



December 6, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair
The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6256

The Honorable Tom Carper, Chair
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

Dear Chairs Graves and Carper and Ranking Members Larsen and Moore Capito:

On behalf of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA), I am pleased to recognize your tremendous leadership throughout the development of the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act of 2024. We applaud your dedication to collaboration and to sound solutions to our nation's water resources challenges and opportunities. We recognize the tremendous work of all of the Committee members and their staff as well as the staff of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Formed by the Governors of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin in 1981, UMRBA represents its member states' common water resource interests and works collaboratively with the federal and state agencies as well as non-governmental organizations and individuals.

The proposed reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act offers important opportunities to advance the principles of sustainability and multi-use management of the nation's water resources and to support cooperation among the federal government agencies, states governments, and non-governmental interests.

In particular, UMRBA is grateful for your inclusion of the following provisions:

- Authorization of the Upper Mississippi River System Flood Risk and Resiliency Study (Section 1227). This new planning authority will lead to strategic, integrated, and durable approaches to improving flood risk and resilience in the Upper Mississippi River System floodplain, systemically and locally. The authorizing language designs a collaborative leadership approach to evaluating an extensive array of structural and nonstructural measures.
- Adjustment of the non-federal cost share of inland waterway construction and major rehabilitation projects to 75 percent Federal/25 percent from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (Section 1126). This cost-share change will allow these projects to advance more efficiently and quickly, reducing the overall costs and accelerating the return on investment.
- Increase of the annual authorized appropriation level for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program's long term resource monitoring to \$25 million (Section 1354). The increased funding potential allows UMRR the opportunity to conduct systemic monitoring of critically important major resources in the system such as mussels and macroinvertebrate populations, to support needed

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analysis to forecast changes to the river's ecosystem resulting from changing hydrologic conditions, and to develop new tools and models to better understand and manage the ecosystem.

- Authorization of a study by the Government Accountability Office to explore the challenges for non-federal sponsors to execute cost-share project partnership agreements, specifically because of the requirements of project lifespan and indemnification. We believe that a more equitable approach to the Corps' cost-share agreements will improve efficiencies in project delivery, improve partnership relationships, and stimulate the nation's ability to leverage non-federal resources.

UMRBA strongly encourages that the study is implemented immediately and promptly so that the study results are available to Congress the next time it considers reauthorizing the Water Resources Development Act. UMRBA recommends that the Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office coordinate directly the appropriate legal representation of the states and other candidate non-federal entities who may cost-share sponsor U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' water resource projects.

UMRBA respectfully requests that the Government Accountability Office also address the legal merits associated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers adhering to state law by applying for the applicable state permits associated with implementing its water resources programs and projects.

UMRBA also supports the general provisions related to beneficial reuse of dredged material, the harmful algal bloom demonstration program, invasive species monitoring and management, the use of nature-based features to improve flood risk and resiliency.

We applaud your leadership and appreciate your work.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Wallace
Executive Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

cc: Upper Mississippi River Congressional Delegation