



The Honorable Sam Graves  
United States House of Representatives  
1135 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-1503

March 7, 2023

Dear Representative Graves,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) and the need for Community Project Funding. Striving to keep this system operating efficiently and reliably today and for decades to come, Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) works to educate policymakers in Washington, DC, and around the United States, the news media, and the public about the waterways system's critical importance and the need to modernize locks and dams initially built in the 1920s and 1930s. The request for \$120 million is well-justified, given NESP's critical importance to ensuring the sustainability of both the Nation's economy and environment.

The seven locks of the program are a vital piece of our Nation's marine highway, connecting the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) basin to world markets through the Gulf of Mexico. Upgrading to 1,200-foot lock chambers to accommodate today's tows is essential for efficiently moving goods. Moreover, modernizing the locks will reduce the risk of injury to mariners and the time associated with uncoupling and recoupling tows.

In addition to economic benefits, NESP will protect adjacent wetlands and lakes from prolonged flooding while enhancing the UMR's ecological and hydraulic features. Therefore, we must invest in NESP to ensure the sustainability of riverine and riparian habitats that are so important to the health of UMR.

The NESP is paramount and should receive strong consideration in the Community Project Funding request. We hope you will consider this request as you review the submissions, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tracy Zea  
President and CEO  
Waterways Council, Inc.



## MISSOURI CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

3118 Emerald Lane • Jefferson City, MO 65109

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves  
1135 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Graves:

We are writing to urge your consideration for a Fiscal Year 2024 Community Project Funding submission, namely, the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) for the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway (UMR-IWW).

NESP is a multi-purpose program for the UMR-IWW, consisting of navigation improvements and ecosystem restoration. Its primary goal is to ensure the economic and environmental sustainability of this, the only river system that Congress identified in 1986 as “a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system.”<sup>1</sup>

This program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) is suited for Community Project Funding as it will provide a positive economic benefit through creation of thousands of jobs for America’s skilled construction trades. NESP aims to improve the capacity and efficiency of the navigation system through updated lock and dam infrastructure and smaller-scale infrastructure designed to further improve the economic and environmental advantages of towboat and barge transportation. The resulting increased efficiencies will help sustain nearly 140,000 jobs in inland waterways-dependent industries in Missouri alone. These jobs bring in \$8.3 billion in personal income, \$13.3 billion in Gross State Product, and \$37 billion in total output, giving rise to \$930.4 million in state and local tax revenue for Missouri.<sup>2</sup>

Ranked tenth in the nation for miles of commercially navigable waterways, 39.9 million tons of freight valued at \$8 billion transited through Missouri in 2018. NESP’s implementation and the resulting efficiencies will surely spur more economic activity at both riverside and landside facilities that are vital to our intermodal supply chain.

For the Midwest in particular, our waterways transport 60 percent of America’s agriculture exports, providing lowest-cost transportation of grain to facilitate our global competitiveness. A recent study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded that transporting freight on our inland waterways saves transportation costs of between \$7 billion to \$9 billion annually. That same study concluded that increased investment in lock and dam construction, particularly NESP, would raise Gross Domestic Product by \$72 billion through 2045, creating a 19 percent increase in waterways-related employment<sup>3</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> [https://waterwayscouncil.org/file/294/HO\\_WaterwaysProfile\\_MO.pdf](https://waterwayscouncil.org/file/294/HO_WaterwaysProfile_MO.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/ImportanceofInlandWaterwaystoUSAGricultureFullReport.pdf>

One example of the far-reaching impacts barge transportation provides can be seen in the cargo moving via barges through Upper Mississippi River Lock 25 alone. According to a study prepared for the U.S. Maritime Administration and National Waterways Foundation, those commodities directly touch 132 counties in 17 states and international destinations. These commodities are the underpinnings of our economy, including cement, steel, petroleum and petrochemicals, coal, road salt, wind turbines and materiel for national defense, to name a few. Unexpected or extended closures of Lock 25 would cost an additional \$1.6 billion annually in shipping costs, thus discouraging 80 percent of users from returning to barge transportation.<sup>4</sup>

Supporting NESP through Community Project Funding would enhance the system's unique ability to support increased capacity, as well as reducing the risk of unplanned closures or catastrophic failure due to aging locks. Congress should support increased capacity and reliable usage of our locks for benefits to both our economy and environment.

NESP will also restore, protect, and enhance the riverine and riparian habitat through ecosystem restoration measures designed to ensure the sustainability of home to 25 percent of North America's fish species and a globally important flyway to 40 percent of North America's migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

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. As we approach another growing season and productive harvest in the Midwest, NESP must receive funding to continue its progression.

NESP implementation by the Corps and its widespread improvements to the Upper Mississippi River System will have regional and national benefits, with global implications as it relates to America's balance of trade. Please accept this letter as an example of the strong community support for NESP. We thank you for your consideration of this request and urge your inclusion of NESP in your Community Project Funding submissions.

Sincerely,



Clint Stephens  
MCGA, President

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.nationalwaterwaysfoundation.org/documents/low%20res%20Lock%20Outage%20NWF\\_FINAL\\_REPORT%202017.pdf](http://www.nationalwaterwaysfoundation.org/documents/low%20res%20Lock%20Outage%20NWF_FINAL_REPORT%202017.pdf)



March 14, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves  
United States House of Representatives  
1135 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Graves:

On behalf of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA), I am writing to respectfully request \$120 million in FY 2024 funding to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program.

UMRBA is the Governor-established forum for interstate water resource planning and management on the Upper Mississippi River, representing its member states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. UMRBA is strongly supportive of NESP's authorities to advance collaborative and integrated management of the Upper Mississippi River System basin for its multiple purposes.

NESP is a unique dual purpose program that will have tremendous value to Upper Mississippi River System and the nation, both in sustaining the river's ecological health and resilience as well as enhancing its ability to support freight transportation of bulk and other commodities. In 2024, NESP will initiate construction of a second 1,200-foot lock chamber at La Grange L&D, construct mooring cells on the Mississippi River to improve navigation efficiency and fish passage at L&D 22, and advance planning and design on six to 10 ecosystem restoration projects.

Please contact me at 651-224-2880 to arrange an opportunity to discuss our request in more detail.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Wallace  
Executive Director  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association