



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

July 26, 2017

The Honorable Pete Ricketts  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 94848  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4848

Dear Governor Ricketts:

The Council on Environmental Quality has received a copy of the attached July 18, 2017 letter to Major General Jackson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, requesting that the Elk Creek, NE Superalloy Project be identified as a high priority infrastructure project pursuant to Executive Order 13766.

The Council on Environmental Quality is currently working with other Federal agencies, including the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council, and Administration officials to align various permitting improvement and infrastructure initiatives. Information on the identification of high priority infrastructure projects will be made available as this interagency process moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Neumayr". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mary Neumayr  
Chief of Staff

CC: MG Donald E. Jackson, Jr., Deputy Commanding General Civil & Engineering Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Douglas Hoelscher, Special Assistant to the President & Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs



**Pete Ricketts**  
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA

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July 18, 2017

MG Donald E. Jackson, Jr  
Deputy Commanding General Civil & Emergency Operations (ATTN-CECW-ZA)  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20314

Dear Major General Jackson:

I am writing to nominate the Elk Creek, NE Superalloy Project (Project) as a high-priority infrastructure project, pursuant to your January 24, 2017 Executive Order: "Expediting Environmental Reviews and Approvals For High Priority Infrastructure Projects."

Key to the success of a national infrastructure re-building is utilizing as many American-made materials as possible – particularly the high strength steels that form the backbone of America's transportation, manufacturing, and defense infrastructures. The Elk Creek Superalloy Project can help the U.S. produce American-made "super steels" for infrastructure projects across all 50 states.

The Project will establish the first-ever production in America of niobium, a metal that helps to make High Performance Steel (HPS). These super steels are increasingly used in highway bridges and in virtually all mega-steel infrastructure projects in order to reduce corrosion, lengthen lifespans, cut costs, and reduce environmental impacts. American-made HPS steel can help highway bridges last in excess of a century. That will reduce taxpayer costs and strengthen safety.

Niobium also is critical to our nation's defense infrastructure. It is vital to superalloys used in virtually all fighter jets. In fact, it is considered of such strategic importance by the Pentagon and the Congress that they directed it be stored in the National Defense Stockpile.

We need niobium, Mr. President, yet we don't mine a single pound of it in the U.S. today. Nebraska wants to change that, and as rapidly as possible.

The Elk Creek Superalloy Project is designed to be funded by the private sector and is seeking no direct U.S. Government financial assistance. It has greatly reduced its planned environmental footprint by finding innovative ways of recycling much of its waste and by operating very efficiently. It enjoys strong and broad local support in Nebraska. What it needs from the federal government is efficient coordination of NEPA and other permitting processes, so that this critical infrastructure project can be brought online as rapidly as possible without unnecessary permitting delays and government red tape.

In my view, Mr. President, the Elk Creek Superalloy Project is vital to the success of the Rebuilding America's Infrastructure initiative. As such, I nominate the Project for designation as a High-Priority Infrastructure Project. I would be pleased to discuss this with you or your staff at your convenience.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Respectfully,

CC: Janet Pfleeger, Deputy Director, Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council  
DJ Gribbin, Special Assistant to the President for Infrastructure Policy  
Michael Catanzaro, Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Energy and Environmental Policy