October 23, 2013

The Honorable Bill Shuster  The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman  Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member Rahall:

The National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) strongly urges the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 (H.R. 3080). Along with modernizing our inland waterways and ports, H.R. 3080 would mandate important reforms and efficiencies to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Civil Works programs and policies.

America’s farmers and ranchers, and the co-ops they own are reliant on an efficient and competitive transportation system to move their products. America’s inland waterways and ports, which have provided U.S. farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses with a strong competitive advantage, are key to enhancing our ability to serve domestic and global markets, as well as to secure essential crop inputs for production of grains, oilseeds and other agricultural commodities. However, the inland waterways system is at risk of becoming a potential detriment rather than a competitive strength as deteriorating locks and dams are long past their expected useful life. As such, enactment of H.R. 3080 is long overdue to address the necessary investment to efficiently move the country’s freight now and into the future.

While H.R. 3080 is a critical step forward, we are deeply disappointed that a much needed provision – adoption of an increase in the barge diesel fuel user fee – was not included in the bill. This increase is supported by both barge carriers and their customers – including agricultural shippers – to provide the financial wherewithal to actually initiate and complete lock projects that would be authorized by H.R. 3080. This provision is essential to the rehabilitation and maintenance of the inland waterways system, and we encourage the House of Representatives to address this in future legislation.

Thank you for your continued leadership and we stand ready to help you get H.R. 3080 over the finish line.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Conner
President & CEO

cc: U.S. House of Representatives