

December 8, 2022

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Graves:

The undersigned members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group (ATWG) write in support of the bipartisan agreement you have crafted on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022.

The farmers, ranchers, food and beverage manufacturers, processors, package suppliers, farm supply dealers and agricultural product marketers that comprise our collective memberships support and sustain millions of American jobs while providing a safe, abundant, affordable, and sustainably produced supply of human and animal food, fiber, and agricultural products.

American agriculture's competitive advantage depends upon the quality, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness of a comprehensive transportation system including inland waterways and ports, rail service, highways, roads, and bridges. As policymakers, we commend your leadership in crafting the Water Resources Development Act of 2022, on a bipartisan basis. Undertaking the WRDA process every two years allows for the examination of policies and projects that enhance and promote the reliability and utilization of this critical mode of transportation.

Building on the progress of WRDA 2020, the bill makes permanent the cost share for inland waterway projects at 65 percent general Treasury funds and 35 percent from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. While ATWG members had advocated a 75/25 cost share, we believe this permanent policy change provides certainty and will bolster investments for U.S. inland waterways, expedite the modernization of locks and dams, and enhance the ability of ATWG members to serve domestic and global customers.

Our members take pride in the fact that U.S. agricultural exports hit an all-time high of \$177 billion in 2021, accounting for 25 percent of a farmer's income. WRDA can impact trade because barges move about half of all grains to export grain elevators, including 48 percent of corn, 62 percent of soybeans and 47 percent of wheat. Critical farm inputs like fertilizer, feed, and fuel are transported via the inland waterways system. From the Pacific Northwest to the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast, the importance of inland waterways and ports to the ATWG and American agriculture is definitive.

The ATWG is also pleased the final WRDA bill maintains navigational access to the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs). The Columbia-Snake River System is the third-largest grain export corridor in the world, transporting nearly 30 percent of U.S. grain and oilseed exports through a sophisticated navigation system to deliver high value farm products safely and efficiently to West Coast ports and consumers worldwide.

According to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, the removal of barge access through the LSRDs would require 39,000 rail cars or 152,000 semi-trucks to replace the cargo volume shipped on the Snake River in

2019. Barging is the most fuel-efficient way to ship goods and failure to maintain access to this system would dramatically increase carbon emissions. We thank you for preserving this important waterway system.

The ATWG thanks you for your efforts and strongly supports final congressional approval of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Cane League
Consumer Brands Association
Corn Refiners Association
Farm Credit Council
Growth Energy
International Fresh Produce Association
National Aquaculture Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Sorghum Producers
North American Millers' Association
Pet Food Institute
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Rice
Waterways Council, Inc.

CC:

Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY)
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
U.S. Senators
U.S. Representatives
President Joseph R. Biden
U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg