

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (CIVIL WORKS)**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT  
OF**

**HONORABLE MIKE PARKER  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (CIVIL WORKS)**

**FOR THE HEARING BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE AND WATER  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ON  
WATER SUPPLY**

**ROOM 406, DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
9:30 am, 14 November 2001**

---

**INTRODUCTION**

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE: I am Mike Parker, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on the Army Corps of Engineers activities to address the water supply issues of the Nation.

In your call for this hearing, you asked that we respond to three specific questions, and I will respond to your questions in order. First, you asked that we present our perspective on water supply in the United States today including the extent to which there is or is not a water supply problem today or in our future, a description of that problem if we believe one exists, including regional differences, and a discussion of the potential cause of this problem.

We believe the Nation faces many challenges in assuring and adequate water supply. These challenges now affect all regions of the country, not just the traditionally dry areas. The availability of reliable and clean supplies of water is crucial to the health of our citizens and to maintaining the Nation's economic prosperity both now and in the future. In a series of listening sessions the Corps held last year, citizens around the Nation voiced their concerns about various aspects of water supply at every session.

At these listening sessions, the public called for better data to understand the scope and nature of the water supply problems we face. The last comprehensive assessment of the Nation's water needs was completed over 15 years ago. The public also told us that water supply is more than a local problem. Municipal leaders

told us that supporting growth in an environmentally sustainable manner will require regional solutions. Consequently, new water supply projects that are feasible and efficient must often be located outside the limits of the municipalities that seek additional supplies. Technical leadership will be essential to integrate competing values across multiple political jurisdictions to reach consensus for regional water supply solutions. As an example, in landmark 1997 legislation, the state of Texas recognized these new realities and designated 16 regions to lead the development of future water supply. Larger communities within these regions were designated to take the lead for their regions.

Your second question asks us to address the extent that the Federal programs under our jurisdiction work to ensure that state and local governments are meeting water supply needs. It has been long-standing policy that municipal and industrial water supply projects are considered the primary responsibility of non-Federal parties. The authorities under which the Corps of Engineers provides water supply storage are generally project specific and a secondary purpose for the development of a project. We can provide water supply storage at completed projects by reallocating storage for other purposes and evaluate the potential for new water supply as part of planning multipurpose projects. At the present time, the Army operates 117 reservoirs containing about 9.5 million acre-feet of storage authorized and available for municipal and industrial water supply use. We also maintain approximately 57 million acre-feet of storage for agricultural irrigation in 50 reservoirs. Overall, we have over 400 reservoirs that could be modified or have existing storage that may be available for reallocation to provide additional municipal and industrial water supply storage.

I want to emphasize that Corps involvement in water supply is founded on deference to state water rights. During the enactment of the Flood Control Act of 1944, Congress made clear that we do not own the water stored in our projects. Our practice is to contract with non-Federal interests for water storage in our projects. Our policy is to continue our commitment to consistency with state water law.

The Corps of Engineers is currently working with other Federal agencies and with State and local interests to help solve several large complex regional water problems. For example, as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Corps of Engineers is undertaking a technical evaluation of complex systems and balancing competing demands for available water resources in the development of a comprehensive regional solution. This effort integrates diverse needs, objectives and ongoing complementary efforts of multiple Federal, State, local and other interest groups. Although the Federal interest is primarily environmental restoration, this interest is closely linked, in the case of the Everglades, with water quality improvement, water supply and flood damage reduction. Another example is the comprehensive assessment of the demands and water resources available in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint and Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa River systems to assist the affected states in reaching decisions on allocation of available water. These efforts included the development of alternative scenarios and options on which allocation decisions can be based.

Your final question asks us to review what actions, if any, Congress should take to facilitate an efficient and effective Federal role in water supply. Participants in our listening sessions told us that they look to cooperative efforts between the Federal government and states in developing integrated, regional management of water resources including water supply. Our management of water must be based on economic and environmental benefits and costs. Decisions must be science-based choices among a full array of alternative uses to which our watersheds and river basins may be put. In doing this we must respect the primacy of state water law. Congress should work with the Administration to ensure that our Nation has the framework to provide integrated water management. This framework should include the appropriate roles of the Federal and non-Federal levels of government and the very powerful part that the private sector must play in any solution to our water resources challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion I believe we are facing emerging water supply challenges. Consistent with the goals of the President, the Army Corps of Engineers stands ready to work with its sister agencies in contributing to the dialogue. We will continue our stewardship of our existing projects to manage water storage for efficient uses including water supply and maintain our commitment to consistency with state water rights.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement, and I would be pleased to address any questions that you or the committee may have.