



BOB ONDER

MISSOURI'S 3RD DISTRICT

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Congressman Onder and Deluzio Lead Colleagues in Calling for Stronger Oversight of Missouri River Management

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, U.S. Congressman Bob Onder (R-MO) released the following statement after sending a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers calling for the creation of an Inland Navigation Construction Organization (INCO) within U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Headquarters to coordinate inland waterway infrastructure projects at the federal level.

The proposed INCO would strengthen transparency, establish clear accountability across all levels of project management, and improve the coordination of planning, strategy, and execution for critical inland waterway infrastructure projects. By creating a centralized system of oversight, and checks and balances, the INCO would help ensure federal investments are managed more efficiently and effectively.

“America’s inland waterways are one of our greatest natural advantages over our competitors, and they’re currently managed through a patchwork of disconnected regional structures, with limited centralized oversight and little long-term strategic coordination. Actions taken upstream on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers have significant downstream consequences for communities in Missouri’s Third District, yet no single entity is responsible for evaluating inland navigation projects as a whole or ensuring that these federal projects are being run effectively,” said Congressman Bob Onder. “Establishing INCO would strengthen accountability and help ensure taxpayer dollars are invested efficiently to support the long-term reliability, competitiveness, and resilience of America’s inland waterways.”

“Western Pennsylvania’s inland waterways helped power the Industrial Revolution and remain critical to our regional economy today, supporting manufacturing, energy, and good-paying jobs across our Commonwealth,” said Congressman Chris Deluzio. “That’s why I support establishing an Inland Navigation Construction Organization within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to strengthen oversight

of federal infrastructure investments and ensure America's inland waterway system remains competitive for generations to come."

Tracy Zea, the President & CEO of Waterways Council Inc. stated, *"The Nation's inland waterways modernization program would benefit from being managed as a single, coordinated national program rather than a collection of competing individual projects. Establishing an Inland Navigation Construction Organization (INCO) within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would improve accountability, reduce cost, mitigate risk and help Congress and American taxpayers achieve better returns on infrastructure investment. Waterways Council, Inc. greatly appreciates Rep. Onder and Rep. Deluzio for their leadership on establishing INCO."*

"Our inland waterways are some of the most important economic arteries in the United States, especially along the Texas Gulf Coast, where we move the energy, agriculture, and goods that keep America running," said Rep. Randy Weber. "Right now, too many of these major projects are dealing with delays, rising costs, and bureaucratic inefficiency. Something has to change. This bipartisan effort is about bringing stronger oversight and accountability to our inland waterway system so America can continue leading the world."

"I'm proud to join my colleagues in urging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to create an organization that will streamline the completion of inland navigation projects. If it rolls, floats, or flies, it comes through Chicago. And for too long, inland navigation projects in the Chicagoland region and across the nation have been stymied," said Congressman Mike Quigley. "Establishing an Inland Navigation Construction Organization will make it easier and more cost effective for cargo to float through our city, strengthening the supply chain and ensuring projects are completed on time."

"Proper coordination is critical to efficient and effective management of taxpayer dollars," said Congressman Emanuel Cleaver. "By establishing an organization within the Army Corps of Engineers with the sole responsibility of overseeing federal investments dedicated to our nation's inland waterway system, we can ensure projects move forward in a timely manner and without wasteful spending. I am proud to join colleagues in this bipartisan push to establish the Inland Navigation Construction Organization, which will benefit communities across the Show Me State."

"In Alabama, our waterways are economic lifelines that create jobs, get our goods to market, and support industries like agriculture and manufacturing. However, the conditions of our waterways have deteriorated due to unnecessary, costly delays to critical infrastructure projects," said Rep. Shomari C Figures. "It's time to streamline the process behind these projects so that we can modernize our inland waterways, strengthen our economy, and ensure that we are getting the most out of every federal dollar."

"The Mississippi River is crucial to our economy in Illinois and all throughout the Midwest. I worked across the aisle to fight for more funding to fix aging locks and dams, but we need to see these upgrades being made faster. Now I am proud to help lead a bipartisan effort to establish an Inland Navigation Construction Organization to help speed up construction and improve coordination along the river," said Congressman Eric Sorensen.

"In the St. Louis region, our river is a huge deal— serving as an opportunity for regional growth," said Rep. Wesley Bell. "Only three major inland navigation projects have been finished over the past almost three decades. We can do better. I'm proud to support this bipartisan letter because Missouri's First District, and all of the other areas impacted, deserve to have more accountability and resources put into the management and development of inland waterways. By fixing the Army Corps of Engineers' project delivery model, we can expand work opportunities in the region and promote economic development."

"Our inland waterways are critical for the success of our Louisiana ports and maritime economy, but decades of delays and cost overruns have made clear that the current system is not working efficiently. Establishing an Inland Navigation Construction Organization within the Army Corps of Engineers will strengthen accountability and improve coordination as we modernize this vital national infrastructure," said Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr.

"Missouri's inland waterways are vital to our economy, but delays and fragmented management have slowed critical improvements for too long. I support creating an Inland Navigation Construction Organization within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve coordination, accountability, and deliver these projects more efficiently," said Congressman Mark Alford.

To read the full letter, click here: [Inland Navigation Construction Organization Letter](#)

Background Information

The inland waterway system is a cornerstone of the American economy, moving hundreds of millions of tons of commerce annually and supporting agriculture, energy production, manufacturing, and exports across the country. However, aging locks and dams continue to create bottlenecks that increase transportation costs, disrupt supply chains, and weaken America's global competitiveness. Modernizing this infrastructure is capital-intensive, spans multiple states and decades, and requires consistent, long-term oversight from a structure that does not currently exist in adequate form.

Despite years of sustained policy changes and congressional appropriations, the inland waterway modernization program has produced troubling results. Only three major inland navigation projects have been completed in the past 28 years, while numerous ongoing projects have experienced significant cost overruns and schedule delays, in some cases extending a decade or more beyond original projections.

These failures are not primarily the result of insufficient funding, but rather reflect a structural lack of coordinated program-level management. Inland navigation projects span multiple river systems, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Districts and Divisions, and states, yet they continue to be managed as isolated and competing efforts rather than as a unified national program. This fragmented approach has contributed to inconsistent priorities, inefficient use of Inland Waterway Trust Fund and General Fund resources, and disjointed communication with Congress.

Inland waterways are national infrastructure assets that require national-level coordination. The time has come to treat the inland waterway modernization program as what it is: a single, interconnected national program that demands unified leadership and strategic oversight.

Importantly, the INCO would not remove project delivery authority from USACE Districts or Divisions, limit Congress's authority over appropriations, or require new statutory authority for USACE implementation. Instead, it would reorganize and strengthen coordination of existing responsibilities to improve accountability, efficiency, and long-term program management.

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