

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management

The Honorable Camille Touton  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation

The Honorable Stephanie Pollack  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

The Honorable Michael Regan  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency

The Honorable Rick Spinrad  
Administrator  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration

The Honorable Mike Connor  
Assistant Secretary of the Army  
for Civil Works  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Honorable Martha Williams  
Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Honorable Randy Moore  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service

Re: Federal Agency Coordination and Strategic Stakeholder Input regarding Fish Passage  
Funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Dear Director Stone-Manning, Commissioner Touton, Acting Administrator Pollack,  
Administrator Regan, Administrator Spinrad, Assistant Secretary Connor, Director Williams,  
and Chief Moore:

The undersigned hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation, landowner organizations, and scientific societies are writing to urge a sustained and high-level commitment to a coordinated implementation of the historic federal investment in fish passage and aquatic connectivity provided in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to ensure the greatest benefit to our nation's fish, rivers, streams, and communities.

We appreciate the leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in convening federal agencies and stakeholders to chart a path forward for the coordinated and efficient use of the approximately \$2 billion in BIL funding for aquatic connectivity.

Freshwater fish, like brook trout, need access to upstream habitat to spawn, access food, and escape predators. Anadromous fish, like salmon and steelhead, migrate upstream as adults to spawn while juvenile fish must travel back downstream to the ocean to feed. Throughout the U.S., fish habitat is fragmented by culverts, dams, and other water control structures leading to declining fish populations, Endangered Species listings, and lost recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishing opportunities.

Restoring aquatic connectivity at the watershed-level creates thriving fish populations, builds resilience, and allows access to cooler habitats as streams warm in the face of climate

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change. Partners across the nation, including many of the signatories here, are undertaking restoration projects for fish with significant co-benefits for communities including reducing and mitigating flood damage, improving water quality, and providing recreational opportunities leading to thriving local economies.

We urge a sustained commitment at both the agency leadership and staff levels to develop a shared strategic vision for achieving watershed-level connectivity through BIL aquatic connectivity funding and an efficient process for implementation. We also urge you to develop a robust stakeholder engagement process to ensure that the greatest conservation and community benefit will result from this investment. A patchwork approach to spending this funding is unlikely to organically yield the watershed-level connectivity that is needed to address the scope of this nation-wide challenge for fish and aquatic organisms and to ensure these projects result in the greatest benefits for communities. Further, a lack of coordination in engineering review and permitting processes across agencies will significantly delay on-the-ground project implementation. A well-coordinated multi-agency design and permitting process will greatly accelerate the collective ability to realize transformational gains from this once-in-a-generation funding opportunity.

We recognize that this cross-agency coordination to implement funding will require a great deal of work and ingenuity. We stand ready to provide support as you move forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Sportfishing Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)  
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust  
Camp Fire Club of America  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
Fly Fishers International  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Falconers Association

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Orion: The Hunter's Institute  
Public Lands Foundation  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wildlife Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
Whitetails Unlimited  
Wild Salmon Center  
Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Mississippi