



April 28, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

On behalf of the nation's recreational fishing industry, thank you for developing America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020, which includes numerous provisions that will benefit the recreational fishing community. As our industry is facing significant economic and access challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we appreciate your leadership in identifying a comprehensive set of water infrastructure policies that will improve the condition of our nation's waterways, expand recreational access and benefit the economy in these difficult times.

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) is the trade association representing the recreational fishing industry, including sportfishing equipment manufacturers, distributors, retailers and outdoors media. The nation's 50 million recreational fishermen contribute \$125 billion annually to the economy, supporting over 800,000 jobs. Our nation's rich tradition of recreational fishing is predicated on healthy and accessible waterways.

We strongly support the development and swift enactment of a water infrastructure package such as this. While often forgotten when considering more traditional infrastructure like highways and bridges, water infrastructure is critically important to economies throughout the nation, all of which are suffering right now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The provisions in your draft bill would be sound policies at any time, but especially now are critical to provide economic stimulus and support for business, like the recreational fishing industry, that depend on our nation's waterways.

Below are specific provisions in your draft bill supported by ASA, and which we encourage you to maintain as you continue advancing America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020.

Sec. 1002. Great Lakes comprehensive flood protection study.

- Flooding throughout the Great Lakes has resulted in substantial losses in recreational access, causing erosion, damaging lakeside property, and causing many boat ramps to become damaged and inaccessible. ASA is pleased to see \$25 million in federal funding being dedicated to complete a report outlining shoreline protection and resiliency. This study will help ensure sound management and policy, and mitigate future impacts when the Great Lakes inevitably flood in the future.

AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 501, Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703-519-9691 • Fax: 703-519-1872
Web: www.ASAFishing.org • Email: info@ASAFishing.org

Sec. 1035: Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection Program

- The health of the Chesapeake Bay is not only critical to the recreational fishing community around the Bay itself, but also to the entire Mid-Atlantic region, as the Bay is an important nursery for migratory fish like striped bass. The Chesapeake Bay Program coordinates data collection and distributes grants to states for Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. This Program helps states control pollution and manage runoff into the tributaries that feed into the Bay. ASA is grateful for the increased funding authorized under this section.

Sec. 1037. Interagency task force on small dams and fish passages.

- ASA is supportive of the creation of an interagency task force to study small dams and fish passages. The removal of dams and creation of fish passage structures will benefit fisheries by allowing many fish species access to their native ranges. Throughout the country, the costs of many dams (e.g., environmental, safety and socio-economic factors) outweigh the benefits (e.g., hydropower, flood control, irrigation), and in many cases dams have outlived their useful purpose. Having a federal task force that develops a national strategy for identifying, prioritizing, and successfully removing or refurbishing small dams of concern by 2030 will allow for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to considering removal of these structures.

Sec. 1041. Brandon Road study.

- ASA is strongly supportive of the Brandon Road project and the cost share agreement outlined in Sec. 1041. This important project is critical to protecting the Great Lakes from Asian Carp, which are currently one of the greatest threats to the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery.

Sec. 1074. Delegation of Work for Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Projects.

- ASA supports this provision to delegate work and federal funds to the non-local sponsor for Everglades restoration projects. This delegation will help complete these projects in the most expeditious manner by allowing flexibility in the regulatory process.

Sec. 1093. Harmful algal blooms demonstration program.

- In addition to their human health risks, HABs harm fish populations and native aquatic habitat. From Florida beaches closed due to red tide, to fishing tournaments being cancelled in lakes across the country, HABs continue to harm recreational fishing opportunities and fisheries resources at a growing rate. The recreational fishing community welcomes additional research to detect and mitigate HABs.

Sec. 1096. Increasing access for recreation at Corps of Engineers projects.

- ASA is supportive of this effort to increase access at Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) facilities, which currently provide recreational fishing opportunities in many parts of the country, particularly on USACE-managed reservoirs. The USACE is one of the nation's leading federal providers of outdoor recreation with over 400 lake and river projects in 43 states, supplying 14% of all freshwater fishing. ASA is thankful for the access currently provided by the USACE and is supportive of efforts to increase these opportunities.

Sec. 1202. Expedited completion.

- ASA supports the direction to expedite completion and review of important Everglades restoration projects, including Lake Okeechobee, Western Everglades, Canal 111 South Dade, and Caloosahatchee River C-43 West Basin Storage

Reservoir. Everglades restoration is a high priority for our association given its impacts on water quality in Florida and moving these remaining projects forward as quickly as possible will minimize negative impacts on habitat and natural resources.

Sec. 1401. Project Authorizations.

- Loxahatchee River Watershed is an important component of Everglades restoration addressing quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water on the eastern side of the system and has undergone a thorough planning process. ASA supports authorization of this project.

Sec. 1602. Invasive species in impaired waters.

- Aquatic invasive species are currently one of the greatest threats to recreational fishing, as their introduction can completely disrupt a fisheries ecosystem. While much of the management and control of aquatic invasive species is done at the state and local level, increased technical and financial federal support would benefit these efforts.

Sec.1603. Aquatic invasive species research.

- ASA is supportive of this textual change to Sec. 1108 of AWIA 2018 (33 U.S.C. 2263a) as the Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research and Development Center is already a leader research on AIS management and eradication that is shared across agencies. The inclusion of "prevention" will assure that ERDC is focusing on ways AIS can be avoided altogether.

Sec. 1604. Invasive species mitigation and reduction.

- Increasing coordination between the federal government and states is key in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. The pilot projects authorized in this section will help to identify appropriate and reasonable approaches to allow boaters to continue to access waterways while minimizing the potential associated spread of aquatic invasive species.

Sec. 1606. Invasive species assessment, prioritization, and management.

- ASA strongly supports efforts to restore Florida's Everglades, including the identification and eradication of invasive species. Invasive species are a key threat to this ecosystem and have proved challenging to control. As such, ASA supports the development of a process to identify, study and eliminate them.

Sec. 1607. Asian carp prevention and control pilot program.

- Asian carp are a significant threat to recreational fisheries not only in the Great Lakes but throughout the Mississippi River drainage. Where introduced, they have disrupted the natural ecosystem, resulting in declines in recreational fish populations. In addition, their behavior of jumping out of the water when motorized boats transit nearby create a serious risk to human health. Reducing their populations where they have already established, and preventing their further spread are critical to supporting recreational fishing opportunities and communities in many parts of the country. The prevention and control projects required in this section will hopefully provide tangible progress in stopping the spread of Asian carp. We are thankful for your leadership to confront this issue at such a pivotal juncture.

Sec. 1608. Aquatic invasive species prevention.

- ASA is supportive of the provision in Sec. 1608 and the expansion of WRRDA to include Asian Carp beyond the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River Basins and

tributaries to all six sub-basins of the Mississippi River, as all of these areas are threatened by Asian Carp infestation.

Sec. 3006: Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

- The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has provided billions of dollars for critical Great Lakes projects including invasive species control, Asian carp prevention, habitat restoration, and many other areas of interest. This section reauthorizes the GLRI and increases funding to \$375 million to restore and protect the Great Lakes through water infrastructure projects, as well as ecosystem restoration and invasive species control.

Sec. 3007: San Francisco Bay Restoration Grant Program

- The health of San Francisco Bay is critical to the in-shore health of fish populations and the grants authorized in this section can be used to further the restoration, monitoring and maintenance of fish habitat. This section establishes a San Francisco Bay National Program Office to oversee a new grant program to implement the San Francisco Bay Plan – a comprehensive conservation and management plan. The provision is authorized \$25 million for each fiscal year 2021 and 2022.

Sec. 3008: Lake Tahoe Restoration Program

- The section establishes cooperative agreements, grants, or other means for activities, studies, or projects identified in the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program. This section authorizes \$6 million is authorized in appropriations for fiscal years 2021 through 2024. These funds are critical to combatting invasive species, restoring and protecting the environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Sec. 3009: Puget Sound Coordinated Recovery

- Restoring the health of Puget Sound must remain a priority for our region and our nation as it is one of the most productive and critical regions for fish habitat in the country. This section establishes a Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office in the EPA which is tasked to coordinate all activities related to the restoration and protection of the Puget Sound and to promote the efficient use of program resources. Additionally, this section requires the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in consultation with the Puget Sound Federal Task Force, to submit a financial report to Congress containing an interagency crosscut budget relating to Puget Sound restoration and protection activities. \$50 million is authorized for each fiscal year 2021 through 2025 to carry out this section. Restoration efforts in the Puget Sound generate jobs, goods, and services in the short-term and help to ensure the economic livelihood of the region in the long-term.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with you and your staff to advance these and other priorities as you continue to advance America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020.

Sincerely,



Mike Leonard
Vice President of Government Affairs