



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Philadelphia District

Francis E. Walter Dam Re-Evaluation Study
18 MAR Hearing/Study Update
DRAFT TESTIMONY – Dr. Dan Hughes

Thank you. I'm Dan Hughes, Project Manager for the Francis E. Walter Dam Re-evaluation Study.

We certainly understand the significant interest and attention this study has received from the public. And we appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

As you know, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is managing this study in partnership with our non-federal sponsors – the Delaware River Basin Commission and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

Our role is to objectively evaluate alternatives and conduct engineering, economic, and environmental analyses. Ultimately, we will develop a recommended plan. It's worth noting that some Army Corps studies result in a no-action recommendation; some result in a recommended plan but don't get authorized by Congress; and some recommendations get authorized by Congress but are not funded and do not get built or implemented. But our job is to go through the process using sound science.

We began this study in the fall of 2019. The purpose of the study is to examine whether potential improvements to infrastructure or operational methods could allow water in the reservoir to be used for additional purposes. In particular, the study is evaluating reservoir management options that could release additional water under drought conditions to help repel salinity downstream. Sea level rise is an important factor in the sponsors' interest in looking at this issue.

It's important to clarify several points.

First, the primary mission of the F.E. Walter Dam is to reduce downstream flooding. This will NOT change and remains at the forefront on all our decision-making.

Second, recreational releases are congressionally authorized at F.E. Walter Dam and we recognize the importance of these release to the region. We'll continue to look for opportunities to improve recreational opportunities associated with F.E. Walter Dam.

Third, as my colleagues will outline, this study has nothing to do with supplying drinking water to New York City. I point that out because there's been general confusion on that subject.

I'd like to mention some general updates and then share information on status and next steps.

Initially, our study team identified eight alternatives. These included a no action alternative, raising the dam, increasing storage with structural modifications, modifying the existing dam tower, and operational changes to alter water releases.

We have since screened out – and this is our terminology for ruling something out – the alternative to raise the dam. This type of project would likely take years to build, cause significant environmental impacts, shut down recreational water releases for an unknown time period, and cost hundreds of millions.

Our team completed an analysis related to the dam's primary flood risk management function. This analysis evaluated the dam's performance and the potential for overtopping by looking at peak inflows, peak stages, and discharges. Ultimately, this was a positive result from a flood risk management standpoint.

Currently, we're focusing on "Alternative 2" – which is to increase water storage behind the dam with structural modifications. The other

alternatives, including modifying the tower and operational changes are still being considered as well.

Moving forward, we'll be analyzing several issues associated with increasing the storage capacity of the dam and the other alternatives. These include water quality and other environmental impacts; real estate considerations; necessary upstream and downstream modifications; and revisiting dam safety as it relates to storage capacity.

Now, for next steps:

Several of the study milestones have been delayed. We're currently working to refine the alternatives and the potential timelines and costs associated with that effort.

We're awaiting a needs analysis from our study sponsors. Then, we'll be re-examining alternatives under various conditions (what we call Future with Project conditions). The alternatives will then be compared and evaluated from an economic, environmental, social, and engineering standpoint.

We anticipate holding a stakeholder working group meeting this Spring to continue dialog on the study alternatives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today.