



June 3, 2021

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 Lock 25 in 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. This designation has been reinforced by Congress multiple times with nearly \$70 million already appropriated for Pre-Construction Engineering and Design (PED), previous Appropriations report language, and 'dear colleague' letters, to name a few. NESP has continual bipartisan support from the governors and legislatures of the five UMRS states and countless non-government organizations.

Collectively, 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. Providing meaningful investment in the UMRS helps to protect adjacent wetland and lakes from prolonged flooding, while also enhancing the ecological and hydraulic features that make the Upper-Mississippi river basin a nationally significant ecosystem for riverine and riparian habitat¹.

A recent study from 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 increased investment in lock and dam construction, particularly NESP, would raise

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

Gross Domestic Product by \$72 billion through 2045, with a 19 percent increase in waterways-related employment².

In addition to the economic benefits of NESP, commodities moving through Lock 25 alone directly touches 132 counties in 17 states, in addition to 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 provide increased capacity and reduce the risk of unplanned closures or catastrophic failure due to aging locks. According to a study prepared for the U.S. Maritime Administration and National Waterways Foundation, unexpected or extended closures of Lock 25 would cost an additional \$1.6 billion annually in additional shipping costs, thus discouraging 80 percent of users from returning to barge transportation. 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.

Again, Congress should support increased capacity and reliable usage of our locks to benefit our economy and environment. As we begin to approach another productive harvest in the Midwest, NESP must receive a construction new start to modernize Lock 25.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T-Z', with a stylized flourish.

Tracy Zea
President and CEO

²<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/ImportanceofInlandWaterwaystoUSAgricultureFullReport.pdf>