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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
BUDGET  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
JUDICIARY  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

May 18, 2023

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

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

I write to follow up on our recent discussion of Tulare Lake during the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing examining the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, and to ensure USACE has the authorities necessary to assist California communities that are anticipating months of flooding risks.

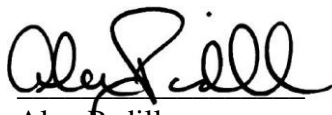
As of May 1, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) measured statewide snowpack at 254 percent of historical average. Even as winter storms helped bolster California's water supplies and ease the impacts of a historic megadrought, this succession of atmospheric river (AR) storms and resultant flooding also caused \$1 billion in damages across the state. Now, as snowpack in the Sierra Nevada melts, state and local officials are preparing for significant potential flooding throughout the spring and summer. I am especially concerned about the risks to the Tulare Lake Basin and the rural and agricultural communities surrounding Tulare Lake, which was once the largest freshwater lake in the West, spanning an area roughly four times larger than Lake Tahoe.

Collaboration between USACE and DWR, whose forecasting and modeling capabilities have informed real-time water management decisions, has proved critical for local agencies and emergency personnel in their preparations for anticipated flooding, and for USACE reservoir operators looking to increase reservoir storage capacity as rising temperatures accelerate snowpack melt.

In assessing USACE Civil Works' capacity to provide assistance, are there gaps in current authorities, including for emergency activities and operations and maintenance, or funding needs that would enable USACE to more effectively meet the emergency needs and longer-term needs of communities facing flood risks in the Central Valley?

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to meeting the public safety, infrastructure, and environmental needs of Californian communities, and I look forward to seeing your response.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator