

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chair: House Committee on Appropriations
Energy and Water Development, and Related
Agencies Subcommittee
2186 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member: House Committee on
Appropriations Energy and Water Development,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
2084 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 26, 2021

Dear Chair Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson,

For nearly a decade, our organizations have worked together and with local, state and federal officials and agencies on the restoration of the Mississippi River Delta. Louisiana is facing a longstanding, existential land-loss crisis: the equivalent of a football field of the state's coastal wetlands vanishes into open water every 100 minutes. Since the 1930s, Louisiana has lost over 2,000 square miles of land, an area roughly the size of Delaware. Reversing land loss in Louisiana is a coordinated and major priority at the federal, state, and local level to support endangered coastal communities, economic activity, vital natural systems and wildlife populations.

The 2020 Water Resources Development Act included a provision that engages the Army Corps of Engineers ("the Corps") in a comprehensive assessment of the entire Lower Mississippi River Basin and directs the agency to make recommendations for the management of this important system (Section 213). This assessment is the first opportunity since the Mississippi River and Tributaries system was designed in the mid-decades of the 20th century for the Corps and the public to take a new look at the management of the lower river. This study will fully incorporate ecosystem management with navigation and flood control, update the scientific basis upon which the current system was designed, and redesign the system to meet the challenges of the future.

The analysis is expected to bring significant improvements to the management of the Lower Mississippi River basin overall, and inform the Corps on optimal use of sediment diversions, and other nature-based solutions to mitigate flooding – including reduced reliance on the Bonnet Carré spillway during high flood years, with better outcomes for Mississippi and Louisiana. We urge the Committee to ensure this important study – which crosses seven states and three Corps districts - is fully funded in FY22 (\$25 million) at 100% federal cost-share.

Timely funding in FY22 is essential to avoid delays in implementing the anticipated results of the study, which are expected to catalyze significant river management improvements with huge implications for community protection and ecological restoration. Without full Federal funding, the Corps would be required to develop cost-share agreements with up to seven states with disparate interests and concerns, an impossible requirement that would effectively stymie any progress on this urgently needed study. Clarifying that the cost share should be 100% federal – which we understand to have been the original intent of the authorizing language - will ensure that this timely study of national importance can advance

without delay, so that the Corps has the necessary information to improve the health of the Lower Mississippi River Basin and reverse land loss in Coastal Louisiana.

Thank you for considering the above funding request. We look forward to working with you on this and other opportunities to support the restoration of Louisiana's coast.

Sincerely,

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Environmental Defense Fund
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation
National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation