

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Honorable David Rouzer  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Grace F. Napolitano  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2024

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

Thank you for your strong leadership in working to draft critical Water Resources Development legislation and building the consensus to move these efforts forward. This commitment to address the nation's water resources and environmental needs is important to our colleagues and the communities we represent, and we appreciate your great efforts.

As you move forward with drafting the Water Resources Development Act of 2024, we ask that you consider our request to provide full aquatic ecosystem restoration of Martinez Creek within the San Antonio Channel Improvement Project (SACIP) / Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project.

The specific legislative request is to modify the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project by modifying the selected plan to direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to construct a pilot channel, riparian woody vegetation, and slackwater measures to Martinez Creek along with a 5 acre wetland adjacent to Martinez Creek known as Alternative 7 in the January 2014 report to allow for full restoration of the Martinez Creek in order to match the full restoration of the other three creeks included in the SACIP.

The project is located in a dense urban setting and adjacent to three Opportunity Homes (formerly San Antonio Housing Authority) properties: The Alazan-Apache Courts, Cassiano Homes and Lincoln Heights housing developments. These apartments house approximately 4,525 people and are the largest low-income housing based on population in the City of San Antonio. In fact, the vast majority of the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project is within the 78207 zip code, which has a poverty rate of 42.5%.

San Antonio is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest city in the nation and the 78207 zip code has an approximate population of 55,500 residents. 94% of the population identify as Hispanic, 3.5% as white, and 2.5% as African American. Of the students attending public schools, 97.2% are Hispanic and 96.8% of the total students are eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program. The median household income from the 2020 census in 78207 is \$27,205. For comparison, the 2020 median household income in the United States was \$67,521.

The January 2014 Final Report for the SACIP, General Re-Evaluation Report (GRR) and Environmental Assessment for the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project recommended partial restoration of Martinez Creek based primarily on the cost of utility infrastructure relocations. At the time of the feasibility study the major wastewater service utility for the community was just beginning their work to satisfy their United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Consent Decree to repair or replace their wastewater infrastructure. The wastewater utility's subsequent improvements to their wastewater infrastructure, in support of the EPA Consent Decree, moved their infrastructure from the center line of Martinez Creek to locations supportive of the future Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project. With this work complete the cost of utility relocations has been significantly reduced.

Martinez Creek and the adjacent historically underserved neighborhoods and disadvantaged residents deserve to have the full array of ecosystem restoration measures implemented similar to restoration efforts on the San Pedro, Apache and Alazan creeks. The Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project is a high priority for our community, and as such the Bexar County Commissioners Court has committed to being the local funding partner for the local match requirement.

The GRR studied the full restoration of Martinez Creek as Alternative 7, and we support the implementation of Alternative 7 as a modification to the Director's Report. It should also be noted that this modification was included in Section 7001 of the 2023 Report to Congress on Future Water Resources Development, dated February 2023.

We have worked closely with the USACE and their local partner in San Antonio, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), on a number of key water resources and ecosystem restoration projects. SARA has worked successfully with the USACE to advance features of Corps' projects, including the award-winning Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration Project, which brought a wide range of benefits to our community.

This project will provide a range of environmental, recreational, social and health benefits that our constituents have been sorely lacking, and we request your full consideration.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



Tony Gonzales  
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar  
Member of Congress