



December 1, 2021

The Honorable Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor,

As you work to implement Public Law 117-58, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) urges you to prioritize, fund, and initiate the construction of the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP).

The NGFA is a U.S.-based nonprofit trade association celebrating its 125th anniversary of “Transforming America’s Harvest.” Our membership consists of grain, feed, processing, exporting and other grain-related companies that operate more than 8,000 facilities handling U.S. grains and oilseeds.

NGFA strongly supported the IIJA as our members rely on a robust and competitive transportation system, including U.S. highways, bridges, inland waterways, ports and railways. In particular, we appreciate the additional \$2.5 billion investment for construction of inland waterways projects as well as the prioritization the law places on projects included in the 2020 Capital Investment Strategy (CIS).

As you know, the CIS prioritizes thirteen new start construction projects, the majority of which are the new 1,200-foot NESP lock and dams. Specifically, Tier A includes Lock and Dam 25 on the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) and the LaGrange Lock and Dam on the Illinois Waterway (IW). Tier B includes Lock and Dam 24 and 22 on the UMR. These projects have been vetted through collaboration between the Corps and the Inland Waterways Users Board and NGFA asks that you fund these critically important navigation projects.

The existing locks on the UMR-IW were built in the 1930’s with 600-foot chambers to accommodate the standard vessels used for commerce during that time. However, today’s towboats can push a 1,200-foot-long tow of 15 barges which must “double-lock” through, resulting in significant, costly delays. Constructing new 1,200-foot lock and dams will boost U.S. agricultural competitiveness, create construction jobs and increase the overall efficiency and reliability of the inland waterways navigation system. NESP also includes a substantial ecosystem restoration component to ensure the environmental sustainability of the river.

As you develop a detailed spending plan for the \$2.5 billion for inland waterways construction projects, NGFA strongly urges the Corps to adhere to the CIS, pursuant to the IIJA, by funding Lock and Dam 25, LaGrange Lock and Dam, Lock and Dam 24 and Lock and Dam 22 to completion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Seyfert".

Michael Seyfert
President and CEO
National Grain and Feed Association

CC: President Joseph R. Biden, Secretary Tom Vilsack, Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Mitch Landrieu