

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

CC: The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Sam Graves, Grace Napolitano, Bruce Westerman

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing the U.S. recreational boating industry, we commend the bipartisan leadership from Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairwoman Napolitano, and Ranking Member Westerman in developing the Water Resources Infrastructure Act of 2020 (WRDA) and urge swift passage to maintain Congress' commitment to keeping WRDA on a biannual schedule. Regular authorizations of WRDA allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to execute critical infrastructure projects that physically and fiscally strengthen local communities.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the recreational boating industry had a significant impact on our nation's economy, generating \$170.3 in annual economic impact that supported more than 35,000 businesses and 691,000 jobs. Additionally, the outdoor recreation economy as a whole – which is driven by boating and fishing and includes RVing, guided tours, and motorcycling and ATVing – accounted for 2.2 percent of U.S. GDP, \$778 billion in gross economic output, and 5.2 million jobs.

As our industry faces unprecedented economic and access challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot stress enough the importance of healthy, accessible, and navigable waterways to revitalizing America's recreational boating economy, and the small businesses and local communities it supports.

We applaud the inclusion of the specific provisions listed below that will take great strides in improving federal efforts to combat aquatic invasive species, improve recreational access, and investments in key conservation and resiliency initiatives. While these provisions represent significant steps forward in protecting and preserving aquatic ecosystems and building more resilient water infrastructure, we look forward to working with Congress in developing stronger water infrastructure policies in subsequent water resources development authorizations that more prominently prioritize recreation access in projects carried out by the USACE navigation and natural resources business lines. The recreation sector is an economic powerhouse that stands to play a large role in our nation's economic recovery, but realizing our industry's full economic potential will depend on development of comprehensive infrastructure policies that prioritize and support recreational access.

We stand ready to work with federal, state, and local partners to ensure Americans have access to healthy, clean, navigable waterways. Passing this legislation now will provide certainty that the

infrastructure needs of recreational boaters and local communities will be addressed. We urge swift passage of this vital legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Association of Marina Industries

BOAT US

Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

National Marine Manufacturers Association

Recreational Boating Industry Supported WRDA20 Provisions

Section 102: Funding for Navigation

Establishes a new framework for annual allocation of operation and maintenance expenditures from the HMTF, increasing the dedicated set aside for emerging harbors from 10 to 20 percent. Also allows for additional expanded uses for emerging harbors. Small and emerging harbors represent an important segment of our economy, providing economic health and stability coastal communities rely on. Expanding the allowable uses of these funds will support and protect the recreational access and essential services these places offer that will be imperative as communities rebuild from the present health and economic crisis.

Section 103 Annual Report to Congress on the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund

Ensures the annual report to Congress on the HMTF is submitted concurrently with the President's annual budget request to Congress. We support full utilization of the HMTF and providing the authority to appropriate additional funds for harbor maintenance needs from the existing balance in the HMTF, currently estimated at approximately \$10 billion.

Section 109: Implementation of Water Resources Principles and Requirements

Directs USACE to issue final agency procedures for the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines (PR&G) that serve as the basis for USACE evaluation of project benefits and costs. Based on the April 3, 2020 USACE memorandum on comprehensive documentation of benefits in feasibility studies, we are encouraged by the key steps identified for USACE to implement that will vastly improve investment decisions for Civil Works projects by requiring national and regional economic benefits as well as other social effects be fully assessed which will ensure the significant recreation economic contributions are factored into investment decisions.

Section 112: Review of Resiliency Assessments

Due to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise on storm intensity and frequency, it is more important now than ever before to ensure communities are prepared and well equipped to bounce back from extreme weather events as their homes, businesses, and lives lay in the path of increasingly dangerous and costly storm conditions. Recreational boating is a key fixture to coastal economies across the country and impacts to boating access and the businesses it supports can take a toll on local economies that depend on recreational activities. We support the requirement for USACE to update existing planning guidance related to sea level rise based on the best available, peer-reviewed science, in coordinate on with Federal and state agencies.

Section 120: Permanent Measures to Reduce Emergency Flood Fighting Needs for Communities Subject to Repetitive Flooding

Across much of the United States, the flood risk is far greater than government estimates show, new calculations suggest, exposing millions of people to a hidden threat — and one that will only grow as climate change worsens. Many recreational boating businesses by nature are located in vulnerable areas and heavily impacted by repetitive flooding events. We support establishment of new authority to study, design, and construct water resources projects for communities that have experienced repetitive flooding events.

Section 124: Sense of Congress on Multi-Purpose Projects

Given the environmental and cost-saving benefits of prioritizing multi-purpose projects, we support this provision providing a Sense of Congress that USACE should maximize the development, evaluation, and recommendation of project alternatives for future water resources development projects that produce multiple benefits, such as navigation, flood risk, management, and ecosystems restoration benefits, including the use of natural or nature-based features and the beneficial reuse of dredged material.

Section 125: Beneficial Reuse of Dredged Material; Dredged Material Management Plans

USACE estimates that hundreds of millions of cubic yards of dredged materials need to be excavated each year from rivers, lakes, harbors, and bays across the country to keep the nation's waterways open for commercial and recreational use. In order to avoid the continued traditional landfill disposal of dredged materials, we support this renewed and expanded Congressional commitment to beneficial reuse of dredged materials that deliver multiple economic and environmental benefits that add more value to local communities.

Section 126: Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration for Anadromous Fish

Anadromous fish have a profound effect on the productivity of freshwater ecosystems and we support the continuation of authorities for aquatic ecosystem restoration to include projects that maximize benefits for anadromous fish and direction that USACE give projects for anadromous fish habitat and passage equal priority for implementation as other projects pursued under section 206.

Section 128: Harmful Algal Bloom Demonstration Program

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) threaten recreational fishing and boating opportunities due to the negative impacts to water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and human health. We support the establishment of a demonstration program for detecting, treating, preventing, and eliminating HABs, and the increased

coordination among USACE with federal and state agencies to maximize the use of existing data and programs.

Section 129: Update on Invasive Species Policy Guidance

Aquatic invasive species are currently one of the greatest threats to recreational fishing and boating, as their introduction can completely disrupt a fisheries ecosystem, cause irreparable damage boats and their component parts, and impact recreational access. While much of the management and control of aquatic invasive species is done at the state and local level, updated Invasive Species Policy Guidance based on the most recent National Invasive Species Council Management Plan would provide improved federal technical guidance and resources that would benefit these efforts.

Section 130: Report on Debris Removal

Marine Debris endanger marine ecosystems, coastal economies, and boating safety. We support the directive for USACE to report to Congress on activities related to debris removal in the prior 10 fiscal years, and the extent to which USACE plans to start potential debris removal activities in the future.

Section 133: Materials, Services, and Funds for Repair, Restoration, or Rehabilitation of Projects

The impacts of major disasters on navigable waterways can create significant safety hazards for boaters, often necessitating non-federal entities to step in to provide emergency materials, services, and funds to facilitate repairs, restoration, or rehabilitation of projects. We support permission for USACE to reimburse a non-federal interest or private party for contributing resources or services in the case of an emergency or major disaster declarations.

Section 206: Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study

Recreational boating is a major economic driver in the Great Lakes region, yet many marine businesses in these coastal communities have been devastated by flooding and erosion in the most recent winter season as a result of record high water levels. The lakes are in uncharted territory and signs point to another year of extremes. We support the expansion of the USACE comprehensive assessment of water resources needs for the Great Lakes to provide recommendations for potential water resources development projects, modifications of existing water resources development projects, or other measures to respond to changing hydrologic and climate conditions in the region.

Section 209: Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Study

The Lower Mississippi River provides an abundance of recreational boating and fishing opportunities. We support a comprehensive study of the Lower Mississippi Basin that could identify actions USACE can take for the comprehensive management of recreation.

Section 216: GAO Study on Application of Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Expenditures

Due to the antiquated prioritization process that solely recognizes commercial economic benefits in investment decisions, to needs of smaller harbors that support recreation activity have been neglected and forgotten. We support a GAO study on the operation and maintenance needs of Federally authorized harbor and inland harbor projects, including the primary uses of such harbor projects, and annual or deferred operation and maintenance needs that will bring these needs back to the forefront and will be an important resource in determining comprehensive investment decisions.

Section 305: Watercraft Inspection Stations

There are hundreds of invasive species threatening ecosystems and water quality in the Russian River Basin. Watercraft inspection stations are a critical tool in combating aquatic invasive species and we support establishment of inspection station for the Russian River Basin.

Section 319: Central Everglades Ecosystem Restoration

We support this clarification that USACE is directed to carry out the Everglades Agricultural Area modification (authorized in WRDA 2018) as part of the ongoing Central Everglades Planning Project. Everglades restoration is a high priority for the boating community given its impacts on water quality in Florida and moving these remaining projects forward as quickly as possible will minimize negative impacts on habitat and natural resources.