

December 5, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) thanks you for your efforts on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 and urges you to prioritize passage of this legislation this week. 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 from devastating flooding, 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 21st century. It is critical that this legislation stays on track with its biennial schedule and be signed by the President by the end of 2020.

ASCE is 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 continues to unlock the HMTF by allowing for \$2 billion annually of the HMTF's \$10 billion balance be used for its intended purpose of dredging at our nation's ports and inland harbors; we urge Congress to oversee this provision's full implementation.

ASCE appreciates that this bill has amended the **Inland Waterways 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. This amendment to the cost share is critical if we are to modernize the nation's inland waterways infrastructure and close the investment gap.

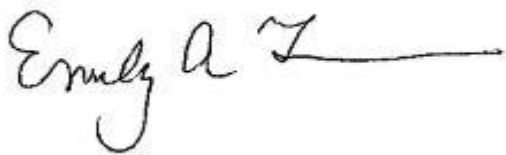
Furthermore, ASCE appreciates the inclusion of technical changes to the **High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Program**. These proposed changes better define technical terms and are designed to

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. 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 over \$20 billion to bring our nation's non-federal high hazard potential dams into a state of good repair. When fully funded, this program has the potential to repair some of the highest priority dam safety rehabilitation projects in the nation.

Finally, ASCE supports the 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. This legislation makes tremendous progress on ensuring our communities are resilient and offering more flexibility in identifying long-term solutions for repetitive flooding.

In conclusion, ASCE thanks the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee and the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee for their efforts on the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, and we encourage swift passage of the legislation this week. 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "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

cc: Senate Committee on Environment & Public Transportation Chairman John Barrasso and Ranking Member Tom Carper; House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio and Ranking Member Sam Graves