

Durbin presses Trump administration on McCook Reservoir funding

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) met with officials from the Assistant Secretary of the Army's (ASA) office and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to demand answers on why funding for the McCook Reservoir Project in Chicago has not been included in the President's budget for the second year in a row, despite repeated Congressional directives to do so. The McCook Reservoir Project is a major flood damage reduction reservoir of the Chicagoland Underflow Plan (CUP) that will provide more than \$114 million in flood damage reduction benefits to five million residents of Chicago and 36 surrounding suburban communities.

“McCook Reservoir is a cost-effective project that will benefit Chicago and the surrounding areas, including protecting the health and safety of Illinoisans,” said Durbin. “In the meeting, I strongly urged the Assistant Secretary of the Army’s office and the Army Corps of Engineers to include and prioritize funding for McCook in upcoming budget proposals and requested that the Administration provide additional funding to ensure this priority project stays on schedule.”

The meeting was attended by Doug Lamont, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Army; Major General Donald E. Jackson, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations; Eric Hansen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army; and David St. Pierre, Executive Director of Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD).

Last year, Durbin secured language in the Water Infrastructure for Improvements to the Nation (WIIN) Act directing the Corps to prioritize funding to expedite completion of McCook, but the Corps has ignored the directive from Congress and refused to fund the project in the President’s budget. To keep funds flowing to the project, Durbin successfully included additional flood control funding in the fiscal year 2017 Energy & Water appropriations bill and then pushed for the Corps to direct that funding to McCook in their annual construction work plan. Durbin also secured language in the fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 Energy & Water appropriations bills expressing disappointment in the Corps’ failure to fund McCook and reiterating the project’s clear authorization as a flood control project. Additionally, Durbin has expressed his support of this project with the previous Assistant Secretary of the Army and the previous Office of Management and Budget Director.

The McCook Reservoir was authorized by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1988 and is currently 91 percent complete. When finished in 2029, the reservoir will hold ten billion gallons of water and protect 1.2 million homes and businesses in the region from flooding. It will also greatly improve the quality of area waterways by reducing untreated sewage backflow into Lake Michigan, which serves as Chicago’s drinking water supply, and storing combined sewer overflow during flooding events before the water can be directed through the Stickney Wastewater Treatment Plant.