

June 26, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Rouzer
Chair
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Graves and Rouzer and Ranking Members Larsen and Napolitano:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) applauds your commitment to advancing bipartisan water resources legislation every two years. This continues to be an opportunity for Congress to strengthen communities using nature-based solutions proven to lessen flood impacts, restore ecosystems, and support the economy. Specifically, we commend you for producing the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024 (H.R. 8812). In developing WRDA 2024 you led a process to incorporate input from all Members of Congress to reach a bipartisan and consensus bill.

We are pleased that WRDA 2024 continues the trend of positive policy changes for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) while authorizing critical water resources projects. The bill enhances the safety of dams, increases the transparency of data on low-head dams through the National Inventory of Dams, and addresses issues TNC has encountered working with the Corps, such as providing the minimum interest in property necessary to carry out water resources projects. It also sets the stage for Congress to address issues in the future, including remaining barriers to the Corps' use of nature-based features. These changes and others in the bill will help ensure that the Corps is partnering with communities across the country to become more resilient to storms, flooding, and droughts while increasing the environmental benefits of Corps-constructed projects.

In addition, TNC appreciates the inclusion of provisions in WRDA 2024 that direct the Corps to expedite the completion of a Chief's Report for the Claiborne and Millers Ferry Locks and Dam Fish Passage project on the Lower Alabama River in Alabama and the Hatchie-Loosahatchie ecosystem restoration project on the Mississippi River between Tennessee and Arkansas. Once

constructed, these projects will reconnect over 500 miles of rivers and streams in Alabama in one of the most biologically diverse regions of the country and set a model for systemic ecosystem restoration on the lower Mississippi River. We look forward to working with you and the Corps to complete these Chief's Reports and include authorization of these projects in WRDA 2024.

WRDA 2024 also acknowledges the significance of deauthorizing the Cherryfield Dam on the Narraguagus River in Maine by including a disposition study on the project. Deauthorization is the first step in the locally led and supported effort to replace the aging dam with a channel-spanning nature-like fishway that would open up over 320 miles of river habitat for fish, including endangered Atlantic salmon, alewife, blueback herring, American shad, searun brook trout, and others, while still ensuring flood control for the town. We look forward to working with you to advance this project as efficiently as possible in the final legislation.

Taken together, these provisions and many others in WRDA 2024 will support much-needed investment in multi-benefit water resources projects, targeting federal resources to disadvantaged communities and nature-based solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James M. Hague". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Jimmy Hague