

J. LUIS CORREA
46TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2025

Dear Neighbors:

Many thanks to those who joined me on May 12, 2025, at Santa Ana College to discuss the latest developments on the U.S. Corps of Army Engineers' ("the Corps") Santiago Creek project ("the Project"). I was pleased to share updates, including some good news about the project, as well as information on the next steps. I am writing to provide a synopsis of the meeting for those who could not attend.

As I mentioned during the town hall, at my request several leaders from the Corps, including the Commanders of the South Pacific and Los Angeles Districts, joined me on the tour of Santiago Creek. The visit included the Santiago Basins (Basins) and the Channel, which runs from the I-5 Freeway to the Santa Ana River. In addition, representatives from Orange County Public Works (OCPW), Orange County Water District (OCWD), locally elected officials, and Rep. Young Kim's office participated. We were able to present a unified position of support for our approach to the Project.

I used this opportunity to show these senior members of the Corps firsthand exactly why we fought so hard to preserve the trees in the Channel, as well as the erosion that needs to be addressed. Further, we conveyed the necessity of repairing and fortifying the Basins as a means of capturing water, which is essential for drought-stricken Southern California.

Last year, I was able to secure language in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 to modify the Santiago Creek component of the Santa Ana River Mainstem Project (SARMP). Specifically, WRDA 2024 prohibits the Corps from moving forward with the Channel work until it develops a plan that "minimizes the impacts to existing trees." Moreover, it requires the Corps to treat the work at the Channel independently from the Basins, allowing the Corps to move forward with the Basin while redrafting the Channel plan.

Since the enactment of the legislation, I have sent two letters [to the Corps](#), including one [recently with Representative Young Kim](#), clarifying Congressional intent and urging the Corps to move expeditiously. I am pleased to report that thanks to our efforts, the Corps agrees with our interpretation of the language, namely that the Channel and Basins are independent from each other and will proceed accordingly.

Currently, the Corps is preparing the Project for review by three Cost Control Boards to determine whether the Project should be funded. The funding for the Project comes from a pot of money that is quickly dwindling, and covers construction at the Prado Dam, as well as many major out-of-state projects. A decision is expected in December 2025, but I will keep working on

a bipartisan basis to secure the funding for the Project. If funding is approved, the Corps will finalize the plans for the Basins before moving toward construction while simultaneously designing a new plan for the Channel. I will continue to push for transparency and ensure that the Corps follows its mandate to provide you with the opportunity to weigh in on the plan before any construction begins. Each project, including the design, bid requests, construction, clean up, and planting will take approximately five years, with the Channel work anticipated to start 18 months after the Basins.

In the interim, I encourage you to reach out to OCPW and OCWD to discuss both the Project and their water conservation efforts. As always, feel free to reach out to me or my staff about this Project or for assistance with any other matters.

Your neighbor and Congressman,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Luis Correa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "J. Luis" and the last name "Correa" clearly distinguishable.

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress