



May 17, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter Defazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Barrasso/Shuster and Ranking Members Carper/Defazio,

On behalf of the recreational boating and fishing community, we would like to draw your attention to the needs of recreational boaters and anglers as you put together the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization.

By way of background, the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading recreational marine industry trade association in North America, representing 1,400 boat, engine, and accessory manufacturers. NMMA members collectively produce more than 80 percent of the recreational marine products sold in the United States with a total economic impact of \$121.5 billion annually. The U.S. marine manufacturing industry is comprised of nearly 35,000 businesses that provide over 650,000 jobs.

The Association of Marina Industries (AMI) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to serving the needs of the marina industry, representing over 1,200 marinas, boatyards, clubs, and related businesses.

American Sportfishing Association (ASA) is the sportfishing industry's trade association, representing more than 800 manufacturers and retailers of sportfishing equipment across the country. ASA also gives America's 47 million anglers a voice in policy decisions that affect their ability to sustainably fish on our nation's waterways through Keep America Fishing®, a national angler advocacy campaign. America's anglers generate more than \$48 billion in retail sales with a \$115 billion impact on the nation's economy creating employment for more than 828,000 people.

BoatU.S., Boat Owners Association of The United States, is the largest organization of recreational boat owners in the country with more than 570,000 members. For more than 50 years, BoatU.S. has worked

to ensure that their members, who own a wide array of types and sizes of boats, can continue to enjoy this healthy outdoor family recreation.

The Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA) is the trade association of small businesses in North America that sell and service new and pre-owned recreational boats, provide access to the waters through marinas, access ramps, and boat yards, and sell boat accessory products and parts.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis at the Department of Commerce has recently estimated that recreational boating and fishing contributes \$38.2 billion to the United States gross domestic product. Our industry is an important economic driver, and we urge Congress to fully consider our requests as it puts together a WRDA package.

Our organizations support the reauthorization of WRDA and urge Congress to include:

- Permitting reforms
- Increases in funding for small ports and shallow draft channels
- Dredging waterways such as the Great Lakes Harbors of Refuge, and small ports on the Pacific Coast and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway that are an essential part of providing access to our great outdoors
- Broadening and strengthening efforts to combat Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)
- Updates to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' project justification system to have better treatment of recreational interests
- An important Everglades authorization

Below is further information on these priorities, and we appreciate your consideration.

Permitting Reforms

Basic permits to allow for the buildout of essential boating infrastructure like marinas, boat ramps, and mooring fields can take years to be processed. While the last WRDA reauthorization included provisions to reduce bureaucracy and streamline permitting, Congress still needs to do more.

State Programmatic General Permits (SPGPs) are supposed to reduce duplication between agencies and improve the permitting process to allow for more flexibility for a geographic region. However, oftentimes localities aren't allowed to access SPGPs, and different entities in the same area are forced to apply for duplicative permits that slow down the process of building new boating infrastructure.

Congress should direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to issue more SPGPs to allow for the more efficient buildout of boating infrastructure.

Low tonnage ports and shallow draft channels

Under the current process, USACE prioritizes dredging funding by total tonnage. This does not properly account for lower tonnage needs and usage for recreational activities. Under the current process, and as evidenced by the current sporadic approach to federal navigation maintenance, dredging and dredged

material management projects are conducted almost entirely in the nation's largest port districts, thereby ignoring the needs at smaller ports and channels used by recreational boaters and anglers.

Smaller, recreational based ports are critical access points for marinas and business developments along the coast. With the recreational boating industry contributing over \$121 billion annually in economic impact, prioritization of dredging for access points on the recreational side should not be ignored. Without sufficient dredging in low tonnage areas, some recreational boaters are forced to use high traffic commercial channels, which poses a user conflict and safety risk for all parties. Additionally, lack of dredging in low tonnage areas directly impacts the economic benefit of marinas and coastal businesses.

The new WRDA reauthorization should direct USACE to amend their prioritization process to ensure that a percentage of existing available funds be prioritized for three different categories: High-Tonnage, Low-Tonnage and Commercial or Recreational ports. Additionally, Congress should develop a federal pass-through program to be managed by the individual state's maritime agencies or channel dredging specialists. (similar to the FHWA Ferry Boat Program or the Department of Interior's CVA/BIG programs)

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

The spread of harmful plants, animals and other organisms threaten America's water habitats and have lasting economic damage for the anglers, boaters, local community, and industry. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the environmental impacts of both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species are second only to habitat destruction as a cause of global biodiversity loss, and managing these invasive species costs an estimated \$137 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Important tools to fight the spread of these Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are proper inspection and decontamination stations at boat ramps.

AIS decontamination stations, placed near boat ramps, provide a place for officials to ensure that boats being launched are not contaminating U.S. bodies of water with invasive species or bacteria. AIS boat inspection/decontamination requirements and procedures vary by state, and can cause confusion among recreational boaters. If a boater is accustomed to procedures in one state, when they travel to another state with their boat they can encounter a completely foreign set of procedures and regulations. The result is delays at ramps, complete loss of access, and wasted state resources for duplicative efforts.

To that end, Congress should direct USACE, in consultation with the Departments of Commerce, Interior, and Agriculture, to conduct a study regarding the effectiveness of current AIS programs and decontamination procedures.

Additionally, Congress should authorize new programs to promote AIS decontamination stations. These facilities would follow in the footsteps of the AIS decontamination stations established by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and those in Wyoming established by the National Park Service.

Congress should also include an increase in authorization for the Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. There are currently 6 Regional Panels that utilize federal funding to coordinate federal, state, and private AIS efforts. The Regional Panels are truly where "the boat hits the water" with regard to AIS programs. Congress has not increased their authorization since 1996. A

modest authorization to keep pace with inflation will ensure that the panels can continue their basic functions.

Army Corps of Engineers Project Justification

The current USACE criteria for justification of projects does not adequately speak to the interests of waterfront communities and businesses. Important projects in smaller areas and waterfronts simply are unable to compete in the current system. This WRDA reauthorization should create a new “economic development” criteria that would encompass marina expansions and other waterfront development projects.

Everglades Project

The Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir, as represented in the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Post Authorization Change Report (PACR), would increase water storage south of Lake Okeechobee as part of an effort to reduce harmful lake discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. These ongoing discharges are destroying vital habitat and sea life. The reservoir is an important step forward to ensure that the ecosystem in south Florida is preserved. On March 27, 2018, the South Florida Water Management District submitted its plan to USACE for approval. However, before the project can begin it must be reviewed by the USACE, approved, and then submitted to Congress for authorization.

In order to avoid a 2-year or more bureaucratic delay, Congress needs to conditionally authorize the project as part of WRDA 2018. The current Senate version does address this issue, but we believe that the language could be strengthened to ensure that there are no more bureaucratic delays.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering our priorities as you put together a WRDA reauthorization. The recreational boating and fishing community is important to the U.S. economy, and we appreciate you considering our needs alongside the needs of other commercial interests in the WRDA bill.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer any questions or be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Association of Marina Industries
BoatU.S.
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
National Marine Manufacturers Association

CC:

Members of the Committee on Environment & Public Works
Members of the Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure