

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Energy & Water
Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy & Water
Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson,

As you prepare the Energy and Water Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2020, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies include robust funding for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) projects under the Construction account. As you are aware, USACE serves an essential role in building and maintaining our Nation's critical infrastructure. Continuing to uphold USACE funding levels will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the wellbeing of constituents, as well as the vitality of the Nation's economy. Therefore, we request the Committee appropriate no less than \$2,183,000,000—the same amount that was appropriated for Fiscal Year 2019—for USACE's Construction account.¹ This would allow USACE to continue its work as it pertains to construction efforts multiple jurisdictions, including Puerto Rico.

Although we appreciate the need to maintain and financially support current infrastructure, we cannot neglect the need to fund new projects to address critical needs. Accordingly, we also respectfully request that the amount included above (\$2.18 billion) be utilized by the Secretary of the Army to initiate no less than five new USACE construction starts during Fiscal Year 2020. This is the same amount of new start projects requested by Congress in Fiscal Year 2019² and will help USACE continue to engage local stakeholders to further the progress of projects ready to enter the construction phase.

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr5895/BILLS-115hr5895enr.pdf>

² <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr5895/BILLS-115hr5895enr.pdf>

Additionally, we request that no less than two of the five new construction starts be an Ecosystem Restoration Project. Being one of the primary missions of USACE,³ ecosystem restoration projects restore ecosystem functions and structures, and reestablish the attributes of natural systems. Moreover, these projects have a lasting impact on the physical health of constituents residing near aquatic systems, like wetlands and floodplains.

Restoring these systems to their normal, self-regulating function should be kept as a priority for the USACE moving forward and we urge the Committee to recognize these projects as one of the priorities to accommodate the needs of residents that depend on the restoration of these systems for their health and economic wellbeing. This decision would potentially benefit several districts, including Puerto Rico, by furthering projects like the Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project (CMP-ERP) in the San Juan area. According to the USACE Feasibility Report completed in 2016, the CMP-ERP is critical for preserving the revitalization of eight communities,⁴ numbering close to 26,000 residents, that are located along the Martín Peña tidal channel, as well as restore connectivity between the San José Lagoon and the San Juan Bay Estuary, thereby improving biodiversity and preservation of multiple ecosystems in the greater San Juan area.⁵

It is with these CMP-ERP objectives in mind, that we further respectfully request that you kindly include the following language in the Committee's report accompanying its FY2020 bill:

“Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project. —The Committee understands that the Preconstruction Engineering and Design (PED) phase of the Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project in San Juan, Puerto Rico, is on track to conclude by the end of Fiscal Year 2019. The Committee remains interested in the timely advancement of this project given the years of significant planning that have been undertaken for its construction, and its purpose in restoring a critical watershed and the natural functioning of the tidal system in the San Juan Bay Estuary. The Committee further recognizes the ancillary benefits this project would bring for flood protection, improved water quality, and economic revitalization in a disadvantaged corridor of Puerto Rico's capital city. The Committee encourages the Corps to work with the non-federal sponsor to advance this project to the next phase at the earliest practicable opportunity, and to include appropriate funding for this project in future budget requests. The Corps is directed to report to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act on the status of, and its future plans for, this project.”^[1]

³ <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Public-Services/Ecosystem-Restoration-Authorities/>

⁴ Final Feasibility Report Delivery Package. Caño Martín Peña Ecosystem Restoration Project. US Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, Corporación del Proyecto ENLACE del Caño Martín Peña. February 2016

⁵ Ibid.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests for the Fiscal Year 2020 bill and accompanying committee report. Should you have any questions about the requests in this letter, please contact Natalia Gandia, staff member in Congresswoman González-Colón's office, at natalia.gandia@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress