

August 16, 2024

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
U. S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
U. S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Dear Chairman Carper, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Capito, and Ranking Member Larsen:

Thank you for your work on the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 (WRDA). The strong bipartisan support this legislation enjoys is testament to your leadership and the importance of water infrastructure nationwide. We write today to request your support to maintain Section 121 of H.R. 8812 in the final conference version of WRDA 2024.

Section 121 would establish water supply as one of the core missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) Civil Works Program. Formally establishing this priority would not supplant its current primary mission areas, which include navigation, flood control, ecosystem restoration, and recreation. Rather, Section 121 would enhance work already underway to provide water supply and help prepare states, communities, and regions for future water supply challenges brought on by growing populations and climate variability. Section 121 specifically stipulates that it will not affect Army Corps authority under section 6 of the Flood Control Act of 1944 or section 301 of the Water Supply Act of 1958.

The Army Corps is one of the nation's largest water suppliers with 6.2 million acre-feet of contracted water supply. Across America, 136 Army Corps reservoirs provide municipal and industrial water supply, and 46 reservoirs provide irrigation water supply. The Army Corps estimates that the water supply space in Army Corps projects is sufficient to meet the household needs of approximately 100 million people. The nation has benefited from these projects, but the dual challenges of population growth and climate variability require that more be done. A 2019 studyⁱ from the United States Department of Agriculture found that 47 percent of the water basins supplying most of the nation with freshwater could face shortages by 2071. Given the interconnected nature of water and the goods and services tied to it, these water shortages will affect the entire country. Mitigating these shortages will require a multipronged approach that includes water recycling and reuse, conservation, and the thoughtful utilization of infrastructure like Army Corps Civil Works projects.

Section 121 would help ensure that the Army Corps engages in meeting critical water supply needs. It would not affect existing authorities of the Army Corps with respect to navigation, hydropower, flood control, recreation and ecosystem restoration. It would not affect how the Corps balances among competing purposes at federal projects, much less suggest the Corps should favor water supply over other project purposes. Instead, the Corps will continue to balance among the various project purposes just as it does today. Section 121 would not authorize the Secretary to initiate any new water resources development projects or modify any existing project without authorization from Congress. In addition, Section 121

specifically states it would not affect the authority of states to manage, use, or allocate water resources. Section 121 is a common-sense, forward-thinking provision that is needed to avoid future water shortages and build smart, modern, resilient infrastructure.

We represent a broad nationwide coalition of water managers, utilities, locally elected officials, irrigation districts, the business community, and non-profit organizations. We urge you to include Section 121 in the final conference version of WRDA 2024. Thank you for considering our request and for your work to meet the water infrastructure needs of our nation.

Respectfully,

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

National Water Resources Association

National Water Supply Alliance

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

WaterReuse

Association of California Water Agencies

CC:

The Honorable Mark Kelly

Chairman

Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Kevin Cramer

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable David Rouzer

Chairman

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

ⁱ Brown, Thomas C.; Mahat, Vinod; Ramirez, Jorge A. 2019. Adaptation to future water shortages in the United States caused by population growth and climate change. Earth's Future: 7.
<https://research.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/58041#:~:text=Abstract,are%20likely%20in%20some%20regions.>