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July 20, 2026

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse:

On behalf of the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), I write to commend the Committee for its bipartisan work advancing the Water Resources Development Act of 2026, and to urge swift passage on the Senate 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 the bill's provision giving the Inland Waterways Users Board independent authority to send its recommendations directly to Congress without executive branch review, which ensures shippers who depend on the system, including those moving fertilizer and crop protection products, have a direct voice in navigation priorities. We also support Section 1115's protection against pausing, terminating, or deferring already-authorized and appropriated Corps projects, the flexibility allowing non-federal sponsors to help fund projects that exceed authorized cost ceilings so lock and dam modernization 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