



# It's Modernization Time for Inland Waterways

Federal funding will help modernize locks like this one on the Mississippi River.



**A**fter President Biden signed into law on November 15 the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (infrastructure package) that provided full federal funding of \$2.5 billion to the inland waterways, the industry celebrated, but not for long.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would, at that point, begin developing spend plans to outline the specific inland waterways projects that would receive funding from the infrastructure package.

For context, the infrastructure bill funding was roughly a \$2 billion or 400% increase from the last significant infrastructure funding package passed in 2009. This additional funding, combined with full annual appropriations for inland waterways construction, equates to nearly \$4 billion over the next five years for inland waterways construction and major rehabilitation projects.

Also in the good news category, the infrastructure bill provided \$4 billion for the Corps' Operations and Maintenance account for all business line items within the Civil Works mission.

## Capital Investment Strategy

As Waterways Council Inc. (WCI) was awaiting the Corps' spend plans, we urged the Corps and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to adhere to the list of priority navigation projects developed by the Inland Waterways Users Board (IWUB) and

Corps of Engineers—Civil Works known as the Capital Investment Strategy (CIS).

On January 19, the Corps released its plans to fund the following inland navigation construction projects at \$2.22 billion:

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- Kentucky Lock (Tennessee River): \$465.49 million (funded to completion);
- Montgomery Lock (Ohio River): \$857.71 million (funded to completion);
- Lock and Dam 25 (Upper Mississippi River) (Navigation & Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP): \$732 million (funded to completion). The NESP program was authorized in 2007;

- Three Rivers (Arkansas River): \$109.15 million (funded to completion); and
- T.J. O'Brien Lock and Dam (Illinois Waterway), (Major Rehabilitation): \$52.52 million (funded to completion).

Additionally, as part of Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) component, a fish passage at Lock 22 is funded at \$97.10 million to complete the design and to initiate construction.

The release of inland waterways infrastructure funds will not only advance the inland waterways construction portfolio but also create thousands of skilled jobs for America's building trades, make American farmers more competitive, and promote energy security.

Upon receipt of the spend plans, WCI offered its thanks to supporters on Capitol Hill who helped to push this funding over the finish line. And individually, WCI thanked members of Congress who have championed the inland waterways and deserve credit for this win for the nation.

## The Next Step

The next step is that on or before March 15, the first set of monthly allocation and obligation reports are due from the Corps of Engineers to the Appropriations Committees that will track how well the Corps is carrying out the spending plans.

Investment in the nation's inland waterways infrastructure is a win-win. By 2045, cargo tonnage on the inland waterways is expected to increase by 23% to 942 million tons valued at \$871 billion. Barge transportation remains the safest, most environmentally friendly, economical, and fuel-efficient way to move America's goods for use domestically and for export.

The backbone of the transportation logistics system, the inland waterways is a key part of the United States' transportation supply chain, which has been in the news much of the end of 2021. The system includes a vast network of 12,000 miles of connecting waterways and 218 locks.

This year, good things came to those who waited.



**TRACY R. ZEA**  
President/CEO,  
Waterways Council Inc.