

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2023

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon
Commanding General
US Army Corps of Engineers
441 G St. NW
Washington, DC 2314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Spellmon:

We write regarding our shared concerns for commercial and recreational access to the Allegheny River. Southwestern Pennsylvania's river system has long been the heart of our region's economy and will continue to be a vital asset for generations to come. Given the Army Corps' critical role in maintaining and operating key facilities on the river system, we write to request your support in preserving the maritime economy of the Allegheny River Valley.

As you may know, the Allegheny River is over 315 miles long and includes a watershed area of 11,747 square miles. In August, the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers were designated as a new Marine Highway Route by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration. The M-79 route is critical to our nation's domestic manufacturing, supporting barge traffic of raw materials, including steel, aggregates, and metallurgical coal.

Due to our region's topography, our extensive lock and dam system is required to keep our rivers navigable. Currently, Locks 2 and 3 on the Allegheny River operate at levels of service (LOS) 2, which allows for two ten-hour daily shifts. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, these locks conducted 803 and 799 commercial lockages. Estimates from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Pittsburgh District have revealed that Locks 2 and 3 on the Allegheny River will drop below the threshold for LOS 2 as early as FY27.

Other locks along the Allegheny River face similar challenges and threats to lower already minimal service. Locks 4 and 5 now operate at LOS 3, which allows for only one daily shift, and Locks 6 through 9 all operate at LOS 6 by appointment only, the lowest level of service. Volunteers in some of these communities have stepped up to ensure proper staffing at lockages for recreational users, but this is not a long-term solution. While both commercial and recreational traffic took a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence that maintaining or increasing LOS at these locks will yield higher traffic. For example, Locks 2 through 5 all saw more commercial and recreational lockages in FY21 than before the pandemic in FY19.

Under the USACE service level metrics, these lockages face cuts to operational hours and may force many commercial operators to choose alternative means of transport, further decreasing the number of lockages and, subsequently, the LOS. Any cuts in service will impact commercial and recreational boaters' ability to move up and down the Allegheny River and prevent future economic development throughout the corridor.

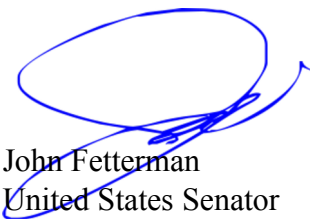
While many of us are seeking a solution to the lockage hour issue through the Water Resources Development Act process, we respectfully request that USACE ensure the service levels remain unchanged in the short term. Pausing any action that would reduce access and stymie growth will help our region maintain a robust and diverse economy centered on our river system.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress



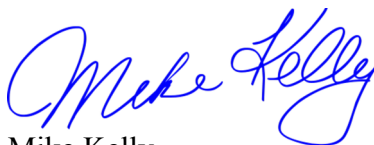
Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Summer Lee
Member of Congress



John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress