

**Alliance for the Great Lakes · American Sustainable Business Council · Cahaba River Society
Clean Water Action · Earthjustice · Environment America · Environmental Law & Policy Center
Freshwater Future · Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited · League of Conservation Voters
Missouri Coalition for the Environment · National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Wildlife Federation · Natural Heritage Institute · Natural Resources Defense Council
PennEnvironment · PennFuture · Pennsylvania Council of Churches · Prairie Rivers Network
PolicyLink · River Network · Sierra Club · Southern Environmental Law Center
Tennessee Clean Water Network**

March 4, 2019

Dear Committee Chair DeFazio, Subcommittee Chair Napolitano, Representative Young, and Representative Katko:

The undersigned members of the Clean Water for All Coalition support the *Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019* (the Act), which would provide much-needed funding to help address our nation's wastewater and stormwater infrastructure challenges.

Americans depend on wastewater and stormwater infrastructure every day to prevent their communities from flooding, protect their sources of drinking water, and keep local rivers and lakes clean and safe for their families to enjoy. However, in many areas, our nation's infrastructure is no longer up to the task. Pipes, septic tanks, and treatment facilities have exceeded their intended lifespans and are breaking down, with the most severe impacts often falling on low-income communities and communities of color. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave the nation's wastewater infrastructure a D+ grade in its 2017 infrastructure report card. Critically, climate change is already adding further stress to these systems.

The EPA estimates that we need to invest \$271 billion in maintaining and repairing our wastewater infrastructure over the next twenty years just to meet current environmental and health standards. Yet according to Congressional Budget Office data, federal funding for water and wastewater utilities has decreased fourfold since 1980, leaving state and local governments to pick up the tab. These costs are becoming increasingly difficult for communities to afford. The passing on of infrastructure repair costs to consumers has created an affordability crisis for many across the country, with wastewater prices more than doubling over the last twenty years.

The Act would help address the pressing need for additional wastewater and stormwater infrastructure funding by significantly increasing the amount of federal assistance made available to states and communities through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program. The Act's proposed CWSRF authorization of \$4 billion annually would more than double current funding levels and help to make a dent in our nation's substantial infrastructure backlog. In the process, it would also create thousands of jobs for America's workers.

As this legislation moves forward, we hope that it can go even further to address our infrastructure challenges by increasing the CWSRF authorization to \$6 billion annually. These additional funds would provide assistance to even more communities and return federal wastewater and stormwater funding levels to the amount appropriated under President Reagan (adjusted for inflation).

We also encourage the Act to broaden its scope beyond funding alone and incorporate necessary policy reforms to the CWSRF program. The Act should also:

- Direct increased investment, under principles of equity, to the communities that need it most, with more funding provided in the form of grants instead of loans when possible;
- Adopt measures designed to ensure that infrastructure investments are affordable, including incentives for states and water utilities to adopt low-income customer assistance programs, equitable rate structures, and strategies that reduce system-wide costs;
- Direct at least 20 percent of funding to projects that incorporate green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions that provide social, economic, and environmental benefits to communities;
- Address the lack of adequate onsite wastewater options for many rural communities; and
- Incentivize inclusive workforce development and procurement through requirements for apprenticeships; inclusion of local disadvantaged workers; and preferences for minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged firms.

Beyond the Act's authorization of additional CWSRF funding, we also support its increased assistance for state pollution control programs, watershed pilot projects, alternative water source pilot projects, and the combined sewer overflow municipal grant program. These investments will help to improve water quality across the country.

The Act is a vital step toward our shared goal of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure that provides clean water for all. Our organizations thank you for your leadership in co-sponsoring it and strongly support it.

Sincerely,

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