

Academy of Natural Sciences • American Rivers •
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies • Clean Water Action •
Clean Water Network • Conservation Law Foundation • Environmental Working
Group • Iowa Environmental Council • National Association of Clean Water
Agencies • National Association of Water Companies • National Ground Water
Association • National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition • Natural Resources
Defense Council • Rachel Carson Council • Sierra Club • Water Environment
Federation

Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Peter Orszag
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Secretary Salazar and Director Orszag:

We represent organizations strongly dedicated to protecting water quality. As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2010 budget for the Department of the Interior, we write to draw your attention to the need to increase funding for a critically important part of the Nation's effort to protect our water resources—the National Water Quality Assessment program (NAWQA) of the U.S. Geological Survey.

The NAWQA program was created by Congress in 1991 to give credible, scientific information to policy makers about the condition of streams and ground water nationwide, to assess trends over time, and to determine the causes of water contamination and the impacts of reduced water quality on human and ecological health. It is the only program that provides this critical decision-making information. Federal, state, and local governments and our own organizations and members use NAWQA's data and assessments to inform scientifically sound water protection and management decisions. NAWQA also provides the water quality information necessary for assessing water availability now and in the future and for understanding the impacts of climate change.

Some of NAWQA's accomplishments include:

Identifying nitrogen and phosphorous loadings in the Mississippi River Basin, which provide policy-makers information to better control nutrients that contribute to hypoxia.

Identifying MTBE in groundwater and determining its sources, which led to a Congressional ban on the compound as a gasoline additive.

Detecting certain "emerging contaminants" present in bodies of water, some of which serve as the source of drinking water supplies. Some contaminants

identified through NAWQA include pharmaceuticals, hormone disrupters, and potentially toxic chemicals used in many household products.

For over a decade Presidential budget proposals and Congressional appropriations for NAWQA have not kept pace with inflation. Without inflationary adjustments over time, NAWQA's scope of work has been significantly curtailed. The number of stream sites monitored has been reduced from 500, during its first ten years, to only 113 over the entire country since 2001. At even these 113 sites, only 12 are monitored every year, 15 are monitored every other year, and the remaining 86 are monitored only every 4 years. Sediments in fish tissue are no longer sampled at all, so that data on levels of trace elements, pesticides, and other organic chemicals, like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), in aquatic life are missing. All work in Alaska and Hawaii has stopped.

To begin to bring the NAWQA program back to its capacity, we request that you provide at least \$70 million in your FY 2010 budget request. This increase would allow all 113 sites to be monitored every year to better assess water-quality trends during this period of rapidly changing climate and chemical use. It would start the process of restoring the program and realizing the potential Congress envisioned for it. NAWQA's accomplishments and the reputation it enjoys among the many agencies, businesses, and organizations that use its information demonstrate the worthiness of its funding

We would like to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the NAWQA program and its importance to protecting water quality and providing valuable scientific information to decision-makers. We would also like to discuss with you particular aspects of NAWQA's work that need funding attention given the environmental challenges the Nation faces. Please contact Tim Williams of the Water Environment Federation at (703) 684-2400 to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

William Brown, President, Academy of Natural Sciences

Katherine Baer, Senior Director, American Rivers

Diane Van De Hei, Executive Director, Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Paul Schwartz, National Policy Coordinator, Clean Water Action

Natalie Roy, Executive Director, Clean Water Network

Anthony Iarrapino, Staff Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation

Sandra Schubert, Director, Governmental Affairs, Environmental Working Group

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Ken Kirk, Executive Director, National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Peter Cook, Executive Director, National Association of Water Companies

Kevin B. McCray, CAE, Executive Director, National Ground Water Association

Martha Noble, Senior Policy Associate, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Nancy Stoner, Co-Director, Water Program, Natural Resources Defense Council

Diana Post, President, Rachel Carson Council

Ed Hopkins, Director, Environmental Quality, Sierra Club

Tim Williams, Managing Director, Government Affairs, Water Environment Federation

Cc:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks, Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, The Honorable Michael K. Simpson, Ranking Member,

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives