

The Western Coalition of Arid States

WESTCAS

TESTIMONY
(Submitted for the Record)

Of

Larry Libeu
President

Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS)

Concerning

THE FY08 BUDGET OF THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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My name is Larry Libeu, and I am President of the Western Coalition of Arid States. The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is submitting this testimony regarding the Presidents FY 2008 budget request for the United States Army Corp of Engineers.

WESTCAS is a coalition of approximately 125 water and wastewater districts, cities and towns and professional organizations focused on water quality and water quantity issues in the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas. Our mission is to work with Federal, State and Regional water quality and quantity agencies to promote scientifically-sound law, regulations, appropriations and policies that protect public health in the environment of the arid West.

Providing adequate budget for the Army Corps of Engineers is crucial for the immediate and long term delivery of adequate water supplies, hydropower, flood control, and flood and costal restoration within the arid west. As such WESTCAS supports the performance criteria established which will ensure projects are funded and completed within a timely fashion. We also believe the issue of reprogramming of funds out of projects needs to be addressed in a more thorough manner and have welcomed your interest in this area of the Corps program.

We are greatly concerned that the Corps Construction budget is down 38%, the General Investigations are down 45% and the O&M Budget is ever increasing. The Corps infrastructure is one of the foundations of our nation's economy – and the infrastructure is aging. When we look at the number of projects funded by Congress last year, it appears the Corps is only submitting a budget that funds **one-quarter** of that work. This is not a solution for success but a path way to cataclysmic failure which could have devastating consequences to the economy.

The Army Corps of Engineers provides funding and oversight for over many projects within the WESTCAS states including but not limited to the following:

Alamogordo, New Mexico	\$4,200,000
National Dam Safety Program	\$10,000,000
Oakland Harbor, California	\$42,000,000
Sacramento River Bank Protection, CA	\$21,528,000
Success Dam, Tule River, California	\$18,000,000
Sims Bayou, Houston, Texas	\$24,154,000

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As such, the Corps is a critical partner for WESTCAS organizations to provide quality water services both today and tomorrow. We look with interest in seeing the five-year budget development plan that will be provided to Congress in the near future. This will provide a level of greater transparency and ability for the stakeholders of the Corps to better understand future budgetary trends.

To that end, we believe it is important for the Committee to provide greater direction for the Corps to undertake an integrated water management and watershed approach that will assist in focusing on the needs of today and with projecting future needs. What we have witnessed over the years of looking at agencies budgets is the lack of intergovernmental cooperation and cooperative planning. The planning should be taking place with the states and the interested parties at the watershed level. We believe there is widespread support for such approaches throughout the West.

We note a slight increase in the Corps Regulatory program, a program to protect wetlands and other waters of the United States. Permit's, and the ability to get timely consideration of such is an important element for our agencies. We are interested in seeing greater detail with regard to the Corps request in this area since they indicate the funding is needed because of the Supreme Court's Carabell and Rapanos decisions. These cases hold the potential for greater resource allocations on our members' part and believe this request needs careful attention.

Though not in your jurisdiction, we look with interest on the current Water Resources Development Act authorization effort because of the consequences to future budgets of the agency. Reform is a good idea if it is not used as a tool for delay. With the Corps having over a \$50 billion backlog of projects it is important to recognize the need to fund this budget at a level that meets the needs in a timely manner and keeps the economy strong and protects the public.

Thank you for considering our request.

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