

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 26, 2024

Senator Tom Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

Representative Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

Representative Rick Larson
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

This week the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8812, the Water Resources Development (WRDA) Act of 2024. We write to express our strong support for Section 323 in this bill, and to request that this language remain included in the final WRDA bill agreed to by the House and Senate.

As you may be aware, a long-standing priority for the Southeastern United States is the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP). As part of SHEP, the Corps is responsible for constructing a mitigation feature to offset any loss of sturgeon or other endangered fish. The Corps selected to remove the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (NSBLD) and replace it with a rock weir, which was strongly opposed by members of the Georgia and South Carolina delegations. The local municipalities and industry in the Central Savannah River Area draw from a pool of water that the NSBLD provides, and the Corps' chosen rock weir would drop the pool level far below the needs of the community. In a disastrous simulation carried out by the Corps, we saw firsthand the dreadful impacts of the lower water level that would result from the installation of a rock weir. From marooned boats and docks to excess debris and mudflats exposed throughout the river, the results spoke for themselves and ultimately the Corps was forced to abandon the simulation due to instability on the riverbank. Additionally, just this past week, we saw the pool levels drop and business was severely impacted.

It is members of the Georgia and South Carolina delegations' position, as well as that of the local communities, that the Corps is not in compliance with the law by choosing an alternative that does not maintain the pool at the 114.5 level as it was in December of 2016 when the law was enacted.

Section 323 of H.R. 8812 makes Congressional intent crystal clear and specifies the exact water level that is needed to ensure that our local communities can continue to draw from the pool of water. It also directs the Corps to find another appropriate mitigation feature that does not lower the pool. This language has the support of the City of Augusta, the state of Georgia, the City of North Augusta, the State of South Carolina, and the Georgia Ports Authority.

We respectfully ask that leadership from both the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure include Section 323 of the House-passed *Water Resources Development Act* in the final conference report.

Sincerely,



Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Mike Collins
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



Barry Loudermilk
Member of Congress