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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress

4th District, Virginia

March 12, 2009

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Mr. John Paul Woodley, Jr.
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Room 3E446
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Mr. Woodley:

I write to you today to urge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to coordinate with its Norfolk District office to initiate a flood reconnaissance and comprehensive watershed study (the "Study") of the Chowan River Basin in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (H.R. 1). The Study is necessary to determine ways to protect the water resources of this highly productive basin, restore wetlands, reduce flood damages throughout the basin, improve navigation on the Chowan River, and would determine the federal interest in conducting a feasibility study at a future date.

The Chowan River is approximately 130 miles long and drains into an area of 5,000 square miles in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Currently, there are no federal flood control projects relating to the Chowan River Basin. In several locations within the basin, six of the top ten historical high water marks have occurred since 1998, including the flood of record (Hurricane Floyd in 1999), the October 2006 cold core upper level low pressure system (second highest), and Hurricane Isabel in 2003 (fifth highest). Flooding and other damage from each of these storm events have ranged from a minimum of \$10 million dollars to more than \$100 million dollars.

In the last two years, a coalition of local communities, the ACOE, and congressional supporters have worked together to begin this important study. The Study was authorized by the 2007 WRDA bill, and \$86,000 is appropriated in the FY2009 Omnibus that has recently passed the Congress. In addition, the ACOE has invested \$45,000 and the local communities have invested a matching contribution \$45,000 to establish a notification system for rising flood levels. As the projected cost of the Study is \$350,000, the study requires \$264,000 to be completed, and the amount may be less given the contributions of the local communities and prior investment by the ACOE. Knowing the intent of the ACOE to finish projects that are started, I respectfully urge you to consider allocating a portion of the \$25 million dollars provided in H.R.1 for ACOE Investigations to complete the Chowan River Basin project.

I understand that the ACOE will soon provide the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) with its recommendations for project funding and I feel this would be a beneficial allocation of government resources. On numerous occasions, flooding in the Chowan River Basin has damaged the region, uprooted families, and destroyed millions of dollars of property. However, this flooding is directly related to an infrastructure deficiency that is correctable. The Study would determine ways to effectively correct this flood problem while protecting and restoring the region's precious wetland natural resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. If you have any questions with respect to the foregoing, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Assistant for natural resources, Brian Perkins (bperkins@mail.house.gov), at (202) 225-6365.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Randy Forbes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress