

November 5, 2021

Mr. Michael Connor  
Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

Dear Mr. Connor,

On behalf of the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), I congratulate you on your recent confirmation as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) navigation, flood control, and natural resources business lines play an integral role in providing recreation access and growing the U.S. recreational boating economy.

NMMA is the trade association for the U.S. recreational boating industry, representing nearly 1,300 marine businesses, including recreational boat, marine engine, and accessory manufacturers. NMMA members collectively manufacture more than 85 percent of the marine products sold in the U.S. Furthermore, the recreational boating industry has a significant impact on our nation's economy and in communities across the country, supporting nearly 700,000 American jobs and 35,000 businesses.

Led by the recreational boating industry, the outdoor recreation economy is a major contributor to the U.S. economy, accounting for 2.1% of GDP, \$788 billion in economic output, and 5.2 million American jobs. The role of recreational boating in our economy has only grown more significant as Americans flocked to new outdoor activities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, with sales of new powerboats in the U.S. increasing last year by an estimated 13 percent compared to 2019, reaching a 13-year high. More than 415,000 new boat buyers entered the market in 2020, representing 10 percent year-over-year growth. There are many encouraging aspects of this new growth including that roughly 30 percent of the industry's growth was made up of new buyers, many of which were younger and more diverse.

While this rise has showcased the popularity of such activities as a safe and fun way to spend time with loved ones, it has also illuminated one of the most pressing issues facing the industry: the need for adequate, sound, and up-to-date infrastructure that meets demand. Given that a majority of public recreation access infrastructure is already in need of significant maintenance and modernizations, our aging access points and facilities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. From rapidly changing water levels to increased frequency and intensity of flooding events and natural disasters in coastal and inland waterway areas, public waterways and outdoor recreation infrastructure need bolstered resilience. Without robust investment in our country's outdoor recreation infrastructure, these economic contributions – along with pastimes enjoyed by the vast majority of Americans – will be in jeopardy.

Considering that boating and fishing are the top contributing segments within the recreation economy and USACE offers the majority of water-based recreation opportunities, significant potential to expand recreation access while growing the outdoor economy– and the entire U.S. economy – can be achieved through better enabling USACE to be one of the premier providers of Federal recreation and annually

first in federal water-based recreation. While USACE is widely recognized for its flood control and navigation work, the economic and societal benefits USACE projects generate will exponentially increase through a higher prioritization of activities that support recreation. Additionally, historic underfunding for USACE managed recreation facilities and access is not funded at levels commensurate with the significant the economic output.

For example, USACE has over 5,000 recreation sites in 43 states, generating over \$10 billion in economic impact and supporting 189,000 total jobs, yet a significant amount of recreation infrastructure managed by USACE is in poor condition. Of note, there were 256 million visits to USACE lake and river projects in 2020 compared to the 237 million visitors hosted by the National Park Service. The fact that USACE recreation visitation surpassed that of National Park Service in 2020, sheds light on just how important USACE is to providing recreation access nation-wide. The increasing visitation underscores the need to ensure USACE is provided with the necessary resources to better manage and support recreation access and maximize recreation value going forward. We are excited to work with USACE in providing input to the recent Natural Resources Management Strategic Plan and as part of the congressionally directed task force to recommend improvements in USACE recreation programs. However we fully understand the limited resources across USACE missions and are seeking your assistance to help prioritize this smaller but significant contributor to the economy, the communities and the visiting public.

As a former Deputy Secretary of the Interior and Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, the recreation community highly regards the extensive knowledge of the conservation issues facing our nation and the crucial role outdoor recreation plays in maintaining our public lands and waters that you will bring to the role as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. NMMA is encouraged by the Biden Administration's goal to grow diversity, increase recreation access, and combat climate change and we look forward to working with you and your team to achieve those objectives.

NMMA welcomes the opportunity to schedule an introductory meeting with you and any appropriate staff to discuss how the boating industry can support your efforts to improve the condition and resiliency of USACE-managed recreation access and better enable the thriving outdoor sector to get Americans back to work and revive local economies across the country. Please contact Callie Hoyt at [choyt@nmma.org](mailto:choyt@nmma.org) to coordinate a time that best accommodates your schedule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Hugelmeyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Frank Hugelmeyer  
President  
National Marine Manufacturers Association