

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2023

Lt. Col. Timothy W. Shebesta
Commander and District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
San Francisco District
450 Golden Gate Ave, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Lt. Col. Shebesta,

We write regarding rehabilitation of the Pajaro River levees under Public Law 84-99 (PL 84-99) and request that you prioritize the completion of the emergency repairs. As we approach the next wet season, the completion of rehabilitation of all three sites, which were breached during the winter storms in 2023, is vital to protecting the communities we represent. We request that you take all appropriate and possible steps to ensure the timely completion of repairs at the two remaining sites under PL 84-99.

As you know, the levee failure this past winter devastated the community of Pajaro, closed the major transportation artery of Highway 1, and devastated highly productive agricultural and other lands. We appreciate that the U.S. Army Corps (Corps) has already completed repairs at Site 1, the only site upstream of Pajaro. The completion of repairs at Site 1 was integral to protecting Pajaro residents, many of whom lost their homes and livelihoods earlier this year.

However, we are concerned that repairs at Sites 2 and 3 might not be completed before the rainy season. While these sites are downstream of Pajaro, the levees at Sites 2 and 3 are still important to protecting agriculture and landowners that received significant flooding earlier this year.

We recognize that both sites experienced issues outside of the Corps' control, including the need for Monterey County to relocate a sewer main at Site 2 and unexpected issues related to dewatering Site 3 experienced by the construction contractor. We also understand that the Corps cannot control the weather between now and the wet season. However, as new atmospheric rivers begin to form off the California coast, we urge you to take all possible steps to ensure that should a sufficient window of dry weather happen between now and the start of the wet season, that the Corps and construction contractors are ready to promptly complete PL 84-99 rehabilitation of Sites 2 and 3. Additionally, should a window of dry weather not occur, we request that you develop emergency contingency plans and share with us how such plans will limit the risk the sites pose to lives and property. As we approach the coming wet season, the Corps, as well as state and local officials, must be fully prepared to prevent a repeat of the devastating flooding local communities experienced this year.

The severe flooding and the current issues repairing the breach locations also emphasize the importance of the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project to increase the level of protection offered by the levees. We appreciate the consistent updates your staff has provided to our offices, including monthly updates on the broader project and weekly meetings regarding PL

84-99 work. We urge you to continue to prioritize both the PL 84-99 work and the Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project to protect Pajaro and the Salinas Valley.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress