



National  
**Corn Growers**  
Association  
www.ncga.com

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October 28, 2008

The Honorable James Oberstar  
Chairman  
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Mica  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony as part of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's hearing entitled, "Investing in Infrastructure: The Road to Recovery." NCGA represents approximately 33,000 corn farmers from 48 states. NCGA also represents the interest of more than 300,000 farmers who contribute to corn checkoff programs and 27 affiliated state corn organizations across the country.

Everyday, the price of grain a farmer receives at his home market is largely based on the price of grain that moves on the Mississippi River to export markets. Each year more than one billion bushels of grain (about 60 percent of all grain exports) are shipped for export via the Mississippi River. However, the waterways infrastructure on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers was built in the 1930s with a life expectancy of 50 years; frequent delays caused by these antiquated locks are hurting our family farmers and our ability to compete in a global marketplace.

NCGA is supportive of the comments submitted by the Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI), which requests \$1 - \$1.5 billion for lock and dam modernization and construction plus an additional \$500 million for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) work on the inland waterway system. These funds would create jobs in the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of these important projects while benefitting those sectors of the economy heavily dependent upon this mode of transportation. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 2006 data, grain is the largest commodity group transported via barge on

the Upper Mississippi/Illinois/Missouri Rivers Basin. Corn specifically accounted for more than 26 billion tons that year with a value of more than \$2.7 billion.

NCGA is particularly interested in seeing new construction move forward on the seven projects in the Upper Mississippi lock system that were authorized in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act: Mississippi L&D 25, 24, 22, 21, 20 and LaGrange and Peoria on the Illinois River, some of which are design-build ready. These lock upgrades would require a total of 48,000,000 person hours from skilled trades throughout the Midwest. The reinvestment potential for our communities from this opportunity is enormous. It would provide for jobs and create immediate economic benefits.

At a time when the American public expects energy efficiency and reduced air emissions for public works projects, waterways navigation offers transportation with unparalleled environmental benefits. The carrying capacity of one 15-barge tow eliminates the need for 870 semi-trailer trucks to travel our nation's highways, reducing traffic congestion. Barges operate at 10 percent of the cost of trucks and 40 percent of the cost of trains, while releasing twenty times less nitrous oxide, nine times less carbon monoxide, seven times less hydrocarbons, and burning ten times less high-price fuel.

Maintaining a cohesive and modern inland waterways system is not only critical to the farm economy, but these construction projects have the potential to create jobs and contribute to our overall economic recovery. For too long we have lived off the investment of our ancestors. It is time to provide necessary and long-overdue infrastructure and environmental improvements to our nation's waterways. Thank you for considering our comments on this important issue.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Dickey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Dickey  
President