact of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization on my community, the Kansas Third District, and to highlight some potential solutions for your consideration. It's important to understand that many of these projects are of regional significance, touching parts of Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska. I'm proud to work with a number of my colleagues from these areas to continue to represent the challenges we face in our individual communities, and the region more broadly.

I ask you to consider incorporating H.R. 6964, which would establish a lower Missouri River flood prevention program, into WRDA. The program established by the bill would allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to study, design, and construct water resource development projects and provide flood protection to affected communities in the lower basin from Sioux City, IA to St. Louis, MO. This would allow projects like the levee at Upper Turkey Creek to be completed on a quicker timeline, rather than waiting for individual congressional approval. There are places along the Missouri River in desperate need of flood control improvements so including the Lower Missouri River Flood Prevention Program in WRDA 2020 would move this reform forward and quickly send help to the communities impacted by Missouri River flooding much sooner.

I also ask you to authorize the USACE to study the lower Missouri River and its tributaries from Sioux City, IA to St. Louis, MO as part of a Lower Missouri River study to evaluate ways to reduce flood risks and improve infrastructure. Kansas City is the 5th most vulnerable community in the country to the effects of climate change¹, including increases in frequency and severity of floods. Areas like southwest Iowa have been dealing with a compromised levee system since March 2019, with more than 40 breaches from Council Bluffs to the Kansas-Nebraska state line.

¹ <http://stories.weather.com/disruptionindex> – Accessed June 30, 2020

Solutions for future flooding go beyond simply strengthening levees and those solutions bear studying.

The USACE, Kansas Water Office, and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism are in the early stages of a five-year watershed study to develop a long-term plan for the Kansas River basin's water resources and infrastructure. The study is an opportunity to review existing and possible future conditions in the basin, lake and river basin management, and to investigate ways to extend the useful life of the 18 federal reservoirs in the basin by increasing resiliency and maintaining capacity. The findings from this study affect the Kansas City area because we're connected with the rest of northeast Kansas in a flood management system, and problems of invasive biology like algae blooms in Tuttle Creek in Riley County can potentially impact the water supply in areas like Wyandotte County. I respectfully request you continue to authorize this study.

Another project of importance to my district, the Upper Turkey Creek Project, is a joint effort between the City of Merriam, KS, USACE, and Johnson County Public Works. It received no funding in 2018 or 2019 but is a vital link in the area chain of federal flood control. Turkey Creek has long-been prone to flooding and a solution needs to be instituted with all deliberate speed.

Knowing what is located behind a levee is important but knowing the levee's ability and capacity might be even more important. As flood control becomes more important across the country, it is imperative to make sure levees are safe and engineered to provide the necessary level of protection for the areas they're protecting. The USACE's Safety Programs helps preserve and improve flood protection contributions by well-built and maintained levee systems. Bolstering this program would keep engineering focus on the actual levees and makes sure our levees are well designed and maintained. I have supported this program in the appropriations process and ask that you do the same by providing assistance for it in WRDA.

Thank you for your consideration of these priorities. Finally, I would also like to thank your staff for their time, diligence, and dedication as they help you to assemble this legislation. Their responsiveness and willingness to communicate with me and my staff throughout this process has been invaluable. Please convey my sincere appreciation to them.

Sincerely,



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress