



December 6, 2024

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senators Carper and Capito, and Representatives Graves and Larsen,

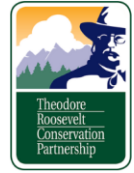
On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing segments across the U.S. outdoor recreation industry, we would like to congratulate you on a successful reconciliation of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) authorization for the 118th Congress and thank you for your leadership. This bill strengthens the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) role as a leader in public land management by improving their ability to provide access to public land and water for recreation. Sections 1153 and 1154 break important new ground to establish parity between the Corps and the other federal land management agencies and help them to provide the best experiences possible for Americans who seek to get outdoors.

Outdoor recreation has long been an underrecognized economic driver in the United States, yet the outdoor sector accounts for 2.3 percent of U.S. GDP, generating \$1.2 trillion in gross economic output and supporting over 5 million jobs across the country. Traditional outdoor recreation – such as boating, fishing, hiking, and RVing – contributed a combined 31.4% of total economic output in 2023.

Prior to the pandemic, an estimated 100 million Americans went boating every year, and we've seen that number increase as Americans look to get outside. The Corps' role in supporting the increased demand for public boating access opportunities is evident by the fact that there were 256 million visits to Corps lake and river projects in 2020 compared to the 237 million visitors the National Park Service (NPS) hosted that same year.

While this rise has showcased the popularity of such activities as a safe and fun way to spend time with loved ones, it has also illuminated one of the most pressing issues facing the outdoor recreation industry. There remains a dire need for adequate, climate-resilient, and up-to-date recreation infrastructure and facilities that meet Americans' strong demand.

This year's WRDA authorization recognizes and supports this demonstrated demand for recreation on Corps-managed land and water. Sections 1153 and 1154, which expand the Corps' ability to enter into more joint management agreements, and offer the option for fee retention



ability, respectively, will help to provide the tools needed to better maintain and improve the infrastructure present at Corps recreation sites, such as boat ramps, campgrounds, parking lots, and other public access facilities.

We applaud your bipartisan leadership and prioritization of recreation access. We look forward to building on the much-needed acknowledgement in this legislation of the need to give the Corps the tools it has long needed to better facilitate and manage public recreation. The outdoor economy is proud of the work that your committees have done to support our industry, and to support the millions of Americans who look forward to getting outdoors every year. We will stand ready to offer support and urge this bill be enacted before the adjournment of the 118th Congress.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association

Association of Marina Industries

Boat Owners Association of the United States

Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

National Marine Manufacturers Association

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership