

April 24, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman, Senate Environment  
and Public Works Committee  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper  
Ranking Member, Senate Environment  
and Public Works Committee  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) thanks you for introduction of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 and the Drinking Water Infrastructure Act of 2020. Our nation's levees, dams, inland waterways, ports, drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure systems are critical for public safety, strong businesses, economic growth, and the preservation and enhancement of our environmental resources. These systems protect hundreds of communities, support millions of American jobs, and generate trillions of dollars of economic activity. However, many of these infrastructure assets have reached the end of their design life, and the investment gap must be closed if we hope to both repair and modernize these infrastructure systems to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First, ASCE would like to thank the Committee for keeping the Water Resources Development Act on its biennial schedule. Additionally, we were pleased that the recent coronavirus economic stimulus package, the CARES Act, included a provision that unlocks the **Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF)**, providing much needed funds over the next decade by ensuring that all future HMTF revenue will be used its intended purpose of dredging at our nation's ports and inland harbors. We urge the Committee to oversee this provision's full implementation.

More specifically to the WRDA legislation, ASCE would also like to thank the Committee for reauthorizing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) **Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)** program for the first time in 30 years. As written, the reauthorization incrementally increases over five years until finally reaching \$3 billion in Fiscal Year 2023. The CWSRF plays a vital role in providing much-needed support for investments in state and local wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and since its inception in 1987, it has provided \$45.2 billion to all fifty states, DC, and Puerto Rico. We urge the Committee to increase the reauthorization levels to more closely mirror those in H.R. 1497, the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act, which reauthorizes the CWSRF at \$16.68 billion over five years. Over the next two decades, more than 56 million new users will be connected to centralized wastewater systems, which will require the construction of 532 new systems by 2032 to meet future demand. The EPA estimates that over the course of the next 20 years, \$271 billion will be needed for wastewater infrastructure. In order to close the growing funding gap, we urge the Committee to increase the CWSRF's reauthorization levels.

ASCE also strongly supports language reauthorizing the **EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance & Innovation Act (WIFIA)** program at \$50 million a year through FY24 and thanks the Committee for including it. Demand for the program remains high – as of 2019, prospective borrowers have submitted letters of interest for 156 projects requesting **over \$21 billion** in WIFIA loans, including \$3.9 billion in requests for drinking water projects. The program has successfully closed 14 loans across 18 states totaling \$3.5 billion in financing for projects ranging in size from \$20.7 million to \$699 million.

However, we urge the Committee to also reauthorize the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) WIFIA program at the same \$50 million a year authorization level as the EPA's WIFIA program**. This program could provide financing for an array of projects that remain on the books for the USACE, including those that achieve environmental, hurricane, flood, and storm damage reduction, coastal or inland harbor navigation improvement, and/or inland and intracoastal waterways navigation. The 25,000 miles of inland waterways and 239 locks managed by the USACE supports more than half a million jobs and delivers more than 600 million tons of cargo each year – about 14% of all domestic freight. Yet most locks and dams on the system are well beyond their 50-year design life, and nearly half of vessels experience delays. The USACE is currently piloting a P3 program for three projects that include flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and harbor channel improvement. The use of an additional alternative financing mechanism such as the WIFIA program can result in improvements through shorter delivery times, greater capital efficiency, and increased operational efficiency, ultimately helping to reduce the project backlog for the USACE on the inland waterways system.

Furthermore, ASCE appreciates that the Committee has amended the **Inland Water Trust Fund's (IWTF)** cost share from 50% general revenue/ 50% IWTF to 65-35 for construction and rehabilitation projects on our nation's inland waterways systems. The updated cost share will encourage faster construction and expedite completion of key inland waterways navigation projects similar to previous WRDA bills that have changed the cost share for certain projects with positive results. ASCE's 2016 *Failure to Act* economic study found that from 2026 through 2040, the average annual investment gap for waterside improvements, including dredging and lock and dam repair, is expected to be \$1.9 billion, which will result in an economic loss of \$2.8 trillion of GDP and 1.2 million fewer jobs in 2040 than would otherwise be expected with modernized water resources systems in place. This amendment to the cost share is critical if we are to modernize the nation's inland waterways infrastructure and close the investment gap.

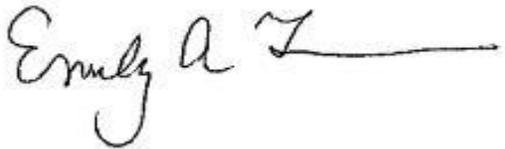
Next, ASCE applauds the Committee for including the creation of a lead mapping pilot program for drinking water utilities, the expanded eligibility for the existing **Voluntary School and Childcare Lead Testing Grant Program**, and the infusion of an addition \$300 million a year to the **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)** program to remediate emerging contaminants such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (**PFAS**). Many of our nation's cities contain lead service lines, and a 2018 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that more than 400 military installations' water systems are contaminated with PFAS. We support new funding streams such as these to assist utilities in the monumental task of addressing these emerging contaminants in order to protect public health and to remain in SDWA compliance.

Finally, ASCE would like to thank the Committee for including the reauthorization and creation of programs that **encourage resilience, innovation, and the utilization of green infrastructure systems**, which help balance the built and natural environments and are often cost-competitive compared to gray forms of infrastructure. As natural hazards become more frequent and severe, investments in resilience measures will save lives and dollars. In fact, the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) found that mitigation funding can save the nation \$11 in future disaster costs for every \$1 spent on hazard mitigation.

A critical component to raising our nation's "D+" infrastructure grade is using new approaches, materials, and technologies to ensure our infrastructure is able to quickly recover from significant weather and other hazard events while reducing impacts on local economies, quality of life, and the environment. We also support research and development into innovative materials and processes to modernize and extend the life of infrastructure, reduce life-cycle costs, expedite repairs or replacement, and promote cost savings.

In conclusion, ASCE thanks the Committee for introduction of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 and the Drinking Water Infrastructure Act of 2020. We believe our nation must prioritize the investment needs of our water resources, drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure systems to protect public health, ensure a strong economy, and build a modern, efficient network of infrastructure that can compete on a global stage. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff on these critical infrastructure bills and can be reached at [govwash@asce.org](mailto:govwash@asce.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Emily Feenstra  
Managing Director, Government Relations & Infrastructure Initiatives