

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 29, 2025

The Honorable Lee Forsgren
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Forsgren:

As you finalize a work plan for fiscal year 2025 pursuant to section 1503(b) of division A of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119-4), I respectfully request that you fund the Yazoo Basin, Yazoo Backwater Area, Mississippi – Construction (Yazoo Backwater Project) to its maximum capability.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) signed a record of decision for the Yazoo Backwater Area Water Management Project, which focuses on the remaining unconstructed features of the comprehensive Yazoo Backwater Project. The decision was reached after years of study, community input, and catastrophic flooding that has devastated the area's rural communities, environment, wildlife, agricultural lands and infrastructure.

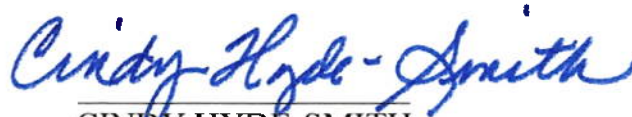
The FY2025 Senate Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (S. 4927; S. Rept. 118-205), which was reported out of committee with unanimous support, provided \$32 million for the Yazoo Backwater Project. While I regret Congress was unable to enact an annual appropriations measure that included this important congressionally-directed spending item, the full-year continuing resolution maintained funding for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) account at the FY2024-enacted level (\$366.9 million), which is more than sufficient to fund the Yazoo Backwater Project to its maximum capability.

FY2025 Work Plan funding could be put to good use to satisfy compensatory mitigation requirements, as well as for preconstruction, engineering, and design (PED) activities. The mitigation aspect of the project is especially important, given that more than 6,000 acres of compensatory mitigation is required, and all sites must be secured prior to construction.

You are familiar with this project and its significance, and I am grateful for the attention you have given it over the years. As we speak, the Mississippi River is well above flood stage and the Steele Bayou Structure gates are closed. Land protected by the federally-constructed levee system is flooding due to overflow from inland streams with no outlet, and the lack of a pumping station. In a matter of days, more than 200,000 acres of land in the South Delta will be underwater. Robust funding for the Yazoo Backwater Project in the Corps' FY25 Work Plan will not prevent the imminent flood damages Mississippians will soon face, but it is one of the few actions we can take toward moving this project to completion, which is long overdue.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



CINDY HYDE-SMITH
United States Senator