Dear Chairs Alexander and Kaptur and Ranking Members Feinstein and Simpson:

As you prepare the Senate and House Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you include report language that supports the Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program (NESP) and urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to move forward with preconstruction engineering and design (PED) of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System projects authorized in Title VIII of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (PL 110-114).

Our nation’s water infrastructure plays a critical role in maintaining our competitiveness in the global economy by ensuring the safe and efficient movement of goods to market, but the current backlog of outstanding water infrastructure projects pending before the Corps is putting that competitiveness at risk. Congress recognized the importance of modernizing our water infrastructure when it authorized NESP in 2007. NESP is an important, dual-purpose program that allows the Corps to address both navigation and ecosystem restoration in an integrated approach that will result in the expansion of seven outdated locks along the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Unfortunately, despite NESP’s importance to our inland waterways system, few steps have been taken by the Corps to implement NESP since 2012.

To illustrate the broad bipartisan support in Congress for NESP and to urge the Corps to provide the funding needed to advance PED for the program, we request the inclusion of the following report language in the FY 2020 Energy and Water Appropriations bills:

The Committee recognizes the importance of advancing the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) for the Upper Mississippi region and our nation’s economy. As such, we urge the Corps to provide the appropriate preconstruction engineering and design (PED) funding needed to advance the projects authorized in Title VIII of the Water Resources and Development Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-114). Congress has already appropriated more than $62 million in PED funding for this program, and the Committee recommends continued funding for PED this year in order for the program to receive new start construction funding as soon as such funding becomes available.

We urge full consideration of this critical language directing the Corps to move forward with PED for NESP. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Jason Smith  
United States Representative

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Bradley S. Schneider  
United States Representative

Dave Loebsack  
United States Representative

Wm. Lacy Clay  
United States Representative

Sean Casten  
United States Representative

Chuck Grassley  
United States Senator

Cheri Bustos  
United States Representative

Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

Mike Quigley  
United States Representative

Ron Kind  
United States Representative

Robin Kelly  
United States Representative

Bill Foster  
United States Representative
Bryan Steil  
United States Representative

Tom Emmer  
United States Representative

Bruce Westerman  
United States Representative

Jim Hagedorn  
United States Representative

Rodney Davis  
United States Representative

Jim Cooper  
United States Representative

Lauren Underwood  
United States Representative

Rick Crawford  
United States Representative

Bob Gibbs  
United States Representative

Emmanuel Cleaver, II  
United States Representative

James Comer  
United States Representative

Glenn Grothman  
United States Representative

Mike Gallagher  
United States Representative