



April 12, 2022

Hon. Sam Graves
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Graves:

As you begin reviewing requests for Community Project Funding submissions, we urge you to include a construction new start in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). By advancing this lock modernization project, we can provide a positive economic benefit to the nation and facilitate a healthier economy and river ecosystem. Modernization of Lock 25 will also sustain existing jobs and create hundreds of thousands more jobs for skilled construction trades and riverside and landside facilities—bolstering our domestic intermodal supply chains.

The Upper Mississippi River—Illinois Waterway System (IL, IA, MN, MO, and WI) (UMRS), authorized in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 and later designated as the only nationally significant ecosystem and commercial navigation system in 2007. Congress has repeatedly reinforced this designation with over \$70 million already appropriated for Pre-Construction Engineering and Design (PED), previous Appropriations report language, 'dear colleague' letters, and full funding for Lock and Dam 25 through funding provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. In addition, NESP has continual bipartisan support from the governors and legislatures of the five UMRS states and countless non-government organizations.

The lock modernization and environmental restoration activities within NESP will help ensure thousands of birds, fish, and other wildlife species can continue to thrive in their natural habitats in and along the Mississippi River. In addition, providing meaningful investment in the UMRS helps protect adjacent wetlands and lakes from prolonged flooding while enhancing the ecological and hydraulic features that make the Upper Mississippi river basin a nationally significant ecosystem for riverine and riparian habitat.¹

A recent study funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded that transporting freight on our inland waterways saves between \$7 billion to \$9 billion annually in transportation costs. That same study concluded that the economic surplus of the corn and soybean sector declines by \$171 million for a fall closure, leading to a \$549 million loss per year in the economic surplus of

¹ Pub. L. No. 99-662, § 1103(a)(2), 100 Stat. 4082, 4225 (codified as amended at 33 U.S.C § 652(a)(2)).



the corn and soybean sector.² Delays or unplanned closures at Lock 25 and LaGrange Lock create net negative impacts on jobs, labor income, total value-added, and total industry output in the U.S. economy.

In addition to the economic benefits of NESF, commodities moving through this system alone directly touches 132 counties in 17 states and international destinations. These commodities enter the global market for everyday use, including cement, steel, petroleum and petrochemicals, coal, road salt, and other underpinnings of our economic success and global competitiveness. In 2019, 514.9 million tons of waterborne cargo transited our inland waterways, a volume equal to roughly 14 percent of all intercity freight and valued at \$134.1 billion. Congress should support the system's unique ability to increase capacity and reduce the risk of unplanned closures or catastrophic failure due to aging locks.

Again, Congress should support increased capacity and reliable usage of our locks to benefit our economy and environment. Our inland waterways system provides a key strategic advantage to our manufacturing sector, but our growing reliance on a withering system of locks and dams requires significant and immediate attention.

Sincerely,

Tracy Zea
President and CEO

²<https://ag.tennessee.edu/arec/Documents/publications/EconomicImpactsInlandWaterwaysDisruptions092016.pdf>