

**COOSA RIVER, GA. AND ALA:
HEARINGS, COMMITTEE ON
RIVERS
AND HARBORS, SIXTY- FOURTH
CONGRESS, JANUARY 28, 1916**

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COOSA RIVER, GA. AND ALA.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., Friday, January 23, 1916.

The committee met at 10.30 o'clock a. m., Hon. Stephen M. Sparkman (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will kindly come to order. Gentlemen, this meeting was called for the purpose of hearing parties interested in the improvement of the Coosa River, Ga. and Ala., but there are two or three gentlemen here from Nebraska who say they would like to take up 10 or 15 minutes; not exceeding 15 minutes.

Mr. KETTNER. Mr. Chairman, I think we ought to make a special effort to have Mr. Frear here, to hear this Alabama project.

The CHAIRMAN. Each member of the committee was notified of the importance of this hearing.

Mr. LEE. We are ready to hear your people now.

STATEMENT OF HON. GORDON LEE, A MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA.

Mr. LEE. Mr. Chairman, how much time will you allow to the Coosa River this morning?

The CHAIRMAN. I am not going to place any limit on the discussion just at present. We will see about it later. It is a very important matter, and we would like to hear you gentlemen fully.

Mr. LEE. I thank you very much. I regret very much that Congressman Burnett can not be with us to-day. He is on the Immigration Committee, and I asked him why he would not be here, and he said, "If you saw the crowd in front of my committee room, you would know why." They are meeting to-day, and he can not be here, but we have Mr. W. P. Lay, president of the Alabama River Improvement Association, who has been on the river all his life, and Maj. Earle I. Brown, who is familiar with many features of the river, and a little later I will ask them to testify.

I shall have very little to say this morning, except on the line of the improvement of the river. Unfortunately for this river it has many names. If it was all one project, by one name, there is not a man on this committee who would not appreciate the importance of the project, but we have the Coosa River, we are discussing to-day, which only extends from Rome, Ga., to Wetumpka, Ala., or about where the Tallapoosa River comes into the Alabama River. This river has several names. Here is the Coosa, the Oostanaula, and the Etowah Rivers forming the Coosa River at Rome. Then it is the Coosa River until you get in the neighborhood of Wetumpka, Ala., and then from Wetumpka, Ala., to Mobile Bay it is known as the

Alabama River, except for about 20 or 30 miles it is the Mobile Bay River. It is practically, however, the Alabama River. In other words, the project has four or five names. If it was all under one name, which I tried to adjust last year, I am sure it would impress you of the importance of the river. In the first place, that river, under one name, is the longest river in the United States east of the Mississippi and south of the St. Lawrence, emptying into the Gulf or ocean.

The CHAIRMAN. What name is this?

Mr. LEE. The river under the various names.

The CHAIRMAN. I thought you said under one name.

Mr. LEE. If you call it one river, the Coosa River, under its various names, is the longest river east of the Mississippi and south of the St. Lawrence. Another fact that I want to bring out briefly is that we have plenty of water in this river. I mean there are no droughts. The highest rainfall in the United States—the average rainfall at the headwaters of the Coosa River—except one spot in Oregon, the mouth of the Columbia River—the next highest rainfall is on this belt, from 60 to 70 inches in this territory.

Mr. HUMPHREY. I guess you will have to exclude several spots along the Pacific coast, but although the rainfall is very heavy there, in these localities on the Pacific coast, they are only small localities.

Mr. LEE. That is the report the engineers made on this proposition.

The CHAIRMAN. The largest rainfall in the country is somewhere in the State of Washington.

Mr. LEE. That is what I say, at the mouth of the Columbia River.

Mr. BOOHER. How far is it from Rome, Ga., to Dam No. 4?

Mr. LEE. I will give you that right now, Mr. Congressman. This river is 850 miles long. It is 108 miles from Rome to the headwaters; it is 200 miles from Rome to Lock 4, approximately; it is about 420 miles then to Mobile Bay.

Mr. BOOHER. Where is Lock 4 on that plat there?

Mr. LEE. It is about here [indicating].

Mr. TREADWAY. Mr. Lee, where is Gadsden, please?

Mr. LEE. Here [indicating].

Mr. TREADWAY. Is that right in the section you are talking about?

Mr. LEE. Yes.

Mr. TREADWAY. What about the circular we have here, Mr. Chairman, which states that they do not ask for any Government appropriation, just permission to build a dam?

Mr. LEE. That embraces this proposition right here.

Mr. TREADWAY. The proposition we are discussing now?

Mr. LEE. No, sir. They are building power dams there. Mr. Lay will handle that in a moment. It is below Gadsden; it is along here in this neighborhood.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Treadway, there are other gentlemen here who are technical men who will discuss that feature of it.

Mr. TREADWAY. My idea was directed to this statement on here that no Government appropriation was asked for it. The dam proposition appeals to me very much.

Mr. LEE. I want to briefly state the resources of this valley. There is another strong feature why ultimately this river should be opened. In the first place, there are very few rivers in the United States that have the variety of products which are found on this river.

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For instance, you start here with oranges and cotton, and you go on up through coal fields and iron mines and about the finest marble in the United States is found on the bank of this river. When you come on above there, in this country, is the finest deposit of brown ore in the South, I think, without a doubt about that. This ore is mined in dozens of places—in Polk County, Barton County, and Floyd County—and is shipped now to Birmingham.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. What do you mean by brown ore?

Mr. LEE. It is a very high-grade ore.

The CHAIRMAN. Does that go down the river?

Mr. LEE. They can not go down the river. I was just speaking of that as one of the general propositions for the river being opened.

The CHAIRMAN. While you are on that subject, which is one of great importance on account of the productiveness and the possibilities for future development of that section, I want to call your attention to this statement made by the Government engineer in his report for this year. He says:

The commerce on this stream for the calendar year 1914 consisted principally of fertilizers, general merchandise, timber products, and groceries. It amounted to 28,751 short tons valued at \$1,517,978. The decrease from last year is probably permanent. Only one boat is operating on this improvement and that is not proving a paying investment.

Mr. LEE. I will tell you about the proposition here of this river. It is an inland river. It is dammed up, and the products of the soil, mines, and factories can not be shipped by water. There are millions of tons of ore and products of factories that manufacture for export that can not get out of this river, and therefore, of course, it can not carry the freight. Maj. Brown will handle this proposition a little later. There is one reason why the freight has fallen off on that river. During the construction of the lock and dam which is just below Rome, known as Horse Leg Shoals, or Mayo's bar, during the construction it demoralized for a time the shipping. Then a little later we had low water, and it simply knocked the boat off the river for a few months, simply demoralized the shipping, because the big shippers will go to some reliable concern to carry their freight, although the freight from Rome to Gadsden is 10 cents, flat rate, and it is 30 or 40 cents to any other point from Rome not on this river.

The CHAIRMAN. In that connection—that is, in connection with the statement regarding the completion of Mayo's bar and the possible demoralization of shipping at that point—the lock and dam—reading from page 72 of this report, the report says:

The improvement has resulted in reductions in railroad freight rates between points on the river and between Rome and Gadsden of not less than 50 per cent. Water rates control all shipments to and from the country contiguous to the river.

Mr. LEE. I think Maj. Brown can develop the proposition of the low water, and things like that. I would like to have him handle that proposition.

I will tell you another proposition, Mr. Chairman. There is a boat operated from Gadsden up and down the river that is not included in this tonnage. At first it was for staves and logs and freight of this character, but they are now carrying freight for the public. That tonnage is not included in this estimate here.

The CHAIRMAN. I assume—I do not know, of course—that Maj. Brown made this report furnishing these statistics, and that that is his language.

Mr. LEE. Therefore I would rather have him explain that point. I will call the committee's attention to the fact that there is another point—

The CHAIRMAN. I did not know but that there was someone else here who is not an engineer who knew something of that fact.

Mr. LEE. Mr. Lay will tell you, because he lives at Gadsden. There is another proposition. They are going to put on a boat or two from Gadsden to Lock 4, construct a new boat or two for that work. That comes to us very reliably since the 1st of December. Mr. Chairman, there are very few that realize the great tonnage that would pass there if it could ever get out. Near Rome, Ga., there are two very large cotton mills, and there is a very large cotton mill at Gadsden, and they do not manufacture except for export. Their products go to South America.

The CHAIRMAN. When you say it could get out, what do you mean by get out?

Mr. LEE. Through this river they would get that business.

The CHAIRMAN. To what point?

Mr. LEE. Mobile, and for export.

The CHAIRMAN. Then you are speaking now with reference to the improvement of the entire river?

Mr. LEE. Yes, sir; I mean this tonnage proposition for the river.

The CHAIRMAN. There is a part of those locks and dams already completed now?

Mr. LEE. I know that, four, and they are working on the fifth, which will be completed, we hope, this year.

The CHAIRMAN. They have completed Lock 4?

Mr. LEE. Yes, sir. Now, a little later Mr. Lay will take up the proposition where I think we can show that it is very much to the interest of navigation that we should at least keep up what we have got, because we are going to suggest a proposition to you that I think will appeal to you.

Mr. BOOHER. Where is Lock 5?

Mr. LEE. About here [indicating on map].

Mr. BOOHER. Now 1, 2, 3, and 4 are completed?

Mr. LEE. And one at Rome is not numbered. There are really five completed, and when they complete Lock 5 there will be six.

Mr. BOOHER. Then navigation will be open as far as Rome when they get this other lock finished?

Mr. LEE. There is navigation from this point to this point. There are just six falls there that will have to be developed in another way.

Mr. BOOHER. Where is Rome?

Mr. LEE. There [indicating].

Mr. BOOHER. Will navigation then be open down to Lock 5 when Lock 5 is completed?

Mr. LEE. Yes, sir; to this point.

Mr. BOOHER. How many locks and dams will it take you below there to get you out to the bay?

Mr. LEE. I would rather handle that in another proposition we are going to suggest in this matter. I think we can show you that if Congress will pass a fair lock and dam bill, there will be no trouble in