

KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

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COMMITTEES:
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AGRICULTURE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

December 17, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Environment & Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Environment & Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

As the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee works to put together a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for 2020, I am writing to urge you to ensure that the legislation adequately addresses the large number of high-hazard dams that are in poor condition across New York and the United States.

Recent reporting by the Associated Press revealed that at least 1,680 dams across the country are potentially at risk of failure and in need of rehabilitation. This includes 90 dams in New York State that have been rated "unsound" by the state Department of Environmental Conservation. Should any of these dams fail, the result could be catastrophic for the local community and potentially lead to the sudden loss of life and property. Higher levels of precipitation and flooding projected to occur due to climate change will only add stress and strain to our aging water infrastructure and makes the need to address this problem even more urgent.

Our committee has an opportunity to proactively address dam safety in the next Water Resources Development Act. This includes ensuring that the regulations governing our federal dam safety programs get assistance where it is needed. We should also work to ensure that federal standards are in place to address climate change and make dams more resilient to extreme weather and other climate-related impacts. We should not wait for a catastrophic dam failure or major flooding event to spur us to action.

Additionally, I hope to work with you to push for Congress and the Administration to fully fund the Rehabilitation of High-Hazard Potential Dam Grant Program that was created in the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, nearly \$45 billion is needed to repair aging high-hazard potential dams across the United States. We must ensure that dam owners, which include states, local governments, public utilities and private entities, have access to the funding provided by this program to make critical improvements to the dams that they own.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent public safety issue. I look forward to working with you on next year's WRDA bill as a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "K".

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator