

## **Transcript of Congressman Frank Lucas's Speech on the House Floor July 21, 2021**

*Thank you, Madam Speaker.*

*Madam Speaker, today I stand before this deliberative body to talk about the importance of rural infrastructure, but more specifically, watershed and flood control infrastructure.*

*Our nation's watershed dams play a critical, yet silent, role in many of our daily lives.*

*Across the nation, watershed projects provide an estimated annual benefit of 2.2 billion dollars in reducing flood and erosion damage and improving wildlife habitat, recreation, and water supply for more than 47 million people.*

*In my home state of Oklahoma alone, there are more than 2,000 watershed dam projects that help Oklahomans meet a myriad of public needs- public safety, water supply, soil health, and fish and wildlife management- just to name a few.*

*In fact, the country's first upstream flood control dam- Cloud Creek Site Number 1- was built right in the backyard of my District- in Washita County. Built in 1948 following the passage of the Flood Control Act of 1944, the dam allowed for the preservation of farmland, wildlife, and several municipal services.*

*Fast forward to today and many of our country's 12,000 watershed dams have exceeded their design lifespan.*

*Like so much of the public infrastructure investments across the nation, our watershed dams are aging and need to be upgraded to remain safe and continue to provide benefits for generations to come.*

*Seeing the need to rehabilitate many of our dams, in 2000, I authored the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments which have provided important investments to help countless dams in need of repair.*

*After more than two decades of funding through the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments, more than 900 million dollars has been appropriated for rehabilitating aging dams. In the 2018 Farm Bill alone, we provided \$50 million dollars per year in mandatory funding for watershed rehabilitation and management.*

*I was proud to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments being signed into law this past year, but we must not delay the continued need to rehabilitate and repair other aging dams and water infrastructure.*

*These silent sentinels are vital to public safety, economic prosperity, and community viability and must not be allowed to fail.*

*We learned a lot of lessons 20 years ago in passing the dam rehabilitation bill. Now we must continue that mission as we debate and consider infrastructure legislation.*

*To aid in our efforts, I'd like the brought forth report to be included in the Congressional Record, Madam Speaker. It can be found at <https://damsafety.org/SmallWatershed>*

*In closing, as Congress negotiates on how best to invest in our nation's infrastructure we must continue to invest in the rehabilitation of these aging public works.*

*It's time to put the lessons of past appropriate investment to good use and build the capacity of a new generation to protect critical infrastructures for decades to come.*

*Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I yield back.*