

**Statement of
The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Hearing On
“Agency Budgets and Priorities for FY 2010 (Part 1)”
June 3, 2009**

Chairwoman Johnson, thank you for holding today's hearing on the Administration's budget proposals for fiscal year 2010. Today, the focus of our hearing will be the proposed budgets for the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

First, let me say that I greatly appreciate the work done by your agencies. The ongoing work that you do under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure is critical to the health and safety of the American people, and to the vitality of the United State's economy.

Each year, the President's fiscal year budget proposal serves as a first glance into the budgetary and policy issues that Congress will engage during that year. Under a new administration, it is particularly interesting and telling to see which programs and policies are emphasized and re-invigorated, and to see which ones are put on the backburner.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the President's budget proposal for the Environmental Protection Agency. Overall, the Administration has requested \$10.5 billion dollars for EPA. This proposal represents the highest level of funding since the inception of EPA in 1970 and is greater than the funding that EPA received in its first 6 years of existence combined.

In particular, this year's request increases funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds to \$3.9 billion. This represents a 157% increase in funding for these programs and will no doubt assist communities in addressing their water infrastructure needs. I am pleased to see that the agency has restored its commitment to investment in this nation's water infrastructure that is so critical to the health of our population and the long term sustainability. When combined with the \$6 billion provided by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, a total of \$11 billion of federal capital would be invested through the SRFs into states and communities that are in desperate need of assistance.

Furthermore, within EPA, the President has placed an emphasis on bolstering enforcement activities and restoring the Great Lakes. The Administration has shown a desire to hold violators of environmental statutes responsible for their crimes by requesting \$600 million for its Enforcement and Compliance Assurance program. And to restore its commitment to restore and protect the Great Lakes, the Administration has requested \$475 million to address the most significant problems in the Great Lakes Region.

I must state, however, that this budget proposal is an improvement over the last eight that we have seen, but the reality is that it is still not adequate to meet all of the nation's needs. One of the shortfalls of this budget is the request of \$1.3 billion for the Superfund program.

This includes \$605 million for the Superfund Remedial program which does not represent an increase from the fiscal year 2009 appropriation levels. Our experience has shown that communities are in need of assistance to deal with toxic, hazardous waste sites, and I am skeptical that this proposal adequately addresses this need.

As I stated at the outset of the hearing, I am pleased to have the other agencies that are with us today. Of note, I look forward to hearing about the progress that the St. Lawrence Seaway has made on its 10 year Asset Renewal Program. We all know that the Seaway is integral to our economy, and I am happy to be with you again today to see how we have progressed on the rehabilitation of the Seaway's infrastructure. The funding that the Seaway receives will create and preserve jobs and ensure that shipping on the Great Lakes remains reliable.

In addition, I applaud the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for increasing its fiscal year 2010 budget proposal to \$4.4 billion, a 2.5% increase from 2009 levels. This funding should help to ensure that science and research guide our decisions and are based on the best information available.

With regards to the Tennessee Valley Authority, although it is not the focus of the hearing I am anxious to hear about the ongoing recovery efforts at the Kingston Facility. However, we should not let this spill divert the Committee's attention from TVA's commitment to pursue clean energy technologies and renewables. Cheap reliable power remains important, but we must remain cognizant of the costs associated with continuing the status quo.

I would again like to thank all of our agency representatives testifying today and I look forward to the testimony.

###