

Dear President Trump:

We write to follow up on your commitment to Tangier Island, Virginia. It meant a great deal for the President of the United States to call Tangier's mayor and give personal assurance of the island's future. As Virginia's U.S. Senators, we wish to work with you to preserve this unique community for future generations. To that end, we have several suggestions we hope you will direct your administration to pursue further.

A proposed study of Tangier's infrastructure needs is working its way through the Army Corps of Engineers for potential authorization by Congress in the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). This is a lengthy process, and time is of the essence. Tangier Island has gradually decreased in size, resulting in the abandonment of previously habited parts of the island. If present trends continue, the entire island could be uninhabitable within decades, or sooner in the event of a Harvey or Maria-type storm. We can debate the causes for why this is happening, but regardless, the effects are clear. It is urgent that we address those effects.

We understand that Tangier Island has been submitted for consideration under a new beneficial reuse dredge fill pilot project authorized in the WIIN Act (WRDA 2016). While we are sure competition for this opportunity is intense, we request your administration give Tangier's application full and fair consideration.

In addition, we understand Tangier leaders have discussed with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service a proposal for the Service to become more involved in managing an area of the island that is now home only to wildlife after it became too low-lying to

support permanent human habitation. We hope you will ask agency leaders to seriously consider this.

We know the Service has limited funds and other wildlife assets in the Chesapeake Bay region, but this is an opportunity to advance the agency's wildlife mission while also helping out a community in need. Given the ban on congressional earmarks and the challenges of small rural communities like Tangier (pop. under 500) in getting federal attention, it is important to secure equities from as many federal and private partners as possible. Tangier residents have pointed out to us that sizable investments have been made in similar nearby islands, such as the uninhabited Port Isobel Island, VA (right off Tangier); uninhabited Poplar Island, MD; and an even smaller (less than 300) community on Smith Island, MD. Tangier Island deserves no less.

We fully appreciate that communities across America much larger than Tangier also have pressing infrastructure needs, particularly in light of recent disasters. It is appropriate to follow robust cost-benefit calculations to determine the best use of limited federal dollars. But there are also rare circumstances under which a project may not score highly on traditional metrics yet is profoundly valuable.

Tangier Island is such a community. Its history and culture predate the United States, and its linguistic characteristics are unlike any in the world. Letting this island wither away due to bureaucratic inertia – or worse, an active decision to write it off – would not only result in the loss of people's homes and way of life, but would be a cultural and historical loss to America. We should not let that happen. You will note that we agree on this even though the island's political inclinations are well known.

Some fights are important regardless of political benefit.

Tangier Island's residents have put their faith in you, and we stand ready to work with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,