



Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program

Helping Communities Solve Natural Resource Problems, Keeping People Safe, Protecting Property and Creating Jobs

In May 2011 the Nation experienced some of the worst flooding in almost 20 years. Businesses, homes, crops, and machinery were lost. Recovery from flood induced damage to the land and the environment will take years. Fast forward to July 2011, experts predict widespread flooding threats on through the summer.

As Congress and the President wrestle with budgets, debt reduction and each other, it is sometimes difficult to follow the action and determine what is genuinely real. On the other hand, the very real nature of flood damage around the country is readily apparent and a looming threat.

Recent flood events reconfirm for us that the Watershed Program, when adequately funded, is the most environmentally friendly and cost effective flood protection tool available. Whether structural measures, land treatment, relocation, flood-proofing, wetland restoration or some combination of practices, it works efficiently in both rural and urban areas. Successful examples of its use abound. It is a federal/local partnership program that provides both national and local benefits.

We are puzzled that billions of Federal dollars are poured into disaster response, National Flood Insurance Program claims, and disaster assistance, yet when constructive preventative measures such as the Watershed Program are proposed, we hear that these are local issues and not the responsibility of the federal government. Another favorite of detractors is that the program duplicates other federal flood control efforts. Recent events vividly document the false nature of that comparison. We were most recently amazed when more than 200 square miles of privately owned farmland was submerged in a deliberate levee breach.

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program is a local/state/federal partnership that helps communities solve local natural resource issues while developing a national infrastructure. This existing infrastructure of flood control dams and conservation practices in 2,000 watersheds in every state provides \$2 billion in annual benefits to over 47 million citizens.

Yet, needs exist in many areas for additional flood prevention work and there is a growing need for rehabilitation of aging flood control dams to extend their benefits as well as ensure they remain safe.

In the current difficult national economic climate it is clearly necessary to reduce federal spending and to reevaluate federal programs when developing a national budget. However, watershed project sponsors believe funding for the Watershed Program including funding for rehabilitation of dams is an important part of the path to economic recovery. The costs to mitigate against the ravages of uncontrolled flooding is a fraction of the cost compared to the damages to resources and millions of dollars required to clean up after the flood.





Why Should Federal Funds be Appropriated for the Watershed Program?

- Reliable water supply and flood protection created by the Watershed Program are essential to creating and maintaining strong rural communities. Well managed water resources create economic growth and strengthen local economies. Positive community development requires economic opportunity and the ability to create and sustain jobs. Flood protection is essential to prevent the unnecessary loss of infrastructure and capital to developing economies in rural America.
- It is a well known economic development principle that attracting commerce and retaining the workforce is tied to quality of life issues. There are countless successful examples that verify investing in the Watershed Program in rural areas brings the water supply, recreation and flood protection benefits of the Program to bear on sustainable economic development opportunities. Watershed Program projects make the participating communities better places to live, work and play.
- The collective Watershed Program benefits to rural and urban communities across the country add up to a stronger national economy and a more productive and secure Nation. The Watershed Program represents opportunity for the perfect blend of natural resource protection and the creation of economic opportunity for rural America. Investment in the Watershed Program represents expanding opportunities for natural resource conservation coupled with important national economic and environmental dividends for all Americans.
- New construction and rehabilitation of existing Watershed Program flood control dams creates jobs and stimulates the economy. Contractors hire employees and make purchases of fuel, concrete, equipment and other services.
- The Watershed Program has existing authorities to deal with a wide range of natural resource issues, including flood control, water quality, sediment and erosion control, water supplies and water based recreation. It is a proven, cost-effective program with thousands of success stories. Watershed projects protect lives and property and reduce flood damages. They also play an important role in protecting resources vital to the agricultural economy as well. The Program is federally-assisted, but locally planned and implemented. Local project sponsors use local resources to maintain constructed project measures.

The National Watershed Coalition and local watershed project sponsors across the county realize the continuing investment in infrastructure through the Watershed Program is part of the solution to a prosperous national economic future for rural America. Current annual documented needs for federally authorized projects should be funded at a responsible level: \$75 million for Watershed Rehabilitation, \$35 million for Watershed Planning and \$100 million for Watershed Operations. A proactive Watershed Program builds economic opportunity, protects natural resources and saves lives and property.

We ask you to support the continuing program through these financially trying times, it is a valuable tool to guarantee a brighter national economic future.