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TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE BACKGROUNDER

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ASA Requests

Infrastructure Priorities:

- Ensure any infrastructure initiative includes significant direct federal funding for waterways projects already authorized by Congress to upgrade inland waterways system
- Provide funding for dredging lower Mississippi River – near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to the Gulf of Mexico – to a depth of 50 feet from the current 45 feet
- Provide funding to adequately maintain Columbia River to authorized depth of 43 feet from mouth of river to Portland, Oregon and for rehabilitating jetties at the mouth of Columbia River to allow efficient passage of marine vessels
- Provide funding, estimated at \$3.1 billion, for federal share of 15 deep draft navigation channel improvement projects authorized by Congress. Additional funds could be utilized for federal share of deep draft navigation channel improvement projects undergoing feasibility studies
- Rural Broadband – include funding and streamline application and permitting processes to facilitate and accelerate rural broadband deployment

Waterways Annual Appropriations

- FY2018 Energy & Water Appropriations bill that provides:
 1. Full funding and use of Inland Waterways Trust Fund revenues as prescribed in 2014 Water Resources Reform & Development Act (WRRDA)
 2. Increased funding for Army Corps of Engineers Operations & Maintenance
 3. Increased funding, as prescribed in 2014 WRRDA, for Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for maintenance and construction of ports and harbors
 4. Funding for the Navigation & Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) on the Upper Mississippi River System

Background

Infrastructure Priorities

Inland Waterways

Policymakers often express support for increasing investment in infrastructure and various proposals are being discussed on how to generate funding for infrastructure improvements and what types of projects to include. ASA urges policymakers to include waterways in any discussions or proposals that would provide significant funding investments in infrastructure. Highways, bridges, locks and dams, harbors and port facilities all need major investment to maintain and increase global competitiveness of

U.S. agricultural products. ASA specifically supports providing \$8.7 billion for projects already authorized by Congress to modernize and upgrade the inland waterways system.

Ports & Navigation Channels

58 percent of U.S. soybean exports, 67 percent of corn exports, and 17 percent of wheat exports depart from the Mississippi Gulf region. Dredging the lower Mississippi River – near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to the Gulf of Mexico – to a depth of 50 ft. (from the current 45 ft.) would allow agricultural exporters to load ships more efficiently and lower the delivered cost to our customers – enhancing our competitiveness.

26 percent of U.S. soybean exports, 48 percent of wheat exports, and 17 percent of corn exports depart from Pacific Northwest. The Columbia River is a critical origination point for a significant amount of these exports. Funding is necessary to adequately maintain the Columbia River to the authorized depth of 43 ft. from the mouth of the river to Portland, Oregon. Funding is also needed for rehabilitating the jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River – allowing for safe and efficient passage of marine vessels.

Broadband

Broadband access is important to economic competitiveness of farming operations and the quality of life in rural America. ASA supports efforts by local, state, and federal governments and the private sector to bring high quality and affordable broadband services to farms and rural areas.

Deployment of rural broadband could be accelerated through increased funding of the Universal Service Fund (USF) and through streamlining of application and permitting processes, including USDA loan programs.

Waterways: Annual Appropriations

The successful policy changes achieved in the 2014 Water Resources Reform & Development Act (WRRDA) must continue to be reflected in the annual Energy & Water appropriations bills.

Appropriate the highest level of funding that can be supported by the inland waterway barge fuel fee revenues received into the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF). Increase funding for the Corps of Engineers' Operations & Maintenance (O&M) account. Increase funding for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) for maintenance & construction of ports and harbors.

Provide funding from the Investigations account of the Corps of Engineers be allocated to continue pre-construction engineering and design (PED) for the Navigation & Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) - Upper Mississippi River & Illinois Waterway System as authorized in Title VIII of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.