

June 24, 2022

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Graves:

The undersigned members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group (ATWG) greatly appreciate Congress' track record of passing a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) every two years.

The farmers, ranchers, food and beverage manufacturers, processors, package suppliers, farm supply dealers and agricultural product marketers that comprise our collective memberships support and sustain millions of American jobs while providing a safe, abundant, affordable, and sustainably produced supply of human and animal food, fiber, and agricultural products.

American agriculture's competitive advantage depends upon the quality, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness of a comprehensive transportation system including inland waterways and ports, rail service, highways, roads, and bridges. As policymakers, we commend your leadership in advancing S. 4163 and H.R. 7776, the Water Resources Development Acts of 2022, through the legislative process on a bipartisan basis. Undertaking the WRDA process every two years allows for the examination of policies and projects that enhance and promote the reliability and utilization of this critical mode of transportation.

As you and your staffs work to ultimately come to a conference agreement between the committee-passed S. 4163 and House-passed H.R. 7776, the ATWG writes to share our priorities for any final WRDA legislation.

Building on the progress of WRDA 2020, Section 103 of S. 4136 amends the cost share for inland waterway projects to 75 percent general Treasury funds and 25 percent from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. This permanent policy change would bolster investments for U.S. inland waterways, expedite the modernization of locks and dams, and enhance the ability of ATWG members to serve domestic and global customers. We request that the final WRDA agreement include Section 103 of S. 4136.

Our members take a lot of pride in the fact that U.S. agricultural exports hit an all-time high of \$177 billion in 2021, accounting for 25 percent of a farmer's income. WRDA can impact trade because barges move about half of all grains to export grain elevators, including 48 percent of corn, 62 percent of soybeans and 47 percent of wheat. Critical farm inputs like fertilizer, feed, and fuel are transported via the inland waterways system. From the Pacific Northwest to the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast, the importance of inland waterways and ports to the ATWG and American agriculture is definitive.

For this reason, the ATWG insists that any final WRDA bill maintains navigational access to the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs). The Columbia-Snake River System is the third-largest grain export corridor in the world, transporting nearly 30 percent of U.S. grain and oilseed exports through a sophisticated navigation system to deliver high value farm products safely and efficiently to West Coast ports and consumers worldwide. While

proposals to breach and remove the LSRDs exist, maintaining navigation access to these dams is critical to the region's economy and the overall competitiveness of American agriculture.

According to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, the removal of barge access would require 39,000 rail cars or 152,000 semi-trucks to replace the cargo volume shipped on the Snake River in 2019. This is not even remotely feasible or acceptable given the current inability of several Class I rail carriers to provide reliable rail service as well as the well documented truck driver shortage. In addition, barging is the most fuel-efficient way to ship goods and removing the LSRDs would dramatically increase carbon emissions. As Congress works through the legislative process, the ATWG remains adamant that WRDA 2022 neither authorize nor pave the way for the breach or removal of dams in the Columbia-Snake River System.

The ATWG supports your efforts to pass a biannual WRDA bill during this Congress. Our associations pledge to work with you on a WRDA bill that modernizes and preserves access to the U.S. inland waterways system to boost U.S. agricultural competitiveness for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
Farm Credit Council
Growth Energy
International Fresh Produce Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sorghum Producers
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Rice
Waterways Council, Inc.

CC:

Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY)
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
U.S. Senators
U.S. Representatives
President Joseph R. Biden
U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg