



December 7, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) strongly supports S. 1811, the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA 2020), and urges both the Senate and House to consider and approve this substantial infrastructure bill before the end of this Congress.

NGFA members move grain and oilseeds by truck, rail, barge and ocean-going vessels. American agriculture's competitive advantage largely depends upon the quality, reliability, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of the national transportation system for inland waterways and ports, rail and motor carriers. Therefore, we appreciate the fact that since the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House and Senate have demonstrated a bipartisan commitment to evaluating and ultimately improving U.S. waterways infrastructure policy. This winning streak of policy progress should continue with the enactment of WRDA 2020.

Specifically, NGFA enthusiastically supports Section 109 of WRDA 2020 that will help bring the U.S. inland waterways transportation system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As you know, the majority of U.S. locks and dams have outlived their 50-year design life. Most are not of sufficient capacity to handle modern 1,200-foot barge tows, while others are requiring more maintenance – both of which create inefficiencies and unpredictability that cost shippers valuable time and resources. Section 109 will bolster the U.S. inland waterways transportation system by amending the cost-share formula for the construction and major rehabilitation of inland waterways navigation projects from the 50:50 percent general revenue:Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) funding to 65 percent general revenue and 35 percent IWTF, which will expedite long-overdue construction on these locks and dams.

Section 109 would bring a decade of policy certainty, which is particularly important because the ability to utilize the inland river system is essential to the competitiveness of America's agricultural exports. Roughly 60 percent of U.S. grains and oilseeds transit the inland waterways enroute to foreign markets, comprising up to 20 percent of U.S. farm income. The inland waterways transportation network also relieves congestion on highways and creates competition to help discipline rail rates. NGFA believes that Section 109 is a difference-making and prudent policy reform.

NGFA also strongly supports Section 101 of WRDA 2020, which better will ensure that funds collected and deposited in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) go toward their intended purpose of dredging the nation's ports and harbors. The fact that nearly \$10 billion has been collected and deposited in the HMTF but gone unspent on investing in U.S. ports and harbors is a fiscal disservice to those that pay the 0.125 percent ad valorem tax based upon the value of cargo imports. The inability thus far to access and spend those dollars on much-needed dredging further has eroded the United States' comparative transportation advantage and contributed to lost export opportunities to the detriment of U.S. economic growth. Section 101 helps unlock additional funds for critically needed harbor maintenance needs and NGFA strongly supports its inclusion in WRDA 2020.

In closing, NGFA urges consideration and approval of WRDA 2020 before the end of this Congress. NGFA also commends the leadership of Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY) and Ranking Member Thomas R. Carper (D-DE), as well as House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), and all of their respective staffs, for drafting, negotiating and producing an impactful infrastructure bill under trying circumstances and logistics created by COVID-19.

WRDA 2020 will enhance U.S. agriculture's competitiveness, contribute to the overall efficiency of the U.S. transportation system, and promote overall U.S. economic growth and job creation. The NGFA urges its expeditious enactment. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the NGFA if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



**Randall C. Gordon**  
President  
National Grain and Feed Association



**Bobby Frederick**  
Vice President of Legislative Affairs  
National Grain and Feed Association