

May 3, 2022

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public
Works
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public
Works
U.S. Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) thanks you for the introduction of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. Our nation's levees, dams, inland waterways, and ports infrastructure systems are critical for public safety, strong business, economic growth, and the preservation and enhancement of our environmental resources. These systems protect hundreds of communities, support millions of American jobs, and generate trillions of dollars of economic activity. However, many of these infrastructure assets have reached the end of their design life, and the investment gap must be closed if we hope to both repair and modernize these infrastructure systems to be competitive in the 21st century.

First, ASCE would like to thank the committee for keeping WRDA on its biennial schedule. WRDA provides an opportunity to demonstrate effective bipartisan action to support the development and strengthening of the nation's water infrastructure. The biennial schedule also provides the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with a degree of predictability which allows for more effective planning and development of vital Corps projects nationwide.

ASCE also supports efforts to increase the resilience of our nation's infrastructure systems, coastlines and riverways. As climate change continues to create increasingly severe and unpredictable weather patterns, as well as increased levels of precipitation, it is critical to ensure that dams, levees, wastewater, and stormwater systems are designed and built to withstand harsher conditions. This year's WRDA addresses these challenges in several ways, including allowing emergency funds to be used to increase the resilience of federal hurricane and shore protection projects, addressing floodplain management challenges, emphasizing the need to rebuild or repair disaster affected systems at or above previous design levels, and expanding the ability of the Levee Rehabilitation Assistance Program to address challenges posed by extreme weather events.

We also commend the proposal to adjust the cost share of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) from 65% general revenue - 35% IWTF to 75% - 25%. ASCE recommends a 75% - 25%

cost share agreement for spending on construction and major rehabilitation projects to raise the D+ grade inland waterways earned on the 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure. The modification proposed in the draft would build on the positive cost share adjustment included in WRDA 2020 and facilitate projects to improve inland waterways, which serve as vital economic drivers.

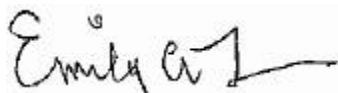
Additionally, ASCE appreciates the bill's focus on dredging activities, such as the authorizations for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to dredge underserved community harbors and the inland waterways regional dredge pilot program. There is a funding gap of over \$12 billion for waterside infrastructure needs such as dredging over the next 10 years, and these efforts would help address those considerations.

ASCE strongly supports provisions to strengthen the nation's science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) workforce at USACE. A significant challenge that the nation's infrastructure faces is an aging workforce with the expertise to manage and strengthen critical infrastructure systems, including water infrastructure systems. ASCE's 2021 Report Card recommends the strengthening and expansion of "green collar jobs" in order to develop the next generation of a workforce with skills in asset management, data-driven decision making, and life-cycle cost analysis.

Finally, we urge the Committee to reauthorize the National Dam Safety Program and the National Levee Safety Program, both of which are set to expire at the end of FY 2023. The nation's 92,000 dams and nearly 30,000 miles of levees are critical components of risk reduction and protect communities, critical infrastructure, trillions of dollars in property. These programs provide states provide resources and critical support to states to conduct routine inspections of dams and levees, support staffing needs, and provided need technical assistance. ASCE strongly encourages the committee to take action to reauthorize the National Dam Safety Program at a level of \$40 million per year, and the National Levee Safety Program at the current authorized level of \$79 million per year.

ASCE thanks the Committee for the bipartisan introduction of the Water Resources Development Act for 2022. The IJA was a strong step forward, but Congress must continue to prioritize investment needs for water infrastructure systems to protect public health, ensure a strong economy, and build a modern, efficient network of infrastructure that can compete on a global stage. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this critical legislation and encourage you to contact Matthew McGinn with our Government Relations team (mmcginn@asce.org).

Sincerely,



Emily Feenstra
Chief Policy and External Affairs Officer
American Society of Civil Engineers