

January 13, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

We are writing to express our strong support for funding in the economic stimulus package for renovation and construction of locks and dams on the inland waterways system. We join a broad coalition of business, labor and environmental organizations as well as state and local governments in requesting \$2 billion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) civil works program. There are many excellent examples of authorized projects critical to U.S. agriculture awaiting funding, including channel deepening and maintenance.

A key component of the civil works program for U.S. agriculture is the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. In addition, other important agricultural-related projects include channel deepening and maintenance on the Columbia/Snake River system, navigation channel improvements on the lower Mississippi, Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Coast ports and their navigation channels, and improvements to the key tributaries that feed major river systems.

These much needed and previously authorized infrastructure and ecosystem improvements are consistent with the job creation and economic stimulus goals of this legislative package. The USACE estimates that for every \$1 billion invested in navigation or ecosystem restoration projects, 30,000 to 35,000 jobs are created.

It is our understanding that as many as 16 lock and dam construction and major rehabilitation projects, which have already been authorized by Congress and on which work is either ongoing or could start immediately, could utilize \$1-1.5 billion of the total \$2 billion investment. An additional \$500 million is needed for Operation and Maintenance work to ensure reliability of the entire inland waterways system.

The dual-purpose NESP authorization, an example of a project that could utilize this funding, integrates modernization of the navigation system to reduce barge traffic delays with restoration of important habitats. Our country's inland navigation system plays a critical role in our economy, moving more than 1 billion tons of domestic commerce

valued at more than \$300 billion. More than 1 billion bushels of grain (approximately 60 percent of all grain exports) move to export markets via the inland waterways each year, accounting for \$8.5 billion in exports.

For continued success, the U.S. agricultural industry needs efficient transportation networks, which is why we have been long-time advocates for improvements to our inland waterway system. Funding lock and dam improvements and other waterway projects are crucial to farmers who depend on the inland waterway system to deliver their crops to the global marketplace and to businesses who rely on the system to move their raw materials and products.

An infusion of \$2 billion for Corps civil works projects, including NESP, that are “shovel ready” would provide multiple benefits to the economy, consumers and the environment.

In addition to the direct, immediate and obvious benefits that these infrastructure investments would provide in the form of jobs and economic activity, they would also result in many additional long-term benefits. The greater capacity and efficiencies that are created for barge transportation on the inland waterways system will alleviate some of the demand for truck transportation, which is more fuel intensive and puts more pressure on already stressed highway infrastructure. As the most fuel efficient means of transportation for agricultural commodities, an investment in our waterways infrastructure will help us toward our national goals of energy security and improving our environmental footprint.

Again, we strongly support the inclusion of funding in the economic stimulus package for renovation and construction of locks and dams on the inland waterways system and other waterway projects. We urge your strong consideration of our request to provide \$2 billion for the previously authorized U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civil works programs. The agricultural community stands ready to assist your efforts to pass this important economic stimulus package to help get our nation’s economy moving forward again.

Sincerely,

American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sunflower Association
The Fertilizer Institute
US Canola Association
USA Rice Federation

cc: The Honorable Richard Durbin
Majority Whip

The Honorable Jon Kyl
Minority Whip

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairwoman
Environment and Public Works Committee

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee

The Honorable John Rockefeller IV
Chairman
Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee