



December 7, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

I write offering the National Parks Conservation Association's (NPCA) support for many of the important policies and projects in S. 1811, the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, as amended, which the House will consider on Tuesday, December 8. NPCA hopes Congress will complete action on WRDA this year.

Since 1919, NPCA has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. We commend the leaders of both the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works for producing a WRDA agreement this year. WRDA is an important bill that prioritizes work undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in and around parks. Since 2014, Congress has passed WRDA every two years to create or revise USACE policy and support new USACE projects that help protect, restore and enhance our national parks and their landscapes. We appreciate Congress keeping to this two-year schedule.

Included in the House-passed (H.R. 7575) and the Senate committee-passed (S. 3591) bills, the new WRDA agreement carries forward provisions that build more resilient landscapes around our National Parks. It includes provisions that encourage the use of natural features and nature-based approaches, which can be more cost effective and create more sustainable infrastructure. Restoring or protecting sand dunes, wetlands, barrier islands and coastal forests in place of traditional human built projects like levies, jetties, groins and bulkheads is also more resilient to a changing climate. Integrating natural features in projects provide multiple benefits to communities where they are already applied, reduces operations and maintenance requirements, and reduces post-disaster spending. The conference agreement removes barriers for integrating these features in more Army Corps projects, such as creating cost share consistency between non-structural and nature-based alternatives. Other provisions require the Corps to document its consideration of using natural

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features, while at the same time authorizing it to incorporate, where appropriate, using natural infrastructure when carrying out its continuing and other authorities. The agreement also encourages the use of beneficial use of dredged material, targets harmful algal blooms in a new pilot program and addresses aquatic invasive species like Asian carp.

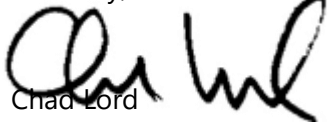
The bill also supports park communities by prioritizing planning and other assistance that can help economically-disadvantaged and rural communities address flooding and damage from hurricanes and intense storms. It creates several pilot programs that could remove barriers facing these communities in addressing these increasingly repetitive events.

The conference agreement also supports resiliency and restoration work around the country, including these important park landscapes where NPCA works: North Atlantic Coast, Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, New York-New Jersey Harbor and the Rio Grande. It also includes project authorizations and project modifications that impact national parks across the country such as the Everglades, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, Gateway National Recreation Area, and Fire Island National Seashore.

USACE is important in many places where NPCA works to protect and restore national park waterways and landscapes, the communities that surround them and the millions of people who visit them each year. From Gateway to the Grand Canyon, Everglades to Olympic, water is central to the features, wildlife, recreation and aesthetic of these esteemed places. However, national parks, once viewed as isolated and remote, are affected by activities occurring in their watersheds. These beyond park boundary activities often enhance or detract from the visitor experience. With much of the Army Corps' work outside park boundaries, S. 1811's increased promotion of using natural features and nature-based approaches and support for communities that need it most will build resilient park landscapes and strong park communities.

Thank you for considering our views. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at clord@npca.org or 202.257.4365.

Sincerely,



Chad Lord
Senior Director, Water Policy

Cc: The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable John Barrasso, Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Work
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Tom Carper, Ranking member, Committee on Environment and Public Works