

March 12, 2009

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition, we urge you to vote for H.R. 1262, the Water Quality Investment Act of 2009. This legislation will help close the approximately \$3.2 billion to \$11.1 billion annual gap that exists between wastewater infrastructure needs and current funding. It also protects public health by requiring notification of sewer overflows and invests over \$750 million for the Great Lakes Legacy Act, which is needed to accelerate the cleanup of toxic hot spots in the Great Lakes.

Sewage contamination and polluted run-off from farms and cities pose a serious threat to the Great Lakes and the millions of people who depend on them. Antiquated wastewater systems and combined sewer systems spill at least 23 billion gallons of sewage into the Great Lakes every year—closing beaches, threatening public health, harming people's quality of life, and undermining the region's efforts to attract businesses, industries, and a talented workforce.

The Water Quality Investment Act attempts to address this problem by investing \$13.8 billion in Federal grants over five years to capitalize the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. This legislation also provides \$1.8 billion over five years for grants to address combined sewer and sanitary sewer overflows, a problem found mostly in the Great Lakes region and Northeast where the oldest water infrastructure is found.

Drinking water restrictions, beach closings, and fish consumption advisories are also just some of the impacts that remain today from a legacy of toxic discharges into the Great Lakes. Persistent, high concentrations of pollutants in the sediments of Great Lakes rivers and harbors also threaten the health of people, fish, and wildlife throughout the region. In 1987, the U.S. and Canadian governments identified 43 contaminated harbors and tributaries around the Great Lakes—with 31 of the so-called Areas of Concern in the United States. After 20 years, only one site in the U.S. has been taken off this list.

The bill attempts to accelerate the cleanup of these toxic sites. It provides \$150 million a year through fiscal year 2014 to the Great Lakes Legacy Act, a program successfully designed specifically to address sediment contamination in the Great Lakes.

This legislation also requires timely notification of the public when sewer overflows occur. Sewer overflows often contain toxins and other pollutants, including microbial pathogens that make people sick and in worst case situations lead to death. Ending the overflows must be the top priority; providing the public with needed information that can keep them well until we do is vital.

In addition, we urge you to support the following amendments:

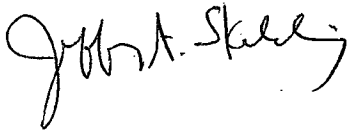
- Oberstar amendment to make a number of improvements to the bill including authorizing additional studies on the condition of wastewater infrastructure on the Great Lakes; requiring States to set-aside 20 percent of combined sewer and sanitary sewer grants to communities that implement green infrastructure or other water and energy efficient improvements; and amending

an existing Clean Water Act authority for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to carry out pilot projects by ensuring that certain "green technology" activities are eligible for controlling storm water runoff.


- Dahlkemper amendment to require certification by a system operator that both water and energy conservation are components of their fiscal sustainability plan.
- Polis amendment to require municipal wide planning that identifies the most effective placement of storm water technologies and management approaches, including green infrastructure.
- Driehaus amendment to increase from \$1.8 billion to \$2.5 billion the authorization level for the combined sewer overflows and sanitary sewer overflows grant program.

Again, we urge you to support H.R. 1262. Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, policy director for the HOW Coalition, at 202-454-3385 or clord@npca.org with questions.

Sincerely,



Jeff Skelding
Campaign Director



Chad Lord
Policy Director