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Testimony of Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS)

Submitted (for the record) to the Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee, Energy & Water

Regarding FY07 Civil Works Program of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Budget

April 30, 2006

The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is submitting this testimony regarding the Presidents FY 2007 budget request for the United States Geological Survey.

WESTCAS is a coalition of Western towns and municipalities, water and wastewater agencies, irrigation districts, Native American nations, companies with water and wastewater concerns and professionals in the fields of engineering, the environmental sciences, and natural resources law and policy. WESTCAS was formed in 1992 by Western water and wastewater agencies concerned with the quality and management of water resources in the Arid West. A grass roots organization, WESTCAS is dedicated to encouraging the development of water programs and regulations which assure adequate supplies of high quality water for those living in the arid regions while protecting the environment.

The United States Army Corps of Engineering is the world's largest public engineering, design, and construction management agency. Its mission includes:

- Protecting the country's hundreds of rivers, lakes, wetlands, and thousands of miles of coastal shoreline;
- Environmental restoration and stewardship;
- Maintaining direct control of 609 dams, 257 navigational locks and 75 Hydroelectric facilities which generate 24% of the nations hydropower;
- Providing engineering expertise and emergency management abilities for homeland security; and
- Building much of the infrastructure the Army and Air Force uses to train, house, and deploy our troops.

The Fiscal Year 2007 budget for the Civil Works Program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers emphasizes three critical Corps activities. First, it funds the construction and completion of water resources projects that will provide a high rate of return on the nation's investment in the Corps' primary mission areas of commercial navigation, flood and storm damage reduction, and aquatic ecosystem restoration.

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Second, it increases funding for the Corps' regulatory program to help protect and preserve the nation's precious waters and wetlands. Third, it reflects the administration's proactive support for the Corps' critical emergency preparedness and response mission by funding the mission in the regular budget process, and not through emergency transfers or supplemental funding. These goals are all extremely important to the arid southwest and general membership of the Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS).

The Fiscal Year 2007 budget transmitted to Congress consists of \$5.271 billion in Direct Program funding which includes \$4.733 billion in discretionary funding and \$538 million in mandatory funding for the Civil Works program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Civil Works program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be augmented by additional Reimbursed Program funding in the range of \$2 to \$3 billion.

As shown below, over eighty percent of the Civil Works program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be appropriated as Operation and Maintenance and General Construction.

Appropriation Accounts	FY 2007 (millions)	Percentage of Total
Operation & Maintenance	\$2,258	47.7%
Construction	\$1,555	32.9%
Flood Control, Mississippi River	\$278	5.9%
Regulatory Program	\$173	3.7%
General Expenses	\$164	3.5%
Formerly Utilized Remedial Action Program	\$130	2.7%
General Investigations	\$94	2.0%
Flood Control & Coastal Emergencies	\$81	1.7%
	\$4,733	100.0%

The following table illustrates that additional funding will be appropriated to Operation & Maintenance and Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies, while reducing the funding appropriation for General Construction. The reduced funding in the Construction appropriation account will result in fewer projects in the Civil Works backlog being completed. This is a significant issue that should be corrected.

Change	FY2006 (millions)	FY2007 (millions)	Percentage	Percentage
			Budget FY 2007	of Total
Appropriation Accounts				
Operation & Maintenance	\$1,979	\$2,258	47.7%	14.1%
Construction	\$1,637	\$1,555	32.9%	-5.0%
Flood Control, Mississippi River	\$270	\$278	5.9%	3.0%
Regulatory Program	\$160	\$173	3.7%	8.1%
General Expenses	\$162	\$164	3.5%	1.2%

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Formerly Utilized Remedial Action Program	\$140	\$130	2.7%	-7.1%
General Investigations	\$95	\$94	2.0%	-1.1%
Flood Control & Coastal Emergencies	\$70	\$81	1.7%	15.7%
	\$4,513	\$4,733	100.0%	4.9%

The Fiscal Year 2007 Civil Works Budget is a performance based budget, which reflects a focus on the projects and activities that provide the highest net economic and environmental returns on the Nation's investment. However, the proposed budget is less than the actual U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget in FY 2001. One must ask whether our priorities are properly in focus.

The impacts caused by Hurricane Katrina could have been significantly reduced with enhanced flood control projects in place to protect the region. The Association Press has recently reported that the estimates of Hurricane Katrina's staggering toll on the Treasury are highly imprecise, costs are certain to climb to \$200 billion in the coming weeks. The final accounting could approach the more than \$300 billion spent in four years to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq. It would seem prudent to invest in construction of facilities to protect the Nation rather than expend hundreds of billions of dollars after a major natural disaster.

Therefore, a priority should be placed on appropriating funds for construction activities focusing on flood control and shoreline protective measures in the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers budget for Fiscal Year 2007. The construction projects identified in the proposed budget for flood control enhancements in the arid southwest such as the American River Watershed and Santa Ana Mainstem projects in California, the Alamogordo project in New Mexico, and the Brays Bayou project in Texas all should be funded.

Thank you for considering our request.

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