

Senate confirms Michael Connor to lead Army Corps



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E&E NEWS PM | The Senate today confirmed Michael Connor, a former Interior Department official under the Obama administration, to lead the Army Corps of Engineers.

Connor will take the post of assistant secretary of the Army for civil works, just as the Biden administration pivots the agency's focus to tackle climate change, flooding, environmental justice and boosting tribal consultation. Connor, notably, is a member of the Taos Pueblo tribe. The vote was 92 to 5.

Earlier this year, Connor faced questions from the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on coastal resilience funding and rules regarding the Clean Water Act's reach ([E&E Daily](#), July 15).

Connor will face a host of controversial decisions and more pressing questions tied to resilience, including calls from coastal Democrats for more aide to deal with sea-level rise and storm damage.

Democratic Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, who chairs the EPW panel, applauded the confirmation. "The Corps of Engineers' Civil Works program is the nation's primary provider of water resources infrastructure, and with the increasing impacts of climate change, having someone of Mr. Connor's caliber at the corps is critical," he said.

Connor will also face heat as the Biden administration rewrites the the Waters of the United States, or WOTUS, rule dictating which wetlands and streams are protected by the Clean Water Act.

Yet another thorny issue is the fate of the Dakota Access pipeline and other energy infrastructure that affects tribal nations. Connor earlier this year vowed before the Senate Armed Services Committee to look into the agency's ability to halt operation of the Dakota Access pipeline ([E&E Daily](#), July 14).