

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Collins
Chairman
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frederica Wilson
Ranking Member
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2026

Dear Chairmen Graves and Collins, and Ranking Members Larsen and Wilson:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) wishes to express its support for H.R. 9497, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2026. We appreciate the work put into this year's WRDA bill by members of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, as well as committee staff, and we thank you for keeping WRDA on pace to be signed into law on schedule for the seventh consecutive cycle. This year's WRDA bill, in addition to authorizing new projects and studies for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, also includes several critical policy provisions supported by ASCE which will improve the efficiency, safety, and development of the nation's water resources infrastructure.

This year's WRDA includes several key provisions supporting the safety of the nation's water resources infrastructure and its surrounding communities, particularly in regards to the nation's dams. ASCE was pleased to see this year's bill took the important step of reauthorizing the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation (HHPD) Grant Program, a top WRDA 2026 priority for ASCE. The HHPD program is one of the only federal funding streams dedicated to supporting rehabilitation of dams, in this case high-hazard potential dams which would result in loss of life in the event of a dam failure. The 5-year reauthorization provided by the House's WRDA bill

ensures that this program will remain available in the coming years to support communities at risk of devastation from a high-hazard dam failure. We also appreciate the committee's efforts to remove "low-head dams" from the allocation formula for National Dam Safety Program State Assistance Grants. These grants support state dam safety programs' efforts to expand and improve dam monitoring and assessment activities, support emergency preparedness, and meet staffing needs. By removing low-head dams from this allocation formula, you ensure that states will not be punished with reduced grant funding because it is not able to account for structures for which there is limited data available, in this case low-head dams. Continued development of a National Low-Head Dam Inventory is critical, and a policy which ASCE strongly supports. However, states should not have to bear the strain of reduced funding due to circumstances beyond their control.

The House's WRDA bill also makes important contributions to improving the resilience of the nation's water resources infrastructure and supporting flood risk reduction. This includes new requirements and opportunities to assess flood and drought risk reduction needs for Corps project studies, development of contingency strategies for wildfires which threaten water resources infrastructure, and an assessment of nonstructural approaches to flood risk management for certain previously authorized WRDA projects. These efforts would help ensure water resources infrastructure is able to stand up to increasingly severe weather conditions, reduce long term risk, and reduce long term costs for communities and the Corps.

ASCE also supports the committee's efforts to improve the condition of the nation's ports and inland waterways. This includes fostering greater coordination among non-federal entities to support maintenance dredging of the nation's navigation infrastructure, acceleration of emergency inland navigation projects, support for spending down the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for inland waterways projects, and requiring a report assessing the health and condition of the nation's inland waterways. In 2025, ASCE's *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* gave Ports and Inland Waterways received grades of "B" and "C-" respectively. The provisions in the House's WRDA bill will provide an opportunity for health and vitality of the nation's ports and inland waterways to grow, and support efforts to ultimately raise their *Report Card* grades.

Finally, ASCE recognizes the committee's efforts to include provisions which will help to address the Corps' growing water resources project backlog. The backlog of water resources projects and feasibility studies previously approved by Congress but not completed has continued to grow, resulting in project delays, changing community needs, and changing conditions. Many cite the Corps' water resources project backlog at more than \$100 billion. The committee took steps to help address this challenge with provisions such as the aforementioned acceleration of emergency inland waterways navigation projects, as well as expedited completion of several other water resources projects and activities nationwide. While this may not provide a cure all solution, it is an important step to address the growing backlog and meet the growing water resources needs of communities throughout the country.

We thank you again for all of your work to ensure timely completion and passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2026, and for supporting ASCE priorities to improve the condition, safety, and efficiency of the nation's water resources infrastructure. We welcome the

opportunity to work with you and your staff on this critical legislation and encourage you to contact Matthew McGinn (mmcginn@asce.org) with our Government Relations team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Sevier".

Caroline Sevier
Managing Director
Government Relations & Infrastructure Initiatives
American Society of Civil Engineers