

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

April 26, 2021

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson:

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). NESP is tailor-made for Community Project Funding because the program will provide a positive economic benefit by facilitating both a healthier economy and river ecosystem through the creation of millions of jobs for skilled construction trades and improvement in the efficiency of intermodal supply chains.

Congress recognized the importance of the Upper Mississippi River—Illinois Waterway System (IL, IA, MN, MO, and WI) (UMRS) in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 by designating it as the only nationally significant ecosystem and commercial navigation system. Unfortunately, delays in construction continue to threaten the reliability of the overall productivity of the waterway. Shippers have legitimate concerns about the age of this structure and increases in planned and emergency lock outages. According to a study prepared for the National Waterways Foundation and the U.S. Maritime Administration, estimated costs of an unplanned closure of Lock 25 alone would result in a \$1.57 billion loss to the economy, impacting 132 counties in 17 states.¹ Many farmers and businesses in our districts rely on the UMRS to ship crops or goods to market, but America's competitiveness in foreign markets shrinks each year without a new start. With 60 percent of our nation's grain exports traveling on the UMRS, we cannot afford to let this situation worsen. NESP provides the opportunity to address these reliability issues, protect this

¹ Center for Transportation Research, University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt Engineering Center for Transportation and Operational Resiliency, Vanderbilt University, "The Impacts of Unscheduled Lock Outages", October 2017

infrastructure from catastrophic failure and provide roughly 10,000 construction jobs over the lifetime of the program, which is about 20 years of construction.²

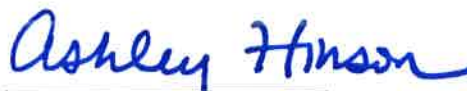
NESP will also improve conditions for fish and wildlife through the construction of fish passage, modified dam operations to restore natural river level variability, backwater and island habitat, side channel reconnections, among other projects. Collectively, these restoration activities will help ensure thousands of species of birds, fish and other wildlife continue to thrive in their natural habitats in and along the Mississippi River. NESP will protect wetlands and lakes from fluctuating water levels and high sedimentation, recreate islands to provide refuge and food for many species of fish and wildlife, and restore natural diversity of water velocities and depths to improve fish habitat. Projects help protect against threats from invasive species, including Asian carp, that outcompete native fish and wildlife for food sources and limited habitat. Still more projects restore forest health and diversity. Investing in the river's ecosystem strengthens the nation's economy, enhancing important ecological services and uses such as improved water quality benefiting municipalities, manufacturers, and renewable energy sources.

NESP has widespread bipartisan support from the five states on the UMRS and the support of industry, America's building trades, and environmental groups. Therefore, we are requesting full funding of NESP's construction for FY 22. NESP has a total FY 22 construction-ready capability of \$22.5 million. The entity receiving the funding for this project is the US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District. Funding will modernize a new lock on the UMRS to increase efficiency and reduce congestion on our inland waterways systems. We certify that neither we, nor our immediate family, has any financial interest in the project.

Sincerely,



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress
Committee on Appropriations



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress
Committee on Appropriations

² Garcia-Franceschini, Fernando. "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Meets with Congresswoman Hinson to Talk Navigation, Flooding Management Projects." <https://www.kcrg.com>, 25 Mar. 2021, 11:03 pm, www.kcrg.com/2021/03/26/us-army-corps-of-engineers-meets-with-congresswoman-hinson-to-talk-navigation-flooding-management-projects/.