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2ND DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
WATER, POWER, AND OCEANS – RANKING MEMBER  
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
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October 27, 2015

The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works  
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Director Donovan and Assistant Secretary Darcy:

As you continue your preparation of an FY 2016 work plan and FY 2017 budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), I wanted to call your attention to several important projects across California's North Coast and the counties in California's Second Congressional District.

### **Harbor Dredging**

Adequate funding for the USACE is necessary to modernize our nation's ports and harbors and better support the over 13 million jobs in the marine transportation industry. Inadequate funding results in insufficient dredging, increasing the chance of collisions and causing higher costs for consumers. In my district, the dredging maintenance for the continued commercial use of Petaluma River last occurred in 2003 and is long overdue. Funding is needed both for dredging and flood control work. Because of the delay in regular maintenance the cost of dredging could be significantly higher than in past years. I urge you to move forward with the initial planning for this long-overdue dredging of the river.

Additionally, the Corps has provided much needed dredging services in the past in the San Rafael Canal, but over the years the silt buildup has significantly impaired the depth during low tide. The last dredging in 2011 covered only a portion of the canal, and a full dredging has not occurred since 2002.

In Humboldt Bay regular and timely dredging is critical for commerce, especially with new investments by companies in products that require deep-draft vessels for shipping, like wood chips and logs. Since Humboldt Bay is also a harbor of refuge – the only deep-water port between San Francisco and Coos Bay – its operation is also vital to marine safety. Consistent maintenance dredging is needed to keep the harbor entrance safe for transit for commercial and recreational vessels. I also ask for your continued engagement in supporting dredging and addressing the disposal and use of dredged materials in Noyo Harbor.

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## **Russian River Biological Opinion Projects**

I strongly support the ongoing efforts in Sonoma County to implement the Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives of the Russian River Biological Opinion (BO) which, as issued in September 2008 by the National Marine Fisheries Service, establishes a series of benchmarked dates. The failure to achieve the BO's tasks by the specified dates could trigger requirements to construct substantially more expensive, and more controversial, projects.

The Russian River BO identified 23 actions that must be taken to protect three threatened or endangered salmonid species: coho salmon, steelhead, and Chinook salmon. If work is to be completed on time, a significant investment will be required in FY 2017. It appears likely that about \$9.2 million in construction funding from the Section 1135 Continuing Authorities Program will be required through FY 2017. I understand that there may be backlogged funding available for this program, and I ask that the President's FY 2017 budget request for the 1135 program contains sufficient funds to complete the three miles of habitat enhancement required by the BO by 2018.

For the Dry Creek (Warm Springs) Feasibility Study, I request that \$425,000 be included in the President's FY 2017 budget. This will allow the Army Corps to make progress on the required six miles of habitat enhancement that must be completed by the year 2020. Taken together, these projects will demonstrate the ability to balance flood control and water supply needs with a sustainable ecosystem.

Additionally, I urge that any FY 2016 work plans prepared by the Corps include an additional \$1.25 million for Operation and Maintenance at Dry Creek (Warm Springs) Lake and Channel for coho hatchery facility water treatment and filtration to prevent fish disease, and for egg incubation equipment.

I urge, as well, that \$6.411 million be included in the President's FY 2017 O&M budget request for Dry Creek (Warm Springs) Lake and \$4 million at Coyote Valley Dam as important components for this connected watershed. Beyond O&M, I urge the Corps to consider studying the benefits of raising Coyote Dam.

## **Bodega Bay**

Bodega Bay, a critical harbor of refuge, is located about 60 miles north of San Francisco, and is home to a Coast Guard search-and-rescue station which performed about 250 rescue missions in 2013. It is also home to a substantial commercial fishing fleet of about 300 vessels (500 in-season), as well as an economically significant sport fishing industry (about 600 vessels in-season) and recreational craft. In 2012, nearly 25% of the total Chinook salmon landings in California, and over 10% of Dungeness crab California landings, came through Bodega Bay.

The Corps O&M schedule provides for periodic inspection and repair of three breakwaters and maintenance dredging of the federal channel, including three turning basins, on an 11-year cycle to a depth of 12 feet Mean Lower Low Water. Recent sounding surveys indicate that shoaling is occurring and that dredging is required now. The last dredging episode was in 2004.

Although \$500,000 was included in the Corps' FY 2014 work plan, the plan for sediment quality sampling and testing has only recently commenced. With groundings occurring particularly among transient vessels, and high tide exit and entry generally required, it is now essential that funding be budgeted sufficient to conduct the necessary dredging.

While \$6.6 million is needed to conduct the dredging as soon as possible, it is critical that \$1 million be provided as part of the FY 2016 work plan, and that any balance up to \$6.6 million be included in the President's FY 2017 budget request to Congress.

### **Corte Madera Creek Flood Control Project**

Continued support for the Corte Madera Creek Flood Control project is crucial for both the FY 2016 work plan and the FY 2017 budget. The project received \$400,000 in the FY 2015 work plan and the Project Design Team is working toward meeting the first project milestone. In order to remain close to the milestones set out by the San Francisco District Engineer in his August 13, 2015, letter to the Marin County Director of Public Works, \$500,000 needs to be included for this project in any FY 2016 Army Corps work plan, and I ask that an additional \$600,000 be included in the President's FY 2017 budget request.

The Corte Madera Creek Flood Control project is critical to the broader Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed program, a region-wide, four municipality, multiple community effort to address chronic flooding in the Ross Valley. A suite of creek improvement measures have been identified to reduce and contain 100-year flows within the main stem of Corte Madera Creek. Residents have agreed to tax themselves \$44 million over 20 years to fund this program. The federal Corte Madera Creek project is at the downstream end of all proposed measures and must be completed for all present and future efforts of the local community to achieve a level of flood protection that will contain a 100-year flood event.

The requested funds will complete a feasibility study for the final phase of the Corte Madera project, which includes a final unit and potential modifications to previous phases, to allow the project to function at a level agreed upon by all stakeholders.

In conjunction with the other measures to be undertaken and for which residents have agreed to tax themselves, the Corte Madera Creek Flood Control project will substantially improve flood control and play a key role in preventing the level of loss seen in our 2005-2006 winter storms. These storms resulted in approximately \$100 million in damage, affecting over 240 homes, 75 retail and commercial structures, two elementary schools, the College of Marin campus, two post offices, the Ross Town Hall, and police and firehouses in the Towns of Ross, San Anselmo, and Fairfax.

### **Redwood Creek**

Last year, I wrote to discuss the importance of a USACE flood control along Redwood Creek, built after the 1964 flood to protect the town of Orick. These levies, while important for local flood control, do not convey enough sediment to prevent a buildup of materials. Furthermore,

they were not designed to ensure that local fish species, including federally protected species, were not harmed. Despite tens of millions of dollars in restoration work done by the federal government upstream, the National Marine Fisheries Service has issued a draft jeopardy opinion on the project, which may further reduce the county's ability to remove gravel from the project area.

Humboldt County is currently working with stakeholders and landowners to redesign the project to allow for improvement in all of these problem areas. USACE will need to at least be a permitting agency, and may need to be the action agency for this new project. I urge inclusion of the associated costs of leading on this project in the USACE's budget.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress