

May 16, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
U.S. Senate Environment
and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Environment
and Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives Transportation
and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Transportation
and Infrastructure Committee
2164 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Barrasso and Carper and Representatives Shuster and DeFazio:

The undersigned organizations request that you include provisions in your respective water infrastructure legislation that will encourage the use of natural or nature-based features in the construction of projects by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps). Natural and nature-based features, used alone or in combination with traditional infrastructure, provide multiple-benefit solutions to many of the nation's water infrastructure challenges.

The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act was a landmark success for advancing natural and nature-based solutions at the Corps, and we are grateful for Congress's support for natural infrastructure. In Section 1184 of the WIIN Act, Congress directed the Corps to consider natural and nature-based features when studying the feasibility of flood risk management, storm damage reduction, and ecosystem restoration projects (33 U.S.C. 2289a). Projects that use these features can reduce flood and storm risk in ways that are both effective and cost-effective. For example, coastal wetlands prevented more than \$625 million in property damages during Hurricane Sandy and reduced property damages throughout the Northeast by 10 percent on average.¹ In addition to providing significant flood and storm risk reduction, natural and nature-based features offer many benefits to water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and local economies that rely on recreation, tourism, and hunting and fishing.

Due to the ability of natural and nature-based features to provide effective and cost-effective solutions with benefits across multiple use sectors, we request Congress build on the improvements it included in the WIIN Act. The next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) should include provisions enabling the Corps to move more efficiently from consideration to use of natural infrastructure alternatives. Specifically, we support language establishing a continuing authorization for projects that either wholly or significantly use natural or nature-based features to provide flood or storm risk

¹ Narayan et al. 2017. The Value of Coastal Wetlands for Flood Damage Reduction in the Northeastern USA. Scientific Reports 7. doi: 10.1038/s41598-017-09269-z.

reduction in concert with environmental benefits. With this continuing authorization, potential non-Federal project sponsors can work with the Corps to study the feasibility of and subsequently construct flood control projects using natural infrastructure expeditiously.

In addition, Congress should direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study how the Corps currently considers and uses natural and nature-based features in project development. The GAO study should assess the extent to which the Corps currently uses these features and any legal, policy, or institutional barriers to their use, and make recommendations for improvements.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you on WRDA legislation this year.

Sincerely,

American Shore and Beach Preservation Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Sportfishing Association
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Association of State Wetland Managers
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society
BNSF Railway
Environmental Defense Fund
Jacobs
The Nature Conservancy
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Union of Concerned Scientists
Willamette Partnership

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Members of the U.S. House of Representative Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure