

December 7, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2051

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

On behalf of the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) – the leading recreational marine trade association in North America, representing nearly 1,300 boat, engine, and accessory manufacturers – I write to urge you to move the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 forward for passage before the end of the 116th Congress.

The navigation, flood control, and ecosystem restoration work carried out by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) that ensures our nation’s ports, harbors, and inland waterways can generate significant economic impact for local economies across the country is made possible through WRDA enactment. We applaud the bipartisan leadership from Chairman Barasso, Ranking Member Carper, Chairman DeFazio, and Ranking Member Graves in crafting WRDA 2020. As many communities are seeking financial relief, federal investments in water infrastructure will be an important tool in economic revival as our nation emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the recreational boating industry had a significant impact on our nation’s economy, generating \$170.3 in annual economic impact that supported more than 35,000 businesses and 691,000 jobs. Additionally, the outdoor recreation economy as a whole – which is driven by boating and fishing and includes RVing, guided tours, and motorcycling and ATVing – accounted for 2.1 percent of U.S. GDP, \$788 billion in gross economic output, and 5.2 million jobs.

As our industry faces unprecedented economic and recreation access challenges, these meaningful investments in safe, navigable waterways and healthy, protected communities through passage of the 2020 WRDA bill will bolster the benefits of the recreational boating economy, and the small businesses and local communities it supports.

NMMA applauds the inclusion of specific WRDA 220 provisions listed below that will take great strides in ensuring increased investments in harbors that support recreation activity, improving federal efforts to combat aquatic invasive species and harmful algal blooms, and investments in key conservation and resiliency initiatives.

We appreciate your consideration of this request to pass a bipartisan WRDA bill in 2020 , and look forward to working with you to protect local communities, ensure continued economic growth for American small businesses, and ensure all Americans have access to our nation's favorite pastimes.

Sincerely,



T. Nicole Vasilaros, Esq.
Senior Vice President, Government and Legal Affairs
National Marine Manufacturers Association

Cc: Chairman Barrasso, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Carper, and Ranking Member Graves

NMMA Supported WRDA 2020 Provisions

Sec. 102. Authorization of Appropriations for Navigation.

Increases designated set-asides of authorized operation and maintenance expenditures from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) to address critical dredging needs of emerging harbors and Great Lakes Harbors to 15 percent and 13 percent, respectively, effective at the beginning of fiscal year 2023. Securing increased investments will ensure emerging and Great Lakes harbors that support recreation activity are not chronically neglected and allows these places to play a key role in getting more boaters out on the water and Americans back to work.

Sec. 110. Implementation of Water Resources Principles and Requirements.

Directs USACE to issue final agency procedures for the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines (PR&G). These new guidelines would serve as the basis for the Corps' evaluation of project benefits and costs. NMMA strongly support the section's requirement that the Army Corps carry out a public comment period prior to the release of PR&G guidelines and review its PR&G guidelines every five years.

Sec. 111 Resiliency Planning Assistance.

This provision amends the USACE Floodplain Management Service program to provide more robust technical assistance, including assistance that would help to avoid repetitive flooding impacts. The provision also prioritizes technical assistance to economically disadvantaged communities and communities subject to repetitive flooding. Assistance rendered by the USACE Floodplain Management Service program would be provided at full federal expense. We strongly support this provision's ability to increase the resiliency of communities.

Sec. 114. Small Flood Control Projects.

Allows for natural or nature-based infrastructure projects to be considered for funding under the Section 205 continuing authorities program. This would help communities meet their flood control needs while also providing them with substantial co-benefits such as enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, enhanced recreational opportunities, and improved water quality.

Sec. 115: Flood Protection Projects.

Ensures consistency in cost-sharing requirements for natural infrastructure projects. The non-federal cost share for nonstructural flood projects is currently 35% of total project costs, including the costs of all lands, easements, rights of way, and disposal sites (LERRDs). However, the current non-federal cost share for natural infrastructure projects can be as high as 50% of total project costs. This update to the cost-share for natural infrastructure projects proposed by the House bill would be consistent with federal law, USACE practice, and is widely supported by the conservation, hunting, angling, and environmental communities

Section 116: Feasibility Studies; Review of Natural and Nature-based Features.

Requires each feasibility study for a flood or storm damage reduction project to include a summary of any nature-based features considered, and an explanation if nature-based features are not recommended. We support this requirement to encourage a more complete evaluation of nature-based features as part of a feasibility study, and to describe the long-term costs and benefits of such approaches, given that these measures can provide sustainable and less costly protections to communities while also improving public health and well-being.

Sec. 119. Permanent Measures to Reduce Emergency Flood Fighting Needs for Communities Subject to Repetitive Flooding

Establishes a pilot program to produce 10 feasibility studies at full federal expense for flood risk reduction in economically disadvantaged communities and rural communities. We support Section 119, which would provide critical assistance to communities suffering from flooding events and in need of a solution, but without the resources to meet the required non-federal cost-share.

Sec. 124. Sense of Congress on Multipurpose Projects.

Expresses the sense of Congress that USACE projects should maximize the development, evaluation, and recommendation of project alternatives for future water resources development

projects that produce multiple project benefits. This approach will optimize navigation, flood risk, restoration, and the use of natural or nature-based features and beneficial use of dredged material.

Sec. 125. Beneficial Use of Dredged Material; Dredged Material Management Plans.

Renews the Congressional commitment to beneficial use of dredged material (BUDM) obtained from USACE projects by establishing a “national policy” on BUDM that a) expands the BUDM pilot program from WRDA 2016 (Sec. 1122), b) requires the Federal Standard to be calculated with consideration of the full economic value of dredged sediment, and c) requires five year dredged material management plans from all USACE districts. The section also explicitly allows for the beneficial use of dredged material at federal expense if the incremental costs are reasonable based upon consideration of the environmental and flood risk reduction benefits of such use. This encourages local communities and USACE districts to consider how to align dredging and sediment placement projects, and will benefit natural infrastructure projects. NMMA supports this effort to improve the use of dredged material for coastal restoration and natural infrastructure risk reduction projects.

Sec. 128. Harmful Algal Bloom Demonstration Program

In addition to their human health risks, harmful algal blooms (HABs) jeopardize fish populations and native aquatic habitat. From Florida beaches closed due to red tide, to fishing tournaments being cancelled in lakes across the country, HABs continue to harm recreational fishing opportunities and fisheries resources at a growing rate. The recreational fishing community welcomes additional research to detect and mitigate HABs.

Sec. 210. Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule, Florida.

Directs USACE to evaluate implications of prohibiting and limiting releases from Lake Okeechobee through specific lock and dam structure to minimize unnecessary negative impacts on coastal estuaries and water quality.

Sec. 211. Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study.

Flooding throughout the Great Lakes has resulted in substantial losses in recreational access, causing erosion, damaging lakeside property, and causing many boat ramps to become damaged and inaccessible. The \$25 million in federal funding being dedicated to complete a report outlining shoreline protection and resiliency will help ensure sound management and policy and mitigate future impacts when the Great Lakes inevitably flood in the future.

Sec. 306. Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection Program.

The health of the Chesapeake Bay is not only critical to the recreational boating and fishing community around the Bay itself, but also to the entire Mid-Atlantic region, as the Bay is an important nursery for migratory fish like striped bass. The Chesapeake Bay Program coordinates data collection and distributes grants to states for Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. This program helps states control pollution and manage runoff into the tributaries that feed into the Bay. NMMA is grateful for the increased funding authorized under this section.

Sec. 401. Everglades Restoration and Brandon Road Study Project Authorizations

Includes authorization for projects critical to Everglades restoration and protecting the Great Lakes. Authorization of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project is essential to reestablishing the historic southerly flow of water from central Florida to Florida Bay. Everglades restoration is a high priority for the boating community given its impacts on water quality in Florida and moving these remaining projects forward as quickly as possible will minimize negative impacts on habitat and natural resources.

NMMA strongly supports the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Brandon Road study. This important project is critical to protecting the Great Lakes from Asian carp, which are currently one of the greatest threats to the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery.

Sec. 502. Aquatic Invasive Species Research.

NMMA is supportive of this textual change to Sec. 1108 of AWIA 2018 (33 U.S.C. 2263a) as the Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research and Development Center is already a leader research on AIS management and eradication that is shared across agencies. The inclusion of “prevention” will assure that ERDC is focusing on ways AIS can be avoided altogether.

Sec. 504. Invasive Species Risk Assessment, Prioritization, and Management.

NMMA strongly supports efforts to restore Florida’s Everglades, including the identification and eradication of invasive species. Invasive species are a key threat to this ecosystem and have proved challenging to control. As such, NMMA supports the development of a process to identify, study and eliminate them.

Sec. 505. Invasive Species Mitigation and Reduction.

Increasing coordination between the federal government and states is key in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. The pilot projects authorized in this section will help to identify appropriate and reasonable approaches to allow boaters to continue to access waterways while minimizing the potential associated spread of aquatic invasive species.

Sec. 506. Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention.

NMMA is supportive of the provision in Sec. 1608 and the expansion of WRDA to include Asian carp beyond the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River Basins and tributaries to all six sub-basins of the Mississippi River, as all of these areas are threatened by Asian carp infestation.

Sec. 509. Asian Carp Prevention and Control Pilot Program.

Asian carp are a significant threat to boating access and recreational fisheries not only in the Great Lakes but throughout the Mississippi River drainage. Where introduced, they have disrupted the natural ecosystem, resulting in declines in recreational fish populations. In addition, their behavior of jumping out of the water when motorized boats transit nearby create a serious risk to human health. Reducing their populations where they have already established, and preventing their further spread are critical to supporting recreational fishing opportunities and

communities in many parts of the country. The prevention and control projects required in this section will hopefully provide tangible progress in stopping the spread of Asian carp. We are thankful for your leadership to confront this issue at such a pivotal juncture.