

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Water Resources Development Act of 2024 Member Day Hearing
Thursday, January 11, 2024
Testimony of Rep. Mike Levin (CA-49)

Thank you, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of my constituents in California's 49th district and share their priorities on water infrastructure issues.

My district has more than 50 miles of California coastline and I am honored to represent such a beautiful community. However, due to rising sea levels caused by climate change, coastal storms and flooding, and even development by the federal government, our beaches and coastal bluffs are eroding away. This erosion threatens vital infrastructure that my constituents rely on such as the LOSSAN Rail Corridor connecting San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Luis Obispo, and disrupts the habitats of sea birds and aquatic wildlife. In addition, coastal erosion jeopardizes public safety and recreational benefits for my constituents and the millions of tourists to the region.

Since coming to Congress, I have fought for sand replenishment projects up and down the coastline in the 49th district. After years of advocacy and collaboration, I'm particularly proud to have secured more than \$41 million in federal funding to pump over one million cubic yards of sand onto beaches in San Clemente, Solana Beach, and Encinitas, which will widen our beaches, reduce storm damage, and improve recreational opportunities. I'm grateful for the Corps' work on these projects, and I will continue to promote additional shoreline restoration efforts, including better integrated regional planning to ensure the resilience of our coast for generations to come.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to one long-delayed shoreline project in particular: the Oceanside Special Shoreline Study. Oceanside has experienced beach erosion for decades since the construction of Camp Pendleton Harbor in 1942. The federal government has acknowledged that construction of the harbor jetties was a direct contributing cause of the erosion of beaches in the area.

This erosion presents a safety hazard and has damaged infrastructure, impacted recreational resources, and threatened property. Only one third of Oceanside's beaches sustain any dry sand. This means the remaining two thirds of the coast, or roughly 2.5 miles out of Oceanside's 3.8-mile coastline, have only low tide, wet sand beaches. Two of the beaches most impacted by erosion are also the ones that offer free public parking or are easily accessible by public transit; as these beaches erode, public accessibility to the ocean will erode as well. Further, lifeguards in the area must regularly rescue individuals who have difficulty getting back onto dry land using

the uneven rock riprap along the coast; additional beach sand is necessary in order to provide a safe ingress into and egress out of the ocean.

The federal government has a responsibility to my constituents to right these wrongs and mitigate the environmental harms in Oceanside that have been decades in the making. In order to alleviate this erosion, the *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000* directed the Corps to complete a study to mitigate the erosion and other impacts from the construction of Camp Pendleton Harbor and to restore beach conditions along the affected shores. However, when I came to Congress nearly 20 years later, this study had not yet been completed, despite the statutory deadline of 32 months that Congress set for the Corps.

In *WRDA 2020*, I appreciate that you included language directing the Corps to expedite the completion of a feasibility study for Oceanside shoreline protection, and that the Corps ultimately allocated \$1.82 million in funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to complete this study. However, over three years later, I am concerned that the Corps may once again put this study on a shelf, an outcome that would be entirely unacceptable after the communities I represent have waited more than two decades for its completion.

It is of the utmost importance to my constituents and me that the Corps work in an expedited manner to complete and submit to Congress their feasibility study in Oceanside, which must include the necessary environmental documents and a full engineering and cost analysis of their recommended plan. I look forward to working with the Committee and the Army Corps to get this study done, so we can finally progress to a project that mitigates the harms done by the federal government and restores our beaches for the safety and enjoyment of our community.