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July 20, 2026

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

On behalf of the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), I write to commend the Committee for its bipartisan work advancing H.R. 9497, the Water Resources Development Act of 2026, and to urge swift passage on the House floor.

ARA represents the retail and wholesale segment of the agricultural supply chain, including businesses that manufacture, formulate, and distribute crop nutrients and crop protection products to farmers nationwide. Our members depend on a reliable inland waterways system to move fertilizer, crop protection products, and other essential farm inputs, as well as the grain and oilseed exports that sustain farm income. The condition of our locks, dams, and channels bears directly on the competitiveness of American agriculture and the reliability of the ag retail supply chain.

ARA is particularly encouraged by H.R. 9497's new Office of Inland Navigation Construction Management, which is designed to address the chronic schedule slips and cost overruns that have long delayed lock and dam modernization on the rivers our members depend on. We also support the bill's multi-year contracting authority for Corps construction, its permitting reforms, including the electronic portal for permit submission and tracking and the revised project study schedule and cost-estimate process, the flexibility allowing non-federal sponsors to help fund projects that exceed authorized cost ceilings so work is not delayed mid-construction, and the bill's provisions maintaining the Columbia River shipping channel at its authorized depth, which supports both inbound fertilizer movement and outbound grain and oilseed exports through the Pacific Northwest. ARA also encourages the Committee to prioritize the navigation and flood risk management needs of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio River systems in the Midwest and the Tennessee River and Gulf Coast waterways in the Southeast, which together form the backbone of the ag input and export corridor for much of the country.

ARA appreciates the Committee's continued bipartisan leadership on water resources policy and looks forward to working with you as the bill moves toward conference. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Richard Gupton
Senior Vice President, Public Policy & Counsel