



CONGRESS MUST ACT NOW: Include the Holmes-Norton Washington Aqueduct Provision in WRDA 2022, Authorize and Appropriate Funding for Secondary Water Source

Problem – Single Source of Water for Major Metropolitan Area

The Potomac River is the metropolitan Washington region’s primary source for drinking water. It is the only source of drinking water for the District of Columbia and Arlington County— the only major metropolitan area of the country to have no redundancy built into the water system. If there were an accidental chemical spill upstream like the Elk River spill in West Virginia in 2014, a natural disaster, severe drought, or a deliberate attack on the region’s water infrastructure, there is no backup source for water [storage or supply]. A severe incident would affect most of the approximately 5.7 million people who live and work in the area, or the federal, state, and local government entities that need reliable water infrastructure to operate in the region. The full impact of a water supply shortage is not fully known, but the potential for a humanitarian and economic crisis should not be underestimated.

Did you know:

- The Potomac River provides 78% of the water for the metro region. The Potomac provides 100% of water for Washington, DC and Arlington, VA via the Washington Aqueduct.
- A total loss of Potomac River water supply would lead to all of DC and Arlington losing water within a 24-hour period and much of Fairfax, VA and suburban Maryland losing water within days.

Complicating things further: Washington, DC and the surrounding metropolitan region do not control this source of water – the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) does. Water is supplied through the Washington Aqueduct, which is owned and operated by the USACE. Therefore, the resiliency of the water supply for the region requires action from the Federal government in collaboration with state and local partners working together to address this potentially devastating, but avoidable water supply challenge.

Solution – Federal Government Action

Congress must authorize—and provide appropriations for—the USACE to move forward with a feasibility study to address this problem. In the [2022 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \(USACE\) Report to Congress on Future Water Resource Development](#) the metropolitan Washington region was identified as eligible for authorization of a feasibility study in the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) 2022 to address its current single source for water and significantly improve the region’s security and resilience.

ASK – Include the Holmes-Norton Washington Aqueduct Provision in WRDA 2022, Authorize and Appropriate Funding for Secondary Water Source

The USACE took the first step by including a recommendation for a feasibility study for a secondary water source for the region. In addition, the U.S. House of Representatives included authorization for a study in their recently passed WRDA 2022 ([H.R. 7776](#)). Given the potential vulnerabilities to the sole source water supply in the metropolitan Washington region, **Congress must act now** to address a secondary water source through WRDA and the annual appropriations process.