

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Mr. Adam Telle
Nominee to be for Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works

Duties and Qualifications

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the (ASA(CW))?

The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of the Army for the Civil Works program. If confirmed, I would be responsible for establishing policy direction and providing supervision of the Department of the Army functions relating to all aspects of the Civil Works program of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This includes improving and maintaining the nation's infrastructure and waterways, primarily flood risk management, navigation, and aquatic ecosystem restoration.

2. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform these duties?

If confirmed, I will bring my 20 years of leadership, management, public policy, and project development experience to bear for the USACE and the nation. While the Corps' mission set is nominally confined to areas like navigation, flood control, and aquatic ecosystem restoration, the Corps winds up being the nation's "utility player." When the U.S. government needs an organization that gets stuff done, often it calls the Corps.

My direct experience as Senator Thad Cochran's point person in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and my experience leading the staff of the Appropriations Subcommittee most focused on disaster relief and response, where I was also the point person on FEMA issues, combined to give me deep knowledge and perspective on what success looks like before, during, and after disasters strike. My advocacy for flood control projects, navigation projects, and port projects give me a good perspective on what it feels like to be on the winning and losing sides of the Corps' decision-making process.

My experience working at the White House and interfacing with all Senators, and my experience working directly for Senators representing Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia, and Tennessee have given me an up-close understanding of how the Corps' performance, good or bad, affects everyday citizens, homeowners, farmers, shippers, entrepreneurs, and our nation's abundant natural resources.

I've worked on 20 fiscal years' worth of appropriations acts and every Water Resources Development Act that the Senate has generated during that span. I vividly understand that the Corps' work is something that is of deep interest to the Congress and thus requires management of not only the Corps itself but its very

active stakeholders on Capitol Hill. My past work in these areas has resulted in invitations to speak at multiple National Waterways Conferences and multiple Army Corps of Engineers leadership conferences.

The Corps' role as the nation's "utility player" though, is what qualifies me the most for this role. My experiences, particularly over the last decade, have given me the agility and organizational skills necessary to manage everything that the nation asks of the Corps. Just like building and managing a large Senate team or building and managing a White House operation, where each new day comes with a new challenge, this role will benefit from my ability to focus on a navigation project one moment, responding to a natural disaster the next, and assisting another agency with a contracting issue the next.

3. Do you believe that there are actions you need to take, if confirmed, to enhance your ability to perform the duties of the ASA(CW)?

My background working in both the Legislative and Executive branches of government, coupled with my firsthand experiences working disaster resilience, response, and recovery have prepared me well for the ASA(CW) position. However, this is a big job with a complex set of responsibilities, and it will require a willingness to constantly learn and improve on my extensive experience.

4. If confirmed, what additional duties and functions would you recommend the Secretary of the Army prescribe for you?

If confirmed, I will work with Secretary Driscoll to implement his priorities and ensure the Civil Works program is appropriately resourced and aligned to ensure success. At this time, I am not aware of additional duties and/or functions to be prescribed to the ASA(CW) position, and those duties and/or functions require a great deal of focus, but if confirmed, I intend to be a constructive resource to Secretary Driscoll and others when called upon.

Major Challenges and Problems

5. In your view, what are the major challenges that will confront the next ASA(CW)?

The organization within the responsibility of the ASA(CW) is vast, with approximately 26,000 personnel, approximately 40 districts, 9 divisions, a headquarters, and the Assistant Secretary's office. The organization has a history of distributed power and responsibility across these entities and will require aggressive and focused leadership to ensure alignment with the law, Administration policy, and Congressional intent.

The nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

In addition, the public is in severe need of speed, transparency, and clarity as it relates to the regulatory responsibilities of the ASA(CW) and its interagency partners. This will require aggressive leadership and focus on interagency cooperation and alignment.

Finally, when disasters strike, the Corps of Engineers is required to be immediately responsive to the needs of the public, and the ASA(CW) must remain flexible and nimble in order to provide instant capacity in emergent situations.

6. If confirmed, what plans, management actions, and timelines would you have for addressing these challenges?

If confirmed, I look forward to quickly assessing which plans, management actions, and timelines are necessary to deliver appropriate and swift responses to the vast and complex needs within the ASA(CW)'s mission set and duties. The public and their politically accountable representatives expect results as soon as possible.

7. If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed by the ASA(CW)?

Regulatory clarity, resource efficiency, transparency, coordination, and accountability.

Relations with Congress

8. What are your views on the state of the relationship between the ASA(CW) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

The Army's Civil Works mission has a broad scope and congressional oversight is shared among several committees, to include the Senate Armed Services Committee. As expressed via the law and other Congressional direction, the relationship between the ASA(CW) and Congress is critical, and, if confirmed, I commit to a collaborative and productive relationship with the Congress, and I will provide all oversight committees—to include the Senate Armed Services Committee—with the information they need, as required and appropriate, to conduct proper oversight and resourcing of this important mission.

9. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the ASA(CW)?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Army emphasizes a transparent and cooperative relationship with Congress concerning Civil Works efforts. I will be as proactive as feasible in providing information to this Committee and other stakeholders in Congress regarding Civil Works matters.

10. What is your view of the role of both the civilian and military leadership of the Corps in developing goals for Corps' programs and presenting these goals to Congress?

The interwoven roles of the civilian and military leadership of the Corps are longstanding and invaluable to the Corps' mission and the public. The Army's civilian appointees lead and translate the policy directives of the President, in consultation with senior military and civilian executives who provide advice and execution.

11. If confirmed, what procedures would you follow regarding consultation with Congress prior to issuing any decision or announcement that could affect the Corps execution of its civil works or environmental functions?

If confirmed, I will follow legally required and other procedures to ensure effective consultation with Congress on decisions or announcements.

Civilian Oversight of the Army Corps of Engineers

12. What is your view of the relative authority of the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, the ASA(CW), the Secretary of the Army, the Army Chief of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense with regard to the civil works function of the Army Corps of Engineers?

My understanding is that the Civil Works Authorities of the ASA(CW) are laid out in numerous provisions in law and Army General Orders, and I intend to follow them. These provisions and orders also outline the other officials' authorities.

13. If confirmed, what fundamental changes would you make in the Corps' execution of both its operational and institutional functions? Please explain your answer.

As discussed above, if confirmed, I intend to evaluate the mission delivery timelines, delegations of authority, internal and external relationships, and talent management processes to see what, if any, changes would improve the organization. I also intend to look for innovative opportunities to enhance the execution of planning, design, construction, and operation & maintenance efforts to reduce the time and resources required to deliver results safely and on schedule.

Integrity and Accountability in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a long history cost over-runs and schedule delays on its major projects.

14. If confirmed, what steps, if any, would you take to ensure that projects are appropriately justified by meaningful and accurate cost-benefit analysis?

If confirmed, I will take the steps necessary to ensure that any U.S. Army Corps of Engineers analysis is sound and transparent. To ensure that projects are justified, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must complete a defensible technical analysis in a timely and cost-effective manner, as appropriate.

15. If confirmed, what steps, if any, would you take to enhance the likelihood that Corps-managed projects will be completed on time and on budget?

If confirmed, I would emphasize the importance of disciplined project scope, early coordination with stakeholders, and consistent execution oversight to ensure projects stay on time and under budget. I believe the Corps must continue to align available resources with well-defined, achievable project plans and improve internal controls. Clear communication with Congress, project sponsors, and other stakeholders is essential to setting and meeting realistic schedules and budgets.

16. If confirmed, what steps would you take to hold accountable officers and employees of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who fail to properly manage the projects entrusted to them?

If confirmed, I will work in consultation with the Chief of Engineers to ensure that appropriate management controls are in place to promote accountability in the execution of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works missions. I expect the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to execute the missions entrusted to them by the American taxpayers and to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Navigation

The Army Corps of Engineers has built and maintains an intra coastal and inland network of commercial navigation channels, and locks and dams for navigation, which comprise integral parts of the nation's critical infrastructure. The Corps also maintains 300 commercial harbors, through which pass 2 billion tons of cargo a year, and more than 600 smaller harbors. Significant amounts of heavy equipment and supplies bound for potential overseas military operations move by ship through ports maintained by the civil works program.

17. In your view, what are the greatest challenges facing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with respect to the execution of its navigation mission

Our Nation is fortunate to benefit from more miles of intra-coastal and inland waterways than the rest of the world combined. One of the greatest challenges with the execution of the Army's Civil Works navigation mission is the maintenance, recapitalization, and modernization of this infrastructure. In addition, maintaining our Nation's ports and waterways is critical to our national security and economic well-being. If confirmed, I will confront these challenges head-on.

18. If confirmed, are there aspects of this mission that you would recommend be transferred from the Department of the Army? Please explain your answer.

The Army's civil works missions are defined in law. I will execute those missions unless the laws are changed, but I will remain open to any ideas about how to execute these missions more effectively or efficiently on behalf of the public.

19. In your view, how can the Corps best respond to environmental concerns in carrying out its navigation mission?

If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders to fully understand resource stewardship concerns related to the navigation mission, and I will be responsive to those concerns.

Environmental Mission

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for environmental restoration projects at Department of Defense Formerly Used Defense Sites and also at Department of Energy Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program. Under the Department of Energy program, the Corps cleans up former Manhattan Project and Atomic Energy Commission sites, making use of expertise gained in cleaning up former military sites and civilian hazardous waste sites under the Environmental Protection Agency "Superfund" program.

20. What do you view as the greatest challenges facing both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with respect to environmental concerns and the execution of its environmental restoration mission?

I believe that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers faces a difficult challenge of balancing available funding, increased technological standards for remediation and restoration, and stakeholder expectations. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy, and Environment and the Corps of Engineers, as appropriate, to enable sound science and management practices that will help to increase remediation efficiency and meet the commitments made to stakeholders, as appropriate.

21. If confirmed, are there aspects of this mission that you would recommend be transferred from the Department of the Army? Please explain your answer.

As stated above, the Army's civil works missions are defined in law. I will execute those missions unless the laws are changed, but I will remain open to any ideas about how to execute these missions more effectively or efficiently on behalf of the public.

22. If confirmed, what would be your vision for improving this aspect of the Corps mission?

I would like to see the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deliver with technical competency and integrity, with a focus on applying science, technical innovation, and employing transparency and collaboration with stakeholders. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy, and Environment and the Corps of Engineers, as appropriate, to seek to understand ways to reduce the time and resources required to deliver results effectively and on schedule.

23. If confirmed, what changes might you recommend to address the Corps' environmental funding requirements?

If confirmed, I would make it a priority to work with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy, and Environment and the Corps of Engineers, as appropriate, in order to make recommendations on funding requirements and prioritization.

24. If confirmed, specifically what steps would you take to preserve the integrity of the Corps environmental and civil works mission?

As stated above, the Army's civil works missions are defined in law. With regard to the Corps' environmental mission, I work with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy, and Environment and the Corps of Engineers, as appropriate, to coordinate on executing the missions defined by law. I will execute those missions unless the laws are changed, but I will remain open to any ideas about how to execute these missions more effectively or efficiently on behalf of the public.

25. In your view, could the regulatory functions presently executed by the Corps be performed more effectively or efficiently by other government departments or agencies, including non-defense entities?

As stated above, the Army's civil works missions are defined in law. I will execute those missions unless the laws are changed, but I will remain open to any ideas about how to execute these missions more effectively or efficiently on behalf of the public.

The Corps is also responsible for Environmental and Ecosystem Restoration as part of its civil works mission. There are many large ecosystem restoration projects around the nation, including the Everglades, Western river systems, Coastal Louisiana, and the Great Lakes.

26. If confirmed, how would you balance the Corps' work between ecosystem restoration and traditional navigation?

If confirmed, I commit to looking for innovative solutions to balance the work between ecosystem restoration and traditional navigation. Opportunities exist for complementary mission work, including the beneficial use of dredged material from navigation channels for ecosystem restoration projects.

27. What is your assessment of the effectiveness and propriety of the Corps' approach and prioritization of river restoration projects?

It is my understanding that the Corps is well-suited to implement large-scale restoration of our nation's river systems and has carried out many creative restoration projects ranging from fish passage at large dams to floodplain restoration. If confirmed, I will work with the Corps to further develop strategies that advance river restoration projects where appropriate and prudent.

State Water Quality Standards

In the past, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has not always been required to meet state water quality standards in constructing and operating its water resources projects.

28. Do you believe that the Corps should be required to meet state water quality standards in constructing and operating Corps projects? Please explain your answer.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should follow applicable laws in the construction and operation of congressionally authorized projects.

Funding

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a significant backlog of operation and maintenance work and construction work throughout the country. This backlog has very real economic, environmental, and safety implications.

29. If confirmed, how would you plan to address the significant backlog of work?

There are a variety of reasons projects authorized by Congress may not be completed, including resource availability and compliance with other applicable laws. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and the Corps of Engineers to overcome hurdles and complete authorized projects.

As stated above, the nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to

stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

30. What factors would you consider in determining which backlogged projects should be prioritized? Please explain your answer.

As stated above, there are a variety of reasons projects authorized by Congress may not be completed, including resource availability and compliance with other applicable laws. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and the Corps of Engineers to overcome hurdles and complete authorized projects.

As stated above, the nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

31. What are your views on the potential for using the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to address the Corps' project backlog?

The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund was established by law as a tool for supporting the maintenance of our nation's ports and harbors, which are critical to the movement of goods and the health of the U.S. economy. If confirmed, I would support using the HMTF in a manner consistent with existing law to address harbor maintenance needs.

32. What are your views on the potential for using the Inland Waterways Trust fund to address the Corps' backlog?

The Inland Waterways Trust Fund was established by law as a tool for supporting our nation's inland navigation infrastructure, which is essential to the movement of bulk commodities and the competitiveness of American agriculture and industry. If confirmed, I would support the continued use of the Trust Fund in a manner consistent with existing law to address inland waterway construction needs.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Workforce

There has been much publicity about the reduction in engineers graduating from our nation's colleges universities over the last 20 years.

33. How would you assess the overall health of national engineering expertise, and the engineering expertise maintained within the Army Corps of Engineers workforce—both military and civilian? Please explain your answer.

American competitiveness in the 21st century requires an American workforce that is more focused and well-trained in the fields of science, technology, engineering and

mathematics. If confirmed, I plan to assess the engineering expertise of the Corps of Engineers and take aggressive action necessary to meet the workforce demands of current and future missions. The leadership and vision applied by the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Army has reinvigorated interest in serving in the U.S. military, and I am optimistic that this enthusiasm will also apply to recruiting and retaining talented personnel in the civilian workforce of the Corps of Engineers.

34. In your opinion, does the Corps have in place adequate workforce education and development to ensure its engineering workforce maintains capability and proficiency in the latest technologies and innovations?

I commit, if confirmed, to assess the workforce education and development program to assure the workforce can meet current and future needs, including the leveraging of technology and innovation.

35. Do you believe there to be any additional authorities or resources you would need, if confirmed, to incentivize talented engineers from our nation's top colleges and universities to affiliate with the Corps?

At this time, I am not aware of any gap in statutory authority or resources inhibiting the ability to attract talented engineers from our nation's top colleges and universities. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Chief of Engineers and Army leadership to ensure that existing authorities and resources are fully utilized and, where necessary, refined to ensure the Corps of Engineers has the talent needed to address its vast responsibilities.

36. Do you believe there to be any additional authorities or resources you would need to improve the current workforce development program?

At this time, I am not aware of any gap in statutory authority or resources needed to improve the current work force development program, but I am committed to ensuring the Corps of Engineers has the talent needed to address its vast responsibilities.

37. What do you perceive to be the most significant challenges to and opportunities for improvement to the Corps' workforce—both military and civilian?

I believe that recruiting and retaining the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' necessary scientists, engineers, project managers, and other professionals is crucial to the success of the Army's Civil Works program. If confirmed, I will give my strongest possible support to the Chief of Engineers in his efforts to recruit, engage, and retain a world-class team.

Acquisition Processes for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

In the last five years, the Corps has continued to rely upon a contract process known as “design-build,” which requires a design agent to partner with a construction agent to compete for a contract. This differs from the traditional design-bid-build process, in which the Corps contracts first for a design product and subsequently issues a separate solicitation for the construction. Although there are many benefits to a collaborative process between a designer and the construction agent, there are also drawbacks. These include reduced oversight of the design/construction process by Corps’ engineers, as well the systematic elimination of small- to medium-size engineering/architecture firms and construction contractors who do not have the resources to compete for design-build contracts.

38. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses in the “design-build” contracting structure? In the “design-bid-build” structure?

If confirmed, I commit to tailoring and optimizing contract structure to deliver the best results for the American public. It is my understanding that the Corps generally uses Design-Bid-Build (DBB) as the primary contracting method for the civil works program. Projects that require historic context and broad technical knowledge may be more successful using DBB. Design-Build (D-B) may be a good choice if a project has an urgent timeframe or if there are multiple solutions available to meet clear and stable performance goals. In addition to the acquisition method, effective project management and contract administration are critical to the success of Corps projects. Whatever the acquisition method, I believe that the Corps must provide oversight throughout all phases of the design and construction process.

39. In your view, what factors should the Corps consider in determining which contracting process to use?

I believe that the Corps must analyze each project for its size, complexity, uniqueness, urgency, and other factors in order to determine the most effective and appropriate acquisition process. One primary consideration for Design-Build (D-B) is that it may require full funding to initiate. Generally, civil works projects are funded incrementally, which may provide more budgetary control, but may also result in cost escalation.

40. In your view, does the preponderant use of “design-build” contracting process have any effect on the proficiency of the Corps engineering and contract management workforces? Please explain your answer.

In my view, there is a balance to maintaining a highly skilled workforce with ability to both execute project delivery and provide oversight of project delivery by others. Evaluation of a project typically requires an understanding of the steps it takes to achieve its successful delivery. In order to achieve this balance, there must be sufficient “hands on” contract management by in-house engineers. Design-build contracts may be an effective strategy for executing certain types of projects, but to

be effectively managed, the Corps must maintain some technical competence developed through executing designs in-house.

41. How can the Corps properly incorporate the use of small- to medium-size engineering/architecture firms and construction contractors, particularly those with innovative ideas and methods, in Corps' projects?

It is my view that small- and medium-sized firms often provide more agility, local knowledge, and innovation than larger organizations. Efforts must be made to employ those who can deliver the best results for the public, not those who best interface with the bureaucracy. If confirmed, I would support the Corps' continued efforts to ensure small- and medium-size businesses have meaningful opportunities to participate in delivering on the civil works missions.

42. What long-term issues do you perceive could emerge from the Corps preponderant use of design-build contracts?

As stated, if confirmed, I commit to tailoring and optimizing contract structure to deliver the best results for the American public both in the near term and the long term.

Nation-Wide Levee Systems and Flood Control

The fragility of the United States' levee systems continues to be a safety hazard.

43. How would you assess the health of these levee systems?

Our nation's infrastructure, including levee systems, are aging and inadequate. Many levee systems are over 50 years old and require constant examination to ensure that they can continue to perform as designed. I intend to closely monitor the Corps' inventory of levee safety to address those systems in a risk-based manner.

44. In your opinion, is the process used by the Corps of Engineers to prioritize national levee requirements adequate?

I am certain that the process can be improved. If confirmed, I commit to review how the Nation's levees are assessed and prioritized, and as necessary, make appropriate adjustments.

45. In your view, are the resources provided to address levee systems sufficient?

As stated above, the nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood

control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

As with many of the Corps' infrastructure investments, levee construction and maintenance must be addressed in a risk-based manner.

46. If not, what additional resources—in funding, capability, and capacity—are needed to address the requirements of the levee systems properly, in your opinion?

As stated above, the nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

As with many of the Corps' infrastructure investments, levee construction and maintenance must be addressed in a risk-based manner.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Congress, the interagency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to identify these shortfalls.

The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 required the Corps and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to take the lead on certain national levee-safety-related activities.

47. If confirmed, what would be your approach to implementing these activities going forward?

Coordination between the Corps and FEMA on levees has been a source of confusion and frustration for the public and their elected representatives.

If confirmed, I will work closely with interagency partners and stakeholders to ensure that risks are properly managed across programs and within respective authorities to provide the best possible outcomes, within a constrained resource environment, for public safety and the economy.

Prioritization Process in the Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is regularly subject to pressures from various levels of government to carry out certain projects of special interest.

48. Do you believe the prioritization process used by the Corps for civil works projects is appropriate?

Water is a precious resource, and its most efficient use requires a careful balance

among a complex array of stakeholder interests.

If confirmed, I plan to evaluate the prioritization process in detail. A prioritization process must be transparent, realistic, regularly monitored, and updated or modified as needed. Prioritization is essential for executing near-term responsibilities and is also key to achieving long-term goals

49. If confirmed, what prioritization processes would you follow, barring any unforeseen circumstances?

I am committed to ensuring that the Corps of Engineers' prioritization process follows the law, appropriately considers stakeholder input, and reflects Administration policies and priorities.

50. In your opinion, would using peer reviews of Corps projects to obtain an outside opinion on the need, urgency, effects caused by Corps projects, be "value added"? Please explain your answer.

I am open to ideas about how to provide better accountability and innovation within the civil works missions.

If confirmed, I will work to determine the benefits of leveraging peer reviews throughout the lifecycle of a project to deliver more efficient results for the American public.

Extreme Weather Events

Extreme weather events have put a strain on our nation's aging water resources and critical infrastructure. Efforts to rehabilitate projects following an extreme weather event and to mitigate against the effects of future such event have pushed existing resources to their limits.

51. What are your views of the Department's responsibility to prepare in advance to mitigate the consequences of extreme weather events?

It is my understanding that most civil works projects are, by their nature, specifically designed to safely perform and reduce risk under extreme conditions.

As stated above, the nation has significant infrastructure needs and a demand for the Corps of Engineers services that exceeds supply. In an environment with constrained resources, the ASA(CW) will be required to balance diverse interests in order to stretch resources to best meet the nation's needs with respect to navigation, flood control, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and the other missions of the organization.

52. What is your understanding of the ways that extreme weather events pose risks to national security?

Extreme weather events can have serious national security implications. They threaten critical infrastructure (including military installations and critical waterways), disrupt supply chains, and displace communities—impacts that can strain military readiness and economic activity. Major flooding events can render military installations or key transportation hubs inoperable, while prolonged drought or storm-related damage can impair energy, water, or agricultural systems that underpin the nation’s economic and strategic resilience. These challenges are at the heart of the importance of the responsibilities of the ASA(CW). If confirmed, I would take seriously the Department’s role in recognizing and mitigating these risks.

53. In your view, how should the Department incorporate resilience against extreme weather events into the planning, design, and oversight of its civil works projects?

In my view, the Department should approach resilience as part of its broader responsibility to deliver reliable, cost-effective infrastructure that serves the nation over the long term. That means using sound engineering practices, the best available data, and practical risk assessments to ensure that projects are designed and constructed to perform as intended. I believe this work must be guided by site-specific data, clear cost-benefit analysis, and close coordination with local sponsors—ensuring that resilience measures are not only technically sound, but also economically justified and appropriate to the mission of each project.

Federal Response Plan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a primary role in support of the Federal Response Plan, which identifies the basic structures by which the Federal government will mobilize resources and conduct activities to assist states in coping with the consequences of significant disasters. The Corps is the primary agency for planning, preparedness, and response under the Emergency Support Function (ESF #3), Public Works and Engineering.

54. In your view, how well prepared is the Corps of Engineers, including individual Corps districts and offices, to execute its ESF #3 functions? Please explain your answer.

The Corps must be prepared to execute the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #3 under the established National Response Framework. In this role, the Corps serves as the nation’s public works and engineering agent responsible for supporting the prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from, both natural and man-made disasters.

While it is my current opinion that the Corps has been one of the federal government's most effective entities in responding to natural disasters with decisive action, I am certain that there is room for improvement.

If confirmed, I will evaluate the Emergency Management preparedness program, including the funding provided annually via the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies appropriation to ensure the Corps' capabilities are optimized with respect to its responsibilities under the National Response Framework.

Sexual Harassment

In responding to the 2018 DOD Civilian Employee Workplace and Gender Relations survey, 17.7 percent of female and 5.8 percent of male DOD employees indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment and/or gender discrimination by "someone at work" in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.

55. What is your assessment of the current climate regarding sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and other harassment in the Office of the ASA(CW) and in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

While I have not yet had the opportunity to assess the current climate firsthand, I take this topic seriously and recognize that any instance of sexual harassment or discrimination is unacceptable. If confirmed, I would prioritize fostering a workplace culture across the Office of the ASA(CW) and the Corps that is respectful and free from harassment or bias of any kind.

56. If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment, discrimination, or other harassment from an employee of the Office of the ASA(CW), the Corps, or an employee of any other organization over which the ASA(CW) exercises authority, direction, and control?

If confirmed, I would take any complaint of harassment or discrimination with the utmost seriousness and ensure that it is addressed promptly, fairly, and in accordance with all applicable laws and policies. I would also work to reinforce a culture of accountability and transparency, where individuals feel safe to report concerns without fear of retaliation.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications) and other information from the Department.

57. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

58. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications), and other information as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

59. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

60. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

61. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

62. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes

63. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Yes