

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman, Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2134 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1135 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Water  
Resources and Environment  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1610 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on  
Water Resources and Environment  
U.S. House of Representatives  
209 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Napolitano, and Ranking Member Westerman:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) thanks you for the introduction of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. Our nation's levees, dams, inland waterways, and ports infrastructure systems are critical for public safety, strong businesses, economic growth, and the preservation and enhancement of our environmental resources. These systems protect hundreds of communities, support millions of American jobs, and generate trillions of dollars of economic activity. However, many of these infrastructure assets have reached the end of their design life, and the investment gap must be closed if we hope to both repair and modernize these infrastructure systems to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First, ASCE would like to thank the Committee for keeping the Water Resources Development Act on its biennial schedule. Additionally, we were pleased that the recent coronavirus economic stimulus package, the CARES Act, included a provision that unlocks the **Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF)**, providing much needed funds over the next decade by ensuring that all future HMTF revenue will be used its intended purpose of dredging at our nation's ports and inland harbors. We support the provision in WRDA 2020 that fully unlocks the HMTF by allowing for the HMTF's \$10 billion be used for its intended purpose of dredging at our nation's ports and inland harbors; we urge the Committee to oversee this provision's full implementation.

We also urge the Committee to reauthorize the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Water Infrastructure Finance & Innovation Act (WIFIA) program at no less than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WIFIA program's FY20 enacted funding level of \$60 million.** This program could provide financing for an array of projects that remain on the books for the USACE, including those that achieve environmental, hurricane, flood, and storm

damage reduction, coastal or inland harbor navigation improvement, and/or inland and intracoastal waterways navigation. The 25,000 miles of inland waterways and 239 locks managed by the USACE supports more than half a million jobs and delivers more than 600 million tons of cargo each year – about 14% of all domestic freight. Yet most locks and dams on the system are well beyond their 50-year design life, and nearly half of vessels experience delays. The USACE is currently piloting a P3 program for three projects that include flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and harbor channel improvement. The use of an additional alternative financing mechanism such as the WIFIA program can result in improvements through shorter delivery times, greater capital efficiency, and increased operational efficiency, ultimately helping to reduce the project backlog for the USACE on the inland waterways system.

ASCE appreciates that the Committee has amended the **Inland Water Trust Fund's (IWTF)** cost share from 50% general revenue/ 50% IWTF to 65-35 for construction and rehabilitation projects on our nation's inland waterways systems. The updated cost share will encourage faster construction and expedite completion of key inland waterways navigation projects similar to previous WRDA bills that have changed the cost share for certain projects with positive results. ASCE's 2016 *Failure to Act* economic study found that from 2026 through 2040, the average annual investment gap for waterside improvements, including dredging and lock and dam repair, is expected to be \$1.9 billion, which will result in an economic loss of \$2.8 trillion of GDP and 1.2 million fewer jobs in 2040 than would otherwise be expected with modernized water resources systems in place. This amendment to the cost share is critical if we are to modernize the nation's inland waterways infrastructure and close the investment gap.

Next, ASCE applauds the Committee for directing the USACE to create an inventory of Civil Works facilities that are or could be contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (**PFAS**). A 2018 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that more than 400 military installations' water systems are contaminated with PFAS. We support efforts such as these, as well as new funding streams, to assist government entities, water utilities, and the public in the monumental task of addressing these emerging contaminants in order to protect public health and to remain in Safe Drinking Water Act compliance.

Furthermore, ASCE appreciates the Committee including technical changes to the **High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Program**. These proposed changes better define technical terms and are designed to help the program, which was implemented for the first-time last year by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), run more smoothly in the future. High hazard potential dams are those whose failure is anticipated to cause a loss of life. ASCE has been a long-time advocate for the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation program, which was enacted in the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act of 2016 and provides federal grant assistance for the rehabilitation, repair, or removal of non-federal high hazard potential dams. The Association of State Dam Safety Officials estimates it will cost \$20.42 billion to bring our nation's non-federal high hazard potential dams into a state of good repair; that's an increase from \$18.71 billion in 2016. When fully funded, this program has the potential to repair some of the highest priority dam safety rehabilitation projects in the nation.

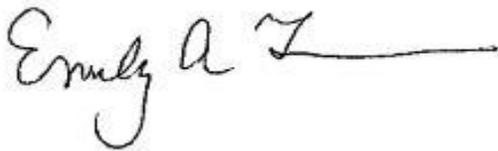
Finally, ASCE would like to thank the Committee for including provisions that **encourage resilience, innovation, and the utilization of nature-based infrastructure systems**, which

help balance the built and natural environments and are often cost-competitive compared to gray forms of infrastructure. As natural hazards become more frequent and severe, investments in resilience measures will save lives and dollars. In fact, the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) found that mitigation funding can save the nation \$11 in future disaster costs for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation.

A critical component to raising our nation's "D+" infrastructure grade is using new approaches, materials, and technologies to ensure our infrastructure is able to quickly recover from significant weather and other hazard events while reducing impacts on local economies, quality of life, and the environment. We also support research and development into innovative materials and processes to modernize and extend the life of infrastructure, reduce life-cycle costs, expedite repairs or replacement, and promote cost savings.

In conclusion, ASCE thanks the Committee for the bipartisan introduction of the Water Resources Development Act. We believe our nation must prioritize the investment needs of our water resources infrastructure systems to protect public health, ensure a strong economy, and build a modern, efficient network of infrastructure that can compete on a global stage. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this critical infrastructure bill and can be reached at [govwash@asce.org](mailto:govwash@asce.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Emily Feenstra  
Managing Director, Government Relations & Infrastructure Initiatives