

May 10, 2021

The Honorable Chellie Pingree, Chair
The Honorable David Joyce, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, we urge you to robustly fund those agencies and programs that protect public health, the environment, and the economy. Investment in these programs ensures that communities have access to clean and safe water while promoting economic growth through hazardous waste site redevelopment and public parks infrastructure.

EPA – Drinking Water and Wastewater

Well-maintained public drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems are critical for public health and a strong, robust economy. ASCE's *2021 Infrastructure Report Card* gave the nation's drinking water infrastructure a grade of "C-," while wastewater received a "D+" and stormwater received a "D." We urge the Subcommittee to renew the federal government's commitment to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure by including the following in the FY22 appropriations legislation:

- **reinvigorating the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) programs by tripling the amount of annual appropriations so that the CWSRF receives \$5 billion and the DWSRF receives \$3.3 billion;**
- **providing the \$1 million for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Drinking Water and Clean Watersheds Needs Surveys;**
- **fully funding the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program at no less than the FY21 enacted level of \$65 million; and**
- **fully funding the new Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program at \$638 million.**

The CWSRF and the DWSRF play a vital role in providing states and localities with a critical source of funding for water infrastructure projects through low-interest loans since their original authorizations in 1987 and 1996, respectively.

By 2039, the investment gap for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems is estimated at \$136 billion. Over 20 years, the cumulative drinking water and wastewater capital investment need will soar to \$3.27 trillion, and the cumulative capital investment gap will total \$2.2 trillion.

In 2014, Congress authorized WIFIA (P.L. 113 – 121, Sec. 5021), a new mechanism to primarily fund large water infrastructure projects over \$20 million. This program offers the sponsors of large projects a new tool to leverage limited federal resources, stimulate additional investment in our nation's infrastructure,

and encourage greater private sector participation in meeting the nation's clean water needs. The EPA estimates that a \$20 million annual level of appropriations will result in approximately \$1 billion in loans supporting approximately \$2 billion in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure investments. As of 2019, prospective borrowers have submitted letters of interest for 156 projects, requesting over \$21 billion in WIFIA loans, including \$3.9 billion in requests for drinking water projects. Recognizing the program's success, Congress doubled the program's funding in FY20 compared to FY17. The additional support increased the program's lending capacity from \$2.5 billion in 2017 to \$6 billion in 2019.

The FY21 omnibus bill authorized the first ever Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program. This program assists low-income households paying their water utility bill by providing funds to public water system operators to reduce rates and to pay off water debt.

EPA – Brownfields

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields program plays a critical role in the overall infrastructure that manages hazardous waste. This program improves the condition of the nation's infrastructure, can increase residential property values, and provides environmental and economic benefits that positively impact rural, suburban, and urban communities.

- **We urge the Subcommittee to fund the Brownfields program at \$250 million in FY22.**

ASCE's *2021 Infrastructure Report Card* gave our nation's hazardous waste a grade of "D+." Although more than half of the nation's population lives within three miles of a hazardous site, only about 30% of grant proposals submitted to the EPA are funded. Current funding levels are less than what is needed to optimize the benefits of this successful program; increased funding would leverage more dollars and stimulate job growth and economic benefit while improving the condition of the nation's infrastructure.

Interior – Public Lands

Public parks and public lands are critical drivers of our nation's economy, as well as a source of water for the 180 million people in over 68,000 communities who receive their drinking water from national forests and grasslands that capture and filter it. In fact, America's local park and recreation agencies generated \$166.4 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1.1 million jobs in 2017 compared to \$154 billion in economic activity in 2015. In 2019, 327 million visitors to national parks resulted in \$41.7 billion in benefits to the nation's economy and supported 340,500 jobs nationwide, while visitors to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas in 2016 spent \$10.6 billion, supporting about 189,000 jobs nationwide. Although public parks and lands enjoy broad support, chronic underfunding of our parks infrastructure continues to plague the system, threatening both the safety of these infrastructure systems and the ability to meet the demand of a growing population.

- **We urge the Subcommittee to address our nation's growing deferred maintenance backlog in FY22 by fully funding the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund at \$1.9 billion.**

ASCE's *2021 Infrastructure Report Card* gave the nation's public parks a grade of "D+." Unfortunately, the NPS now has a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion, which includes \$6 billion for roads, bridges, tunnels, and parking lots and \$6 billion for non-transportation related projects such as eroding trails, visitor facilities, and water and electrical systems. The NPS manages more than 75,000 constructed assets, and over 41,000 of them – more than half – are in need of repair.

Interior – U.S. Geological Survey

ASCE supports fully funding the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Earthquake Hazards Reduction (NEHRP) and streamgaging programs. Recent legislation (PL 115 – 307) amended prior NEHRP authorizations and provided for expanded activities to include: gathering information on community resilience (i.e., the ability of a community to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to earthquakes); publishing a systematic set of maps of active faults and folds, liquefaction susceptibility, susceptibility for earthquake-induced landslides, and other seismically induced hazards; and continuing the development of the Advanced National Seismic System, including earthquake early warning capabilities.

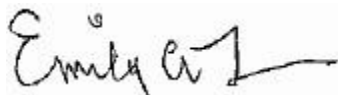
USGS' streamgaging program provides consistent, scientifically reliable data that is essential for flood-risk assessments, water supply planning, water quality appraisals, and stream flow forecasting. We urge the Subcommittee to include the following in the FY22 appropriations legislation:

- **fully fund the NEHRP program at \$83.4 million; and**
- **fund the streamgaging program at \$100.5 million broken down as follows: Federal Priority Streamgages (\$27.5 million), Cooperative Matching Fund (\$33 million), Modernizing the Streamgaging Network (\$30 million) and Next Generation Water Observation System (\$10 million).**

In conclusion, ASCE believes our nation must prioritize the investment needs of infrastructure to ensure public safety, a strong economy, and the protection of our environmental resources. Strategic, robust, and sustained investments, through long-term, reliable federal funding, as well as through the utilization of alternative financing mechanisms, must be made quickly if we hope to close the growing funding gap and restore America's world-class infrastructure.

We thank you for your consideration of our funding requests and look forward to working with the Subcommittee to fund these existing successful federal infrastructure programs.

Sincerely,



Emily A. Feenstra
Managing Director, Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives

cc: Chairwoman Rosa L. DeLauro and Ranking Member Kay Granger, House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations