

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 3, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Mr. Vance F. Stewart
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Civil Works)
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20314

Dear Acting Director Young, Acting Assistant Secretary Stewart, and LTG Spellmon:

We urge that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) prioritize and commit robust funding to the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS), including deepening, operations and maintenance of the MKARNS, and construction of the Three Rivers project in the FY 2022 budget request.

The MKARNS, which opened as an official inland waterway system in 1971, originates at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa and runs 445 miles through Oklahoma and Arkansas to the Mississippi River. Inland waterways barge transportation is the safest, most economical, and fuel-efficient way to move our nation's goods for use domestically and for export. On a single gallon of fuel, one barge can move freight more than four times farther than trucks. In a typical year, approximately 12 million tons of commerce traverses the MKARNS, valued at more than \$3.5 billion. However, if the MKARNS was deepened from 9-feet to 12-feet, the capacity of each barge could increase by nearly 400 tons and increase the value of business sales by over \$250 million.

Through enactment of the *Water Resources Development Act of 2020*, Congress provided the Corps with flexibility to continue carrying out construction of the deepening of the MKARNS. Continuing the deepening of the MKARNS would directly benefit the 56,000 jobs for surrounding farmers, manufacturers, and other producers who contribute over \$8 billion in sales and nearly \$300 million in state and local tax revenue as a result of the system's efficient operation.

The future economic viability of the MKARNS is at risk as there is currently more than a \$230 million backlog in critical maintenance along the entire 50-year-old system. This includes locks, dams, and other important equipment that is deteriorating to dangerous conditions. The MKARNS is vital to the economies of Oklahoma and Arkansas, as well as Kansas, which sends or receives 49 percent of the tonnage coming through Oklahoma ports. A critical failure on the system could result in it being shut down for months and even a temporary shutdown could put future use of the system at risk, as businesses would no longer see the MKARNS as reliable and would likely find other means to transport their goods. Losing navigation on the entire MKARNS would cost over 6,000 jobs and cause national GDP to decline by \$723 million.

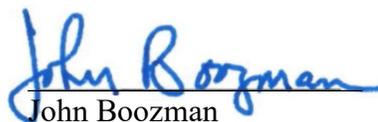
Lastly, completion of the Three Rivers project will ensure the reliability of the MKARNS as a whole. Through enactment of the *Water Resources Development Act of 2018*, Congress authorized the Corps to construct the Three Rivers project to promote a long-term sustainable navigation system by reducing the risk of a cutoff forming near the entrance channel of the MKARNS between the Arkansas and White Rivers. The Corps has already funded to completion preconstruction, engineering, and design work and is ready for construction in FY2022.

Due to these concerns, we urge that the Corps prioritize funding for deepening, operations and maintenance of the MKARNS, and construction of the Three Rivers project in its FY 2022 budget request. We look forward to working with you on improving our nation’s vital inland waterways infrastructure.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



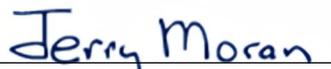
John Boozman
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



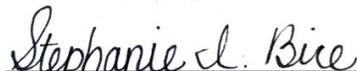
James Lankford
United States Senator



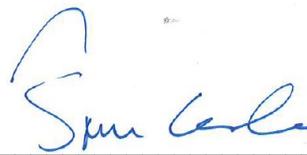
Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Roger W. Marshall
United States Senator



Stephanie Bice
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress



Kevin Hern
Member of Congress



French Hill
Member of Congress



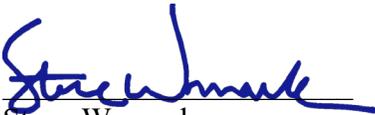
Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Steve Womack
Member of Congress