

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, Chairman Capito, and Ranking Member Tester:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, we urge you to provide the National Levee Safety Program with funding that meets the program's full \$79 million authorization. Specifically, we request that you provide the Energy and Water Development appropriations bill with \$54 million and the Homeland Security appropriations bill with \$25 million for the National Levee Safety Program. Every state in the nation and the District of Columbia rely on levees for flood control to reduce risk to homes, businesses, and property. Decades of levee upgrades along the Mississippi River have prevented \$306 billion in flood damage, equating to a 24:1 return on investment of that infrastructure. However, an estimated \$80 billion is needed in the next 10 years to maintain and improve the nation's 30,000 documented miles of levees.

The National Levee Safety Program was authorized in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 (PL 113 – 121 Sec. 3016) to promote consistent safety standards, create levee safety guidelines, and provide funding assistance to states and regional districts for establishing participating levee safety programs. America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 reauthorized the program through FY23 (PL 115 – 270 Sec. 1144).

Although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been able to inventory 13,700 miles of levees under USACE's authority and another 15,400 miles of levees maintained by other federal, state, or local agencies in the National Levee Database (NLD), there is much work to be done in inventorying and determining the location and condition of all the levees outside of USACE's authority.

With nearly two-thirds of Americans living in a county with at least one levee and more than half of the U.S. population living within 50 miles of a coast with continued development in floodplains, levees play a critical life safety role. Fully appropriating the program at \$79 million would play a crucial role in protecting people, communities, critical infrastructure systems, and trillions of dollars of property.

Ultimately, robust investment in this program is necessary to improve the nation's levee infrastructure. We thank you for your consideration of our funding request and look forward to working with the Subcommittees to fund this successful infrastructure program.

Sincerely,

American Society of Civil Engineers
Association of State Dam Safety Officials
American Council of Engineering Companies
Deep Foundations Institute

cc: Chairman Richard Shelby and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations