April 11, 2014

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Kaptur:

On behalf of the members of the National Waterways Conference, Inc., I am writing to express our concerns about the Administration’s FY15 budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Civil Works program.

As this committee well knows, reliable, well-maintained water resources infrastructure is fundamental to America’s economic and environmental well-being, and is essential to maintaining our nation’s competitive position within the global economy. Our water resources infrastructure provides life-saving flood control, needed water supplies, shore protection, water-based recreation, environmental restoration, and hydropower production. Moreover, waterways transportation is the safest, most energy-efficient and environmentally sound mode of transportation.

The President’s budget for fiscal year 2015 would fund the Civil Works program at a level nearly $1 billion less than the Congress appropriated for the current fiscal year. This request, contrary to the priorities set forth by the Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, fails to recognize the critical role of our nation’s water resources infrastructure to a robust economy, job creation, public safety and environmental well-being.

We appreciate the additional funding in the FY14 omnibus appropriations act, along with the criteria for utilization of that additional funding, and encourage the committee to use that process in the FY15 energy and water bill. We urge the committee not to let stand the across-the-board cuts in construction, operations and maintenance, and investigations in the President’s budget, as those devastating cuts would result in the continued delay or stoppage of many critical projects. Requiring work plans to detail the funding allocations is a step in the direction towards ensuring that these investment decisions are made in an
open and transparent process.

We also appreciate the inclusion in the FY14 omnibus of the statement of concern about the ongoing effort to update the Water Resources Principles and Guidelines, along with the continued prohibition on use of funds in this proceeding and the reporting requirement should the Interagency Guidelines be finalized. We support the continued prohibition on use of any funds to develop or implement rules or guidance related to the ongoing proceeding at the Council on Environmental Quality until such time as the revision is modified to reflect the direction set forth in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

We are mindful of the fiscal constraints facing the nation, and the difficult choices that must be made to ensure our nation’s fiscal well-being. However, investments in water resources projects are essential to the nation’s economic vitality, public safety, environmental health and competitive position within the global economy. Our nation simply cannot afford the negative economic impacts, the diminished export capabilities and the detriment to our way of life that surely would result if we fail to invest in our water infrastructure.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy W. Larson, Esq.
National Waterways Conference, Inc.