

April 25, 2023

The Honorable Mike Simpson, Chair  
The Honorable Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2024 legislation 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.

#### **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Drinking Water and Wastewater**

Well-maintained 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-," and the nation's stormwater and wastewater infrastructure fared even worse with a grade of "D" and "D+" respectively. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) made a significant investment of \$55 billion in clean water and drinking water infrastructure over five years. However, prior to passage of IIJA, as a nation we were only paying a little more than half of the country's needed investment in our aging water systems, creating a funding gap of \$434 billion over the next decade. Investments under the IIJA can and will go a long way to decreasing this investment gap, but only if Congress continues to fulfill those levels authorized by the legislation.

Therefore, we urge the Subcommittee to renew the federal government's commitment to drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure and ASCE recommends the following in the FY24 appropriations legislation:

- Building on historic investments in 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 \$4.92 billion and the DWSRF receives \$3.4 billion**. These programs 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.
- **Fully funding the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA)** program at no less than the FY23 enacted level of \$75.64 million. 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 IIJA took the needed

step of reauthorizing WIFIA through FY 2026. 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.

### **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 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 FY24**.

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 improve blighted hazardous waste sites near communities, 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, the Outdoor Industry Association’s *2017 Outdoor Recreation Economy* report found that the outdoor recreation economy, which relies heavily on public parks and lands, directly supports 7.6 million American jobs and generates \$125 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue. 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 **appropriate \$3.8 billion in FY24** to address the National Park Service’s (NPS) growing deferred maintenance backlog.

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 more than \$13 billion, which includes \$7.1 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 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. 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.

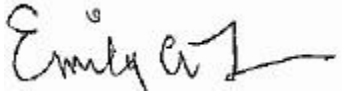
USGS’ streamgaging program provides consistent, scientifically reliable data that is essential for flood-risk assessments, water supply planning, water quality appraisals, and stream flow forecasting.

We urge the Subcommittee to include the following in the FY24 appropriations legislation:

- **fully fund the NEHRP program at \$92.7 million; and**
- **fund the streamgaging program at \$100.5 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.. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Emily A. Feenstra

Chief Policy & External Affairs Officer, American Society of Civil Engineers

cc: Chairwoman Kay Granger and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, House Committee on Appropriations