

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 15, 2020

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable R.D. James
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Director Mulvaney and Assistant Secretary James,

We write to you today in support of vital New Hampshire water infrastructure projects. In the Granite State and the surrounding region, Rye Harbor and Portsmouth Harbor serve a tremendous value, supporting local businesses, creating jobs and ensuring public safety. However, the demand for maintenance at both of these waterways has disrupted their usability and daily operations. As your offices work to develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Work Plan, we urge you to prioritize providing much-needed resources for Rye Harbor and the Portsmouth Harbor and Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement Project.

Rye Harbor is an essential part of the New Hampshire coastal economy. The harbor currently supports more than 180 commercial and recreational vessels, as well as numerous whale watching and sightseeing tour boats, and provides subsistence support for the Isle of Shoals, a group of small islands approximately six miles off the coast of New Hampshire. According to the Town of Rye, the harbor is estimated to contribute more than \$5 million each year to the local economy. However, since last being dredged in 1990, the harbor has experienced shoaling that could very well cause the harbor to become nonfunctional, threatening the regional economy and public safety. Many vessels that utilize the harbor now rely on the tides to successfully navigate the shallow water.

Given this imminent need, we are pleased that the Corps has taken steps toward beginning the dredging of Rye Harbor. On February 25, 2019, the New England District of the Corps released a preliminary dredging plan for Rye Harbor. Shortly thereafter, the Administration released its proposed budget for FY 2020, which requested \$200,000 for Rye Harbor dredge planning. This funding was appropriated in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94).

However, in order to preserve the usability of Rye Harbor, we request that this project receive priority for additional maintenance funds that were made available in Public Law 116-94, and that the dredging be completed this fiscal year. Further delay of this project would continue to limit, if not prohibit, the operations of commercial fishermen, lobstermen, whale watching and shuttle service boats that currently operate out of this important harbor. We appreciate your attention to the pressing need to dredge Rye Harbor.

In addition, we urge support for the Portsmouth Harbor and Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement Project in the FY 2020 Corps Work Plan. This project would widen the uppermost turning basin on the Piscataqua River to improve safety and navigability for commercial vessels.

The current 800-foot width of the turning basin poses significant safety risks for liquefied petroleum gas tankers and other bulk shippers and limits the existing and future use of the terminals located along the river. New Hampshire State Licensed River Pilots are now dependent upon daylight and the tides to maneuver 764-foot long ships in the narrow turning basin, and transit restrictions have added an additional cost to cargo shipped into the ports. Widening the turning basin to 1,200 feet and thereby improving navigation safety in the Piscataqua River would have a tremendous economic value to New Hampshire and the surrounding region.

The Corps submitted a favorable study for the Portsmouth Harbor and Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement Project in 2015, and Congress granted authorization for the project in the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (P.L. 114-322). Congress further emphasized the importance of completing this project expeditiously through Section 1317 of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-270). However, despite significant progress at the local level to advance this work, including efforts to secure a sponsor and reserve funding for the project, construction cannot begin until the project receives new construction start approval in the Corps Work Plan.

As you know, Public Law 116-94 authorized six new starts in the Construction account, two of which are for navigation projects. The Portsmouth Harbor and Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement Project is competitive for new start approval because of the benefit it would serve to the regional economy and the cost effective nature of the project. According to the New England District of the Corps, the turning basin expansion project could be completed with a single year's appropriation in FY 2020, ensuring the navigation safety concerns are resolved and no out-year funding is required.

As your offices work to develop the FY 2020 Corps Work Plan, we respectfully request that you give all possible consideration to expediting the maintenance of Rye Harbor, as well as the expansion of the uppermost turning basin on the Piscataqua River. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



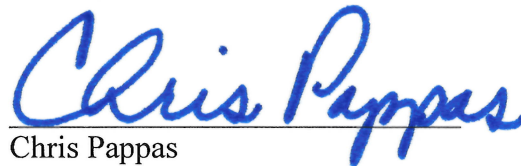
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

CC: Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite, United States Army Corps of Engineers
New England District, United States Army Corps of Engineers
New Hampshire Division of Ports and Harbors
New Hampshire Dredge Management Task Force