

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Energy & Water Appropriations
Subcommittee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Senate Energy & Water Appropriations
Subcommittee
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Cc: Senate Appropriations Committee Members

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Alexander, and Ranking Members Mikulski and Feinstein:

As members of the Ag Transportation Working Group, our members consist of producers, grain handlers, processors and exporters, feed manufacturers and agribusinesses. We thank you for your work and support of critical waterways infrastructure investment. Fiscal Year 2016 was a strong, impactful year for waterways funding, and we appreciate your efforts.

During the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations process, we ask for your continued leadership in support of the inland waterways infrastructure. Locks and dams are in a precarious state of disrepair, given most are well beyond their 50-year projected lifespan.

From an agricultural users' perspective, having access to a modern and efficient inland waterways transportation system is vital to the efficient production, marketing and shipment of agricultural products in international commerce. In 2014, 73 percent of the volume of U.S. agricultural exports and 65 percent of imports were transported via our waterways. Having access to competitive barge transportation also helps discipline rates for other modes of transportation—an important factor given current depressed agricultural commodity values.

The United States exports nearly one-quarter of the grain it produces. When it comes time to move these crucial commodities to export grain elevators, barges account for the transporting of 61 percent of corn, 42 percent of soybeans, 40 percent of wheat and 26 percent of sorghum. These exports and other navigation activity support more than a half-million U.S. jobs.

We believe these facts help make the case for renewed commitment and investment in our waterways and port infrastructure. Therefore, we ask you to build on these much needed critical investments by appropriating the following:

- 1) Please appropriate the full amount supportable by the diesel fuel tax going into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund, which we understand to be \$390 million in FY 2017.
- 2) Please support at a minimum, a funding level of \$3.137 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers operations & maintenance (O&M) account. This represents the same funding that was provided in FY 2016 and the need to make progress on the project backlog is still very much present.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions on our request, please contact Bobby Frederick, director of legislative affairs and public policy for the National Grain and Feed Association, at 202-289-0873, or bfrederick@ngfa.org.

National Grain and Feed Association

Agricultural Retailers Association

Agriculture Transportation Coalition

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Soybean Association

Corn Refiners Association

Equipment Dealers Association

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Council of Farm Cooperatives

National Corn Growers Association

National Farmers Union

National Oilseed Processors Association

National Pork Producers Council

National Sorghum Producers

National Sunflower Association

North American Millers Association

U.S. Canola Association

U.S. Dry Bean Council

USA Rice