

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations for the Senate 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 *2017 Infrastructure Report Card* gave the nation's drinking water infrastructure a grade of "D," and the nation's wastewater infrastructure did not fare much better with a grade of "D+." We urge the Subcommittee to renew the federal government's commitment to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure by including the following in the FY21 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 \$4.9 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 FY20 enacted level of \$60 million; and**
- **fully funding the SRF WIN Act program at \$5 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 2025, the investment gap for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems is estimated at \$105 billion. According to the American Water Works Association, \$1 trillion will be needed to maintain and expand drinking water service demands during the next 25 years.

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.

The Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now (SRF WIN) Act is an innovative new financing tool that blends the most successful parts of the SRFs and WIFIA to create a program that gives State Infrastructure Financing Authorities access to WIFIA loans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Authorized in the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (P.L. 115 – 270, Sec. 4201) for \$5 million each in FY20 and FY21, this new and efficient mechanism leverages limited federal resources and stimulates additional investment in our nation's infrastructure.

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 FY21.**

ASCE's *2017 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, 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 \$2 billion in FY21 to address the National Park Service's (NPS) growing deferred maintenance backlog.**

ASCE's *2017 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.

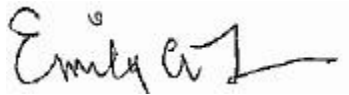
USGS' streamgaging program provides consistent, scientifically reliable data that is essential for flood-risk assessments, water supply planning, water quality appraisals, and stream flow forecasting. We urge the Subcommittee to include the following in the FY21 appropriations legislation:

- **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: Chairman Richard Shelby and Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy, Senate Committee on Appropriations