

December 5, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

The Nature Conservancy applauds the bipartisan and inclusive efforts of both chambers to invest in and modernize our nation's water resource-related infrastructure and to maintain regular order of advancing water resources development legislation every two years. This continues to be an opportunity for Congress to strengthen communities using nature-based solutions proven to lessen flood impacts, restore ecosystems, and support the economy. Specifically, we commend the House and Senate for producing a consensus Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022 (H.R. 7776). The projects and policies included in this WRDA bill are vital to the economy, the environment and the public safety of communities across the country. We urge you to bring this bill up for a vote as soon as possible and Congress to pass this important piece of legislation.

We are pleased that WRDA 2022 builds upon the positive policy changes for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) included in previous WRDA bills by continuing to advance nature-based solutions while directly addressing the disproportionate impacts water resources management challenges have on disadvantaged communities. WRDA 2022 will help build inland and coastal communities that are more resilient to the effects of floods, droughts and climate change by, among other things, beneficially reusing dredged material, allowing USACE to build and maintain hurricane and storm damage reduction projects to higher standards and studying the impacts of the historic drought conditions in the West to improve water management and supply while preparing for aridification and climate change. These changes will help ensure that communities across the country can respond to the threats they face while increasing the environmental benefits of USACE-constructed projects.

Furthermore, the bill ensures that USACE will be a more effective partner with local stakeholders. It gives local project sponsors greater flexibility to meet their cost-share requirements. It provides an increase in USACE technical assistance and coordination with

tribal, minority, and indigenous communities. It will also enhance the effectiveness of USACE technical assistance through the Planning Assistance to States and Floodplain Management Services programs by improving public access to the programs while targeting the needs of disadvantaged communities.

Lastly, WRDA 2022 supports many local and regional projects and programs to improve the environment. For example, it will encourage ecosystem improvements on the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System through modest changes to the operations of locks and dams in the region while maintaining the navigation channel. It will advance important ecosystem restoration projects for fish passage in New Hampshire and Alabama. Additionally, WRDA 2022 authorizes several programs that prioritize environmental restoration and protection, including the Chattahoochee River program.

Taken together, these provisions and many others included in the bill will support much-needed investment in multi-benefit water resources projects, targeting federal resources to disadvantaged communities and nature-based solutions.

We urge Congress to take up and pass WRDA 2022 as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James M. Hague". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

James M. Hague  
Senior Water Policy Advisor

CC: The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Works  
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works  
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure