

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
House Transportation &
Infrastructure Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
House Transportation &
Infrastructure Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water Resources
and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water Resources
and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Napolitano, and Ranking Member Westerman:

In Iowa, the great Mississippi and Missouri rivers are vital to our economy and environment. However, year after year, Iowans have become all too familiar with the devastation from floods along our many rivers. In 2019 alone, losses from floods in Iowa reached \$2 billion, disrupting the lives of families, friends, and our communities. As the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee begins to move forward with reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), we request that you consider provisions that will support and protect our nations water resources and strengthen flood mitigation infrastructure.

First, given the impacts that floods have on our communities, we request that you include language that will reform the benefit cost ratio used by the US Army Corps of Engineers for flood control and mitigation projects. The current system does not do enough to support rural and low-income communities seeking to invest in flood protection infrastructure. New evaluations and formulas must look to the benefits of protecting existing communities and move away from only supporting areas with high property values.

Second, please include language that supports the development of crucial infrastructure along the nation's inland waterways by adjusting the federal cost share for projects to 75%. America's great rivers serve as cost- and fuel-efficient highways to transport goods and commodities. The inland waterways system moves over 600 million tons of cargo each year. In 2017, 70% of agricultural products were exported using the inland and coastal waterways. This change will accelerate project delivery for crucial lock and dam infrastructure and increase efficiency on the inland waterways.

Third, we ask that you consider providing the Army Corps with new authority to evaluate whether temporary flood control structures should be converted into permanent structure with significant federal cost share. In Southwest Iowa, we have seen a small town forced to tear down a heightened but lifesaving levee after the residents were not able to come up with the funds needed to meet the Corps

specifications for a permanent structure. Without the protection afforded by the heightened levee, the community flooded again last year. We cannot let this happen to any other community in Iowa and ask that you include language to give the Corps greater flexibility to protect small towns.

Fourth, we ask that you consider including a provision to allow for low-income communities such as the Rathbun Regional Water Association (RRWA) in Iowa to have first rights to remaining water supply storage in their regions at a reduced rate. Without a reduced cost, many low-income communities will be unable to afford the cost of their own water supplies. We request that regional water systems deemed to serve low-income communities have the right to purchase remaining water supplies at \$100 per acre-foot, allowing these rural communities to maintain essential water sources in their regions.

Again, thank you for your commitment and dedication to working on WRDA 2020. This legislation has the potential to strengthen flood mitigation and resiliency efforts for every community and improve project delivery along the inland waterways system. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these priorities.

Sincerely,



Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress



Cindy Axne
Member of Congress



Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress