

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2013

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Secretary Darcy:

As a follow up to our meeting with you in April, we are again writing regarding the Blanchard River Flood Risk Management Project (BRFRMP) and the importance of securing funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2013. With the release of the U.S. Army Corps fiscal year 2013 work plan, we request a status update regarding your efforts to identify funds to be reprogrammed to the BRFRMP.

We were pleased to learn that the meetings between the Army Corps of Engineers and local officials in Findlay on June 3-4 were considered productive by both sides. Importantly, we were encouraged to hear that the BRFRMP remains the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District's highest priority General Investigation study.

We urge you to complete the study phase of the BRFRMP as soon as possible. We appreciate that the recent meetings resulted in a more clearly defined project schedule, and specifically, identified the studies and reports that must be completed in fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014 to prepare the Chief's Report.

It is our understanding that \$325,000 is the estimated federal need to fund BRFRMP for the remainder of FY13. We look forward to the results of your review of reprogramming options to make up this immediate funding need which is necessary to keep the project moving. As you know, the local share is in place.

The next milestone for the BRFRMP is the release of the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP), which is expected in July. We know that the local sponsors are eager to have the opportunity, once the TSP is set, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Army Corps and to begin work on the separable elements of the plan.

We understand that in evaluating the BRFRMP for inclusion in the President's Budget or the Army Corps Work Plan, the benefit-cost ratio is paramount. While we agree that the Army Corps needs to be able to score projects according to certain metrics, it is important to look at the overall community impact of a project.

Currently, small communities like Findlay and Ottawa are at a disadvantage in comparison with their large urban counterparts under the Army Corps utilization of traditional, narrow, benefit-cost analyses in its budgeting process. Mitigating flood risk in areas with major regional employers in small communities, such as Findlay and Ottawa, is essential to keeping these businesses in the community and, thus, key to a community's economic viability.

We understand that the evaluation framework included in the final Principles and Requirements for Federal Investments in Water Resources released by the Council on Environmental Quality earlier this year is designed to get at this issue by capturing a broader range of effects of alternative actions.

Additionally, the House's FY14 Energy & Water Appropriations Bill's report includes language that would help level the playing field between small and large cities when it comes to the Army Corps utilization of current benefit-cost analyses in its budgeting process. We look forward to working with you to help small communities compete, in a fairer construct, for limited resources.

We appreciate your efforts to continue to advance this project and urge you to reprogram funds for the remainder of fiscal year 2013. Thank you for your timely response to our request.

Sincerely,


Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator


Rob Portman
U.S. Senator


Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress