

March 14, 2008

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky, Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Committee on Appropriations
2362-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Hobson, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Committee on Appropriations
1001 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Hobson:

We write to request that you support an important investment in America's transportation system by including \$50 million in FY 2009 Energy & Water Appropriations bill for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Civil Works, Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP).

With the passage of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the Army Corps of Engineers is authorized to implement the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) for the Upper Mississippi River System. This new dual-purpose authority will integrate restoration of the river's important habitats with modernization of the navigation system to reduce barge traffic delays.

Our country's inland navigation system plays a critical role in our economy, moving more than 1 billion tons of domestic commerce valued at more than \$300 billion. More than 1 billion bushels of grain (approximately 60 percent of all grain exports) move to export markets via the inland waterways each year, accounting for \$8.5 billion in exports.

For continued success, the U.S. agricultural industry needs efficient transportation networks, which is why we have been long-time advocates for improvements to our inland waterway system. NESP is crucial to farmers who depend on the inland waterway system to deliver their crops to the global marketplace and to businesses who rely on the system to move their raw materials and products. Specifically, the WRDA enacted in 2007 authorized a 15-year project that includes modernization of seven locks on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Additionally, it included a balanced, science-based environmental restoration program that recognizes the river's environmental value and potential.

Again, we strongly support funding for the NESP for the Upper Mississippi River System and hope that \$50 million can be appropriated for these vital projects in FY 2009. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association

Nation Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
Renewable Fuels Association
The Fertilizer Institute