

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 9, 2021

Mr. Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works
Department of the Army
1600 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1600

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

As the Administration begins the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), we write to urge the prioritization of funding for construction of the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) on the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) using the \$2.5 billion provided in the IIJA for inland waterways infrastructure projects.

The regional and national economic benefits of NESP are significant, which is why the project was included in the December 2020 Inland and Intracoastal Waterways Twenty-Year Capital Investment Strategy (CIS) developed by the Corps and the Inland Waterways User Board (IWUB). The IIJA specifically recommends that funding priority shall be given to projects included in the CIS. The CIS recommends that Tiers A and B construction projects should be funded to completion, including NESP's Lock and Dam 25 and LaGrange Lock (Tier A) and Lock and Dam 24 (Tier B). These projects have been vetted through a collaborative process between the Corps and the navigation industry, and there is strong support among both the navigation and agriculture industries for their construction. In fact, a number of farmer organizations have recently offered \$1 million of their own funds to get NESP started, and the navigation industry voluntarily sought and achieved a 45 percent increase in their commercial diesel user fee several years ago in part to help advance NESP construction.

NESP addresses the needs of both navigation infrastructure improvements and ecosystem restoration into an integrated, multi-purpose program. NESP's ecosystem restoration would benefit riverine and riparian habitats throughout the UMRS. Specifically, NESP will modify dam operations to restore natural river level variability, backwater and island habitat, and side-channel reconnections, among other projects. Collectively, these restoration activities will help ensure that birds, fish, and other wildlife continue to thrive in their natural habitats in and along the UMRS.

Construction of 1,200-foot lock chambers at seven strategic locations on the UMRS will create almost 50 million person-hours of living wage construction jobs. A 2019 study released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that rebuilding NESP locks would inject \$72 billion additional dollars into the nation's GDP.

Following the 2020 CIS including NESP construction will bring immediate financial and environmental benefits throughout the system that will reverberate through the economy. Therefore, we strongly urge your adherence to the CIS developed by the Corps and the IWUB by funding Lock and Dam 25, LaGrange, and Lock and Dam 24 to completion in the upcoming IJA spend plan.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



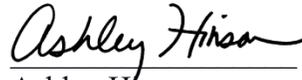
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress

/s/ Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Bill Cassidy
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Joni Ernst
United States Senator

/s/ John Kennedy
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Roger Marshall
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Bost
Member of Congress

/s/ Sean Casten
Member of Congress

/s/ Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

/s/ James Comer
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/ Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/ Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

/s/ Tom Emmer
Member of Congress

/s/ Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/ Sam Graves
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Hagedorn
Member of Congress

/s/ Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

/s/ Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/ Ron Kind
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress

/s/ Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

/s/ Darin LaHood
Member of Congress

/s/ Billy Long
Member of Congress

/s/ Blake Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

/s/ Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

/s/ Mary Miller
Member of Congress

/s/ Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Marie Newman
Member of Congress

/s/ Dean Philips
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/ John Rose
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/ Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

/s/ Jason Smith
Member of Congress

/s/ Pete Stauber
Member of Congress

/s/ Bryan Steil
Member of Congress

/s/ Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress

/s/ Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

CC: Shalanda D. Young, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget