

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2024

The Honorable Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

We are writing to request that you include \$50 million in Construction funds in the Army Corps of Engineers' (Army Corps) Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Work Plan to reimburse the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) of Greater Chicago for design and construction work conducted on the Thornton Composite Reservoir.

This funding will allow MWRD to reinvest in the historically underserved and low-income communities of Robbins, Harvey, Glenwood, Ford Heights, South Holland, Dolton, Calumet City, Lansing, Markham, Dixmoor, and Thornton, Illinois. It will build on this year's \$20 million in the FY2024 Army Corps of Engineers Work Plan; last year's \$7.2 million reimbursement to MWRD in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's* Construction Spend Plan, Summer 2023 Addendum; and the \$12 million in the FY2022 Army Corps of Engineers Work Plan, allowing MWRD to complete construction of the Robbins Flood Protection Project.

In 2009, MWRD executed an amendment to its Project Cooperation Agreement with the Army Corps for the design and construction of the Thornton Composite Reservoir. This enabled MWRD to design and construct the Thornton Composite Reservoir project and allowed it to be eligible for federal reimbursement. The reservoir was put into service in 2015 and now provides an estimated \$40 million per year in flood reduction benefits to 14 communities, protecting more than 35,000 structures from flooding.

Currently, the Army Corps of Engineers owes MWRD approximately \$200 million in reimbursements for the cost of designing and constructing the Thornton Reservoir, which is needed to support disadvantaged communities struggling with flooding. For example, Cook County experienced extreme flooding during two storms events in 2023 that led to two major disaster declarations. Some of these reimbursement funds would be used to match FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant funding for projects to address flood damages in Chicago's south suburbs. Including a \$50 million reimbursement in the FY2025 Army Corps of Engineers Work Plan will ensure that MWRD can work to protect these communities from the next set of disasters driven by the climate crisis.

MWRD has applied the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and confirmed that the requested funding will be used to fund stormwater management projects in six Justice40 disadvantaged communities. The Thornton Reservoir's service area also is in a census tract considered to be disadvantaged under CEQ's criteria. These communities include areas that meet both the socioeconomic indicators and the

CEQ/Justice 40 Initiative Key Categories, including: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, reduction and remediation of legacy pollution, critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure, health burdens, and workforce development. This reimbursement will help these communities create resilient futures.

As the Corps determines how to best address its environmental justice obligations, we strongly urge you to include \$50 million in Construction funds for reimbursement to MWRD in the FY 2025 Work Plan. The reimbursement to MWRD will help create a better future for the disadvantaged communities of Robbins, Harvey, Glenwood, Ford Heights, South Holland, Dolton, Calumet City, Lansing, Markham, Dixmoor, and Thornton, Illinois. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

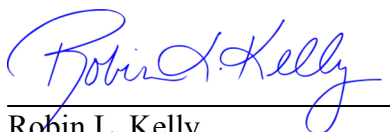
Sincerely,



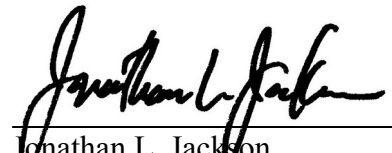
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