

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Energy & Water Appropriations
Subcommittee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Energy & Water Appropriations
Subcommittee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Subcommittee Chairman Alexander and Subcommittee Ranking Member Feinstein:

As members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group, our members consist of producers, grain handlers, millers, processors and exporters, feed manufacturers and agribusinesses. Thank you for your past support of critical waterways infrastructure funding. As you focus on the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process, we believe further attention to and investment in America's waterways system is vital if U.S. agriculture is to remain competitive on the world stage.

While the U.S. transportation infrastructure system long has provided U.S. agricultural producers and agribusinesses with a strong comparative advantage against foreign competitors, our waterways infrastructure system is falling behind. Most locks and dams on the U.S. inland waterways system have surpassed their design life span of 50 years. Further, navigation channels at U.S. ports need to be deepened to accommodate larger vessels transiting through the recently reopened and expanded Panama Canal.

From an agricultural users' perspective, having access to modern and efficient inland waterways and ports is vital to the production, marketing and shipment of agricultural products in international commerce. In 2015, 72 percent of U.S. agricultural export volume – totaling 142 million metric tons valued at \$128 billion – were transported to U.S. export ports via waterborne commerce. The United States exports one-quarter of the grain it produces with 59 percent of this grain moving on the Mississippi River, Texas and East Gulf Ports, and another 27 percent moving through the Pacific Northwest Ports.

U.S. inland waterways provide a low-cost, economically sustainable and environmentally friendly way to move grain and other agricultural products while supporting more than 540,000 jobs. Every \$1 billion in agricultural exports shipped through U.S. ports creates 15,000 jobs. We believe these facts more than make the case for renewed commitment and investment in our waterways and port infrastructure.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you appropriate the following:

- 1) Please appropriate the full amount supportable by the barge diesel fuel tax going into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund.
- 2) Please support, at a minimum, a funding level of \$3.173¹ billion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operations & maintenance (O&M) account, which helps support inland and coastal navigation activities.
- 3) Please ensure that spending targets for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund codified in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 are met to cover O&M activities, such as harbor dredging.

During the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process, we ask for your continued leadership and support of America's vitally important waterways infrastructure. Our inland waterways and ports are true economic difference-makers that support American workers and help U.S. products reach the 95 percent of consumers who live outside our borders. We appreciate your consideration of these appropriations requests, and thank you for your time and work on these critical infrastructure needs.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture & Commodities Transportation Coalition
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Corn Growers Association
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Association
National Sunflower Association
North American Millers' Association
Soy Transportation Coalition
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Rice
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

¹ This reflects the same amount recommended in the Senate FY 2017 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (S. 2804).