



Congresswoman Lori Trahan
Remarks as Delivered
Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization Hearing
March 16, 2022

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

By including these priorities as we reauthorize the Water Resources Development Act, we'll be able to undertake critical water development projects that benefit communities across our country.

In my district, MA-3, combined sewage overflows, or CSOs, are an all too familiar issue.

In fact, many of my colleagues have come to know me as the sewage lady here in Congress because of how much I talk about the need to stop sewage overflows.

So, I don't think it was a surprise for anyone when I used the five environmental infrastructure requests that each Member was allotted to request authorizations of \$20 million each to fix the CSOs in Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, and Fitchburg.

CSOs are an issue that have plagued my district for as long as I can remember.

It was an issue when I toured Lowell's Regional Wastewater Utility's facility as part of my first infrastructure tour after being elected to Congress three years ago.

And it remains an issue to this day. In fact, I was just at that facility again a few weeks ago.

Each year, hundreds of millions of gallons of waste are dumped into the Merrimack River – from Manchester to Lowell and all the way out to the mouth of the river in Newburyport – and honestly, that's probably a conservative estimate based on some of the heavy rain years that we've had recently.

In addition to polluting the treasure that is our river, the human health effects from CSOs are also cause for alarm.

600,000 people rely on the Merrimack as their drinking water supply – and our gateway cities are continuing to grow. The same is true with the Nashua River, where Fitchburg's sewage overflows.

Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, and Fitchburg have each taken a number of steps to drive down the amount of sewage that must be discharged each year – and I certainly commend their leadership on that.

But each of us knows that this doesn't get fixed without a serious course correction at the federal level.

Now, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is an excellent start. Already, the EPA has provided \$188 million this year alone for water infrastructure projects, including CSOs, in Massachusetts.

But still, fixing CSOs is not cheap. Over the last 15 years, Lowell has invested \$150 million in CSO control projects, resulting in a 60 percent reduction in annual volume of CSO discharges.

Even so, an average of 300-450 million gallons of raw sewage are released into the river each year.

Overall, the city estimates it will cost roughly \$400 million to eliminate all CSO discharges from its sewer systems.

Lawrence, Haverhill, Fitchburg, and Methuen also face the daunting prospect of multi-million-dollar projects to fix their CSOs.

The same is true for Manchester, New Hampshire, which is further upstream along the Merrimack.

In fact, Manchester dumps 221 million gallons in CSOs into the Merrimack each year.

That is why my good friend, Mr. Pappas, a member of this committee, also requested a \$20 million authorization to help Manchester fix its sewage systems.

I strongly support this request, and I thank him for making it.

After all, we are all a part of the Merrimack River ecosystem – and sewage in the river in Manchester eventually works its way to Lowell, to Methuen, to Lawrence, and to Haverhill.

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and my colleagues on the Committee, I'm not asking for an authorization to fix all of the sewage systems in my district.

But I am asking for your help to make a dent.

\$20 million authorizations for each of these five cities will go a long way to cleaning up our drinking water and improving the health of hundreds of thousands of people in my district.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for considering my requests.

I look forward to working with all of you as we craft WRDA and find ways to help the communities we serve.

Thank you. I yield back.