

May 14, 2010

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

We applaud you for introducing legislation last month to ensure that the Clean Water Act will protect streams, wetlands, and other important waters. By introducing new legislation and highlighting how it addresses past concerns, you have created tangible momentum for action. We strongly urge you to utilize that momentum to schedule and hold a mark-up in your committee and seek full House consideration in June. We also request a meeting with you soon to discuss how our organizations can most effectively support your efforts.

Over the past several weeks, our organizations have met with your colleagues on the committee and their staffs to discuss the bill. These meetings have been encouraging. Staff and members of Congress recognize America's Commitment to Clean Water Act is a new bill and that it addresses issues raised in the past. They understand you followed through on your request in 2008 for input and your commitment to address constructive recommendations.

Although these dynamics are encouraging, offices are also very interested in learning how and when the committee intends to proceed on this issue. Our organizations can explain provisions in the bill and how our members support moving it forward; however, we can not address critical questions about the timing of committee action. While we believe momentum is on your side, there is a narrow window of opportunity to achieve our shared goal. We encourage you to pursue a strategy focused on passing the bill through the House before the Independence Day district work period.

With each passing week, the November election grows closer. In spite of our success in reframing the initial debate, this issue remains politically charged, with strong lobbying campaigns dedicated to defeating good faith efforts to restore protections. As a result, we believe it is imperative to act aggressively over the next two months to pass the bill through committee and then the full House. Following this timeline will also allow you to work with your colleagues in the Senate to advance legislation to the President for his signature this year.

Our organizations and the millions of Americans we represent stand ready to support your efforts. With your active leadership, there is clear momentum to pass America's Commitment to Clean Water Act before the end of June.

Sincerely,

Renee Hoyos
President
Clean Water Network

Trip Van Noppen
President
Earthjustice

Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

David Hoskins
Executive Director
Izaak Walton League of America

Gene Karpinski
President
League of Conservation Voters

Larry Schweiger
President and CEO
National Wildlife Federation

Frances Beinecke
President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club

Rick Middleton
Executive Director
Southern Environmental Law Center

Michael Hutchins
Executive Director/CEO
The Wildlife Society

Diane Craney
Interim President and CEO
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership

Chris Wood
President and CEO
Trout Unlimited