United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 26, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

As the Committee begins its consideration of the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), we are writing to request support for the following projects:

Project Name: Portsmouth Harbor & Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement Project

Location: Portsmouth and Newington, NH

Description of Project: This project will 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 causes major safety concerns for liquefied petroleum gas tankers and other bulk shippers and limits the existing and future use of the terminals located along the river. Widening the turning basin and thereby improving navigation safety in the Piscataqua River would have significant economic value to New Hampshire and the region. If the basin is widened to 1,200 feet across, larger ships will be able to safely use New Hampshire as the entry point for goods to be sold across Northern New England.

Project Status: The Chief of Engineers completed report was submitted on February 8, 2015. Please find enclosed in this letter a copy of this report.

Project Name: Hampton Harbor Navigation Improvement Project

Location: Hampton and Seabrook, NH

Description of Project: The Hampton Harbor is New Hampshire's largest commercial fishing port and a vital part of the state's seacoast economy and public safety infrastructure. The existing Federal navigation project was authorized by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in 1964 under the Continuing Authority of Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960 (PL 86-645), and was designed for mixed commercial and recreational boating use with fishing as the principal purpose. However, since design of the existing project, the local fleet has substantially grown in size.

The Hampton Harbor currently supports party-fishing boats, lobster and commercial fishing boats, a federally funded pier with emergency response and patrol boats, and a number of recreational vessels. Additionally, the harbor is home to Hampton River Marina which is estimated to be the largest contributor to the Hampton economy, and is the docking place for barge support for the Seabrook Nuclear Power Station including fuel rod delivery and spent rod removal. The only access to the ocean from Hampton Harbor is via the Harbor's Federal entrance channel.

In recent years, the Hampton Harbor has experienced shoreline erosion at an accelerated rate causing the harbor to fill with tailings from a nearby tidal sandbar. The worsening condition of the channel is such that many vessels entering and exiting the harbor are now reliant on the tides to successfully navigate the shallow water. Moreover, this erosion has caused the exposure of a sewer force main that passes under the harbor and the eventual exposure of a natural gas main and two water mains, subjecting these pipelines to failure from the natural elements or passing watercraft.

Project Status: On December 7, 2015, the Corps released the results of a Condition Survey of the Hampton Harbor. Please find enclosed in this letter a copy of this survey. This study found that the harbor does indeed shows shoaling on the Seabrook-side of the harbor, within the channel, where it is shallower than the 8-foot authorized depth. The Corps has signaled its intention to dredge the harbor during its regular dredging schedule. However, because of the severe shoaling, the Hampton Harbor requires emergency dredging.

If you have any questions, please contact Ariel Marshall at (202) 224-6492 or ariel_marshall@shaheen.senate.gov, or Andres Hoyos at (202) 224-3399 or andres_hoyos@hassan.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Enclosures:
2015 Chief of Engineers report
2015 Condition Survey of the Hampton Harbor