

January 26, 2010

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

As a coalition of America's leading sportsmen and conservation organizations representing millions of hunters, anglers, and conservationists across the country, we want to reiterate the urgent need for legislative action to address the uncertainty that Supreme Court decisions have created pertaining to the Clean Water Act's jurisdiction. Resolving this issue is critically important for the effective implementation of the Clean Water Act and a top priority for our organizations.

Our coalition was heavily involved in the effort last June to build support from the sportsmen community for a negotiated compromise between Chairman Boxer and Senators Baucus and Klobuchar to fix the jurisdiction problem. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's markup and passage of this compromise bill marked a real breakthrough, and we began to see momentum build for a legislative solution that could appeal to moderate legislators and others who had concerns related to agricultural exemptions.

However, we feel much of the momentum gained by that vote in June has been lost absent any outward activity to move legislation in the House. We have welcomed the sharing of ideas, draft language, and plans from your office in the last eight months but it seems now that the window for action has grown alarmingly small given the combination of the many competing issues still to be addressed and the upcoming political season. Our fear is that without a bill in the House in the next few weeks, it will be impossible to move forward with the legislative process this year. Moreover, our coalition is ready to help mobilize support but the absence of legislation makes it very difficult to do so. Considerable support exists within your Committee and in the House to solve the Clean Water Act jurisdiction problem and protect our nation's streams, rivers, and wetlands. With your vigorous leadership, building on the groundwork you laid in the 110th Congress, this legislation can still be enacted this year.

Our organizations are very eager to work with you to achieve this important goal – a goal that we know you share. However, the next two months are a critical time for action. Every day that passes without any House action threatens the health of our nation's rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands and other waters. We urge you to move quickly to introduce, markup, report and pass a House bill this year.

Sincerely,

Ducks Unlimited
National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
The Wildlife Society