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A Formal Statement for submittal to the Mississippi River Commission during the 2016 Low Water Inspection Hearing, Alton, IL.

Topic: Making the Case for Waterway Modernization Goes Beyond Waterways

We have amassed almost \$20 trillion in national debt. We have a sluggish economy, stagnate wages, and a growing list of unfunded social mandates. Many Americans are frustrated; thinking institutions and key actors that could otherwise make a difference simply are not listening or do not understand what needs to be done.

Modernizing our U.S. Waterways has not successfully garnered Main Street's attention; nor has the issue forged the political will on Capitol Hill to win requested funding. Politicians authorize improvements, but get bogged down in their efforts to actually *fund* improvements they have authorized. Meanwhile bureaucrats are left to pursue major maintenance in a piece meal, stop and start, fix it when it completely fails crisis management fashion. This "fix as it fails" strategy is well on its way to leaving U.S. waterborne transportation as a weak link in our commodities supply chain, an uncertain and unreliable mode for moving large amounts of commodities with competitive efficiency. It is time to make the case for waterway modernization that will resonate with the American people, not just waterway lobbyists and users.

The popular argument for modernizing our inland waterways *cannot* be because the locks are old and need to be replaced, or because the continued navigability of our waterways are central to U.S. farm interests in feeding the world, or because of speculative claims linked to the expansion of the Panama Canal forecasting an uptick in interior movement of freight, or that tinkering with the existing system of locks and dams will also drive a requisite amount of mitigative environmental spending for wildlife habitat and local recreation interests.

The *only* real case for updating the locks is dependent on how effectively waterway modernization can be linked back to a larger planned-for effort to muster regional economic recovery. The American people need to see and count on a larger legitimate effort to bring back jobs, wages, the economy, and the well being of the communities where they live. They

need to be able to visualize how waterway modernization is squarely linked to an actionable plan to improve their quality of life. When they see the linkage, they will concede the need to update the locks.

Lobbyists and special interest groups have not proven capable of pushing through funding to fully modernize the system. Instead, they are left fist pumping over each new federal water resources development act. These new authorizations and re-authorizations produce a hollow victory when very few new projects are actually funded and unfunded major maintenance to existing projects remains largely deferred. Special interests are no longer able to use congressional earmarks as a public interest work-around. Today, Federal Program Managers need the American people to buy in and to do so the people need to see real value. When the case for funding is fuzzy and real public value is difficult to recognize, when cost externalities are glossed over and the ask is large, the argument for public interest will be perceived as contrived and the public will turn a deaf ear to stakeholders.

Again, none of this can be perceived as simply putting people to work, nor can the perception be that a Federal agency like the Corps of Engineers is keeping itself busy on the backs of taxpayers. Waterway modernization must be cast as serving some real and measurable public good, and there must be a larger, evident plan for social improvement. Waterway modernization as an engine for greater economic prosperity cannot simply be a claim put forth by waterway stakeholders. You cannot merely say improving the locks is important. You cannot claim lock modernization somehow links to some vague, open-ended effort to improve the economy. You must show your efforts are squarely part of a larger well-stated, planned-for effort to improve the situation for everyone. U.S. taxpayers have grown weary of publicly funding big public projects and programs where they cannot see the benefit. Again, having moved past the era of congressional earmarks, making the case for modernization to the American people in this new era of greater transparency has become acutely important.

To date *no* real plan exists for economic recovery that reveals a path toward making river basin communities more vibrant and their natural systems more resilient. Until such a plan exists, is sufficiently vetted as legitimate, and its implementation underway, it is difficult to imagine how the American people can be engaged and rallied to galvanize our electorate to act on the narrower issue of improving our inland waterways. The populations that inhabit our large basin catchments and live and work in our large river corridors need to recognize the linkage between working waterways and a planned-for river corridor approach to economic redevelopment.

The winning case here is regional and national economic redevelopment and everyone doing their part. Politicians and the Corps of Engineers have a job to do, as well as all system beneficiaries, capable private investors, and the American people.

Remember, significantly more people will care and pay attention to a narrative about economic recovery than will ever be the case regarding a narrative about lock and dam repairs. The latter discussion has to be nested effectively within the former. Modernizing locks and dams is then reduced to the due diligence execution of one aspect of a larger more compelling plan for economic recovery.

Its time we get this narrative right and begin to communicate with the American people

strategically on this critical topic.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick S. McGinnis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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