



CLEAN WATER CONSTRUCTION COALITION

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"The Need for Renewed Investment in Clean Water Infrastructure"

**Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives**

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**Robert A. Briant
Chairman
Clean Water Construction Coalition**

Statement for the Record

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Clean Water Construction Coalition (CWCC) I am pleased to submit the following statement for the record.

At the outset, CWCC wishes to commend you and the Subcommittee for holding this important hearing. No subject and no resource is more important – and more fundamental – to the quality of life for all Americans than the condition of our Nation's water. As the Subcommittee turns its attention this Congress to the reauthorization of the Clean Water Act, today's hearing is a necessary and important first step.

As a matter of background, CWCC is an organization of 13 construction associations from throughout the Nation committed, as its initial goal, to raising the national awareness to the fact that the Federal Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts have not been reauthorized in over a decade. Due to the lack of reauthorization, annual federal appropriations for sewer and water construction has diminished dramatically.

CWCC was organized on December 2, 2005. Representatives of the Coalition met periodically during 2006 with a Coalition Impact Event held in Washington, D.C. on May 18, 2006. That event brought together representatives of the associations that are part of the Coalition, other organizations that support the goals of CWCC, and various congressional leaders. CWCC hopes, and expects, to play a key role in the reauthorization of the Clean Water Act. As the Subcommittee moves ahead on that effort, we will be making our issue positions known. Pending that, our comments today focus on the overall importance of investing in our Nation's clean water infrastructure.

Madam Chairwoman, water is a unique and precious resource that is necessary to sustain life – human, animal and plant. As such, it is important for agriculture,

transportation, flood control, energy production, recreation, fishing, and municipal and commercial uses. Public opinion consistently and overwhelmingly supports making clean water a National priority. A recent national survey found that nearly 9 in 10 Americans say that federal investment to guarantee clean and safe water is a critical component of our Nation's environmental well-being. The survey also found that most Americans believe clean and safe water is such an important national priority that they are willing to pay more to get it.

Unfortunately, we are all well aware that our national water infrastructure is aging, deteriorating, and in need of repair and replacement. The American Society of Civil Engineers recently graded the condition of the infrastructure throughout our country. Wastewater infrastructures received a "D-". Nearly half of the sewer pipes in American cities are over 50 years old. Some are over 100 years old. Treatment plants build in the 1970's need to be upgraded. New mandates to manage municipal stormwater runoff have gone into effect. Water quality must be improved.

As a Nation, we are not investing enough in our clean water infrastructure to ensure that we will continue to keep our waters clean. As an example, this Administration has consistently proposed to cut clean water infrastructure funding to the lowest level in the Nation's history. Such cuts will only exacerbate the current backlog of water infrastructure projects. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the spending gap for clean water needs between \$132 billion and \$388 billion over 20 years. EPA's "Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure Gap Analysis" found that there would be a \$535 billion backlog of water and wastewater infrastructure projects by 2019 if additional investments are not forthcoming. Further cuts to the Clean Water State

Revolving Fund (CWSRF) will only broaden this gap as federal dollars provide vital funding to leverage public and private sector funds. Unless we act now to renew investment in our clean water infrastructure, we could lose the significant gains in water quality that have been achieved over the last 30 years.

In addition, it must be pointed out that investments in water infrastructure have a well-documented record of success in job creation and economic development.

According to the American Public Works Association, every \$1 billion invested in water and wastewater infrastructure construction creates over 40,000 jobs. Critical sectors of our economy rely on clean water. These sectors include the \$45 billion commercial fishing industry; the soft drink manufacturers that generate \$54 billion in sales; and, the manufacturing sector that uses more than 13 trillion gallons of clean water each year.

An integral component of the Clean Water program is the State Revolving Fund. The CWSRF, which provides funding to capitalize state clean water loan programs which in turn fund water quality protection projects for wastewater treatment, nonpoint source pollution control, and watershed and estuary management, is critical to clean water efforts nationwide and is an extremely cost-effective government program. For every dollar the federal government invests, more than two dollars is made available for environmental improvements. CWSRF is also a flexible program, allowing states to choose from a variety of assistance options, including loans, refinancing, purchasing, or guaranteeing local debt and purchasing bond insurance. States can also target resources to their particular environmental needs, including contaminated runoff from urban and agricultural areas, wetlands restoration, groundwater protection, estuary management, and wastewater treatment.

Madam Chairwoman, we appreciate the funding constraints that are facing the Congress this year, but we believe that the federal government must sustain a strong partnership with states and local governments to fulfill its share of the burden of maintaining and improving the Nation's water infrastructure. Accordingly, CWCC urges the Congress to promote funding for the Clean Water program at a level which ensures the highest protection of, and safety for, our Nation's water.

Thank you.