

July 11, 2011

**Protect Clean Water, Communities, and Wildlife – Vote No on Dirty Water Bills and Riders**

Dear Representative:

The undersigned 120 national, regional and local conservation organizations represent millions of members and supporters who rely on the Clean Water Act to protect the health, safety, and well-being of communities across the country. *We urge you to vote no on all dirty water bills and riders that strip away the long-standing protections provided by the Clean Water Act.*

All Americans deserve and rely on clean water. All Americans deserve rivers and beaches that are clean enough to swim in and fish from. All Americans deserve safe drinking water. All Americans deserve the natural flood protection provided by healthy wetlands, floodplains, and headwater streams. All Americans deserve the recreational opportunities and tremendous economic stimulus provided by healthy rivers and wetlands.

With passage of the Clean Water Act, America said no to rivers that catch on fire, no to using our waters as open sewers and garbage dumps, and no to the rampant destruction of our vital flood protecting wetlands. Since passage of the Clean Water Act we have made tremendous progress in cleaning up our waters, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, protecting drinking water sources, reducing wetland loss, and developing water-based recreational and commercial economies.

That progress provides real protection to communities. For example, a single acre of wetland can store 1 to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found that protecting wetlands along the Charles River in Boston, Massachusetts saved \$17 million annually in potential flood damage. Coastal wetlands reduced Hurricane Katrina's storm surge in some New Orleans neighborhoods by two to three feet and levees with wetland buffers had a much greater chance of withstanding Katrina's onslaught than those levees without wetland buffers.

That progress also provides real benefits to the economy. For example, California's remaining wetlands provide nearly \$10 billion each year in groundwater recharge, flood control, and water purification benefits. Ninety-five percent of commercially harvested fish and shellfish are wetland-dependent. Wetlands provide shelter, food supply, spawning, and nursery areas for 90% of fish caught by America's 40 million recreational anglers. These anglers contribute about \$45 billion a year to the American economy, breathing life into rural communities and supporting millions of jobs across the country.

The Clean Water Act Section 404 program is critical to this progress. This program protects all Americans by placing common sense safeguards on the disposal of fill into the nation's rivers, streams, and wetlands. The section 404 program requires permit applicants to avoid impacts to these waters and mitigate for impacts that cannot be avoided, and prohibits discharges when other less damaging options are available or where the damage would be too great. The program also provides critical opportunities for the public and federal agencies to provide meaningful input into the 404 review process. On average, 80,000 activities receive Section 404 permits each year, helping to minimize the ecological harm from these activities that include large scale mining operations, development projects, water resource projects (such as dams and levees), and transportation projects (such as highways and airports).

A cornerstone of the Section 404 program is the oversight role that Congress established for the Environmental Protection Agency. This oversight is critical for ensuring that the goals of the Clean Water Act are met, and that downstream states have recourse to ensure their waters are not fouled by activities in upstream states. EPA must follow a highly deliberative process, including an opportunity for significant public comment, in exercising its Section 404(c) oversight authority. This authority is reserved as an action of last resort when no other approach works to prevent unacceptable impacts to municipal water supplies, shellfish beds and fishery areas, wildlife, or recreational areas.

EPA has used this authority only for the most unacceptable cases. Section 404(c) has been used to stop just 13 projects in the nearly 40-year history of the Clean Water Act – it has been used 11 times by Republican administrations and 2 times by Democratic administrations. In 2008, the Bush Administration used Section 404(c) to protect more than 200,000 acres of some of the richest wetlands in the country located in the heart of the Mississippi River flyway. This action also saved federal taxpayers well over \$220 million. In 1990, the first Bush Administration used Section 404(c) to protect 30 miles of river, including an extraordinarily rich portion of the South Platte River designated by the State of Colorado as a “gold medal” trout stream.

While much progress has been made, much more still needs to be done to ensure that our rivers, streams, and wetlands are healthy enough to protect communities like those along the Mississippi River and Missouri Rivers from repeated floods, to provide us with clean water, and to promote vibrant water-driven economic opportunities.

Section 404 and other vital provisions of the Clean Water Act are currently under attack by a long list of dirty water bills and riders (including H.R. 2018, Section 109 of the FY 2012 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, H.R. 5992, H.R. 517, and H.R. 457). Our organizations adamantly oppose efforts to weaken Section 404 and other Clean Water Act protections.

Now is not the time to take steps backwards for the health of our environment, drinking water, and economy. We urge you to vote no on any bills, amendments, and riders that would reverse decades of progress for Clean Water by stripping away existing Clean Water Act protections.

Sincerely,

Deborah Sheppard  
Executive Director  
Altamaha Riverkeeper

Jennifer Robins  
President  
Amigos de Bolsa Chica

Jim Bradley  
Senior Director of Government Relations  
American Rivers

DeEtte Huffman  
Founder & Board Member  
Arkansas River Coalition

Rachel Conn  
Projects Director  
Amigos Bravos

Wayne Shewmake  
President  
Arkansas Wildlife Federation

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders

July 11, 2011

Page 3

Russell Bassett  
Executive Director  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders

Leigh Haynie  
Basinkeeper  
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper

Eugenia Marks  
Senior Director of Policy  
Audubon Society of Rhode Island

Greg Suba  
Conservation Program Director  
California Native Plant Society

Michael Mullen  
Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper  
Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, Inc.

John Koferl  
President  
Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal

Adrienne Esposito  
Executive Director  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Lynn Thorp  
National Campaigns Coordinator  
Clean Water Action

Natalie Roy  
Executive Director  
Clean Water Network

Dale Beasley  
President  
Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association

Clark Bullard  
Director  
Committee on the Middle Fork of the Vermilion  
River

Arthur Feinstein  
Citizens Committee to  
Complete the Refuge

Jennifer Hecker  
Natural Resources Policy Manager  
Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Marjorie Ziegler  
Executive Director  
Conservation Council for Hawai'i

Christopher M. Kilian, Esq.  
Clean Water and Healthy Forests Program  
Director  
Conservation Law Foundation

Laura Baker  
Conservation Committee Chair  
East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant  
Society

Kara Gillon  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Defenders of Wildlife

Maya van Rossum  
Delaware Riverkeeper  
Delaware Riverkeeper Network

Dan Silver  
Executive Director  
Endangered Habitats League

Amy Trainer  
Executive Director  
Environmental Action Committee of West  
Marin

Katherine Nadeau  
Water & Natural Resources Program Director  
Environmental Advocates of New York

Jason Budsan  
President  
Environmental Association St.Thomas St.John

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders

July 11, 2011

Page 4

Brian Jackson  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Community Resiliency Specialist

Jessica Dexter  
Staff Attorney  
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Donald Eslick  
Chairman  
Estero Council of Community Leaders

Brian Van Sande  
President  
Float Fishermen of Virginia

Captain Dan Kipnis  
Captain  
Florida Billfish Inc.

Cheryl Mendoza  
Regional Policy and Network Advisor  
Freshwater Future

Zack Sprayberry  
President  
Friends of Chewacla and the Uphapee  
Watershed

Glenda Booth  
President  
Friends of Dyke Marsh

Sandra Farrell  
President  
Friends of Hediona Creek

James Lane  
Friend of Perdido Bay  
Friends of Perdido Bay

Don Mohler  
President  
Friends of the Gauley River

Erich Pica  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Earth

Laura Calwell  
Kansas Riverkeeper  
Friends of the Kaw

Lewis MacAdams  
President and Founder  
Friends of the Los Angeles River

Jane Darr  
President  
Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers

William Tanger  
Chair  
Friends of the Rivers of Virginia

Ron Bottorff  
Chair  
Friends of the Santa Clara River

Bob Stokes  
President  
Galveston Bay Foundation

Daniel Parshley  
Project Manager  
Glynn Environmental Coalition

Cynthia Sarthou  
Executive Director  
Gulf Restoration Network

Hugh Carola  
Program Director  
Hackensack Riverkeeper, Inc.

Ernie Reed  
Council Chair  
Heartwood

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders

July 11, 2011

Page 5

Steve Glazer  
Water Program Director  
High Country Citizens' Alliance

Claire Schlotterbeck  
Executive Director  
Hills For Everyone

Tim Maloney  
Senior Policy Director  
Hoosier Environmental Council

Kevin Lewis  
Conservation Program Director  
Idaho Rivers United

Julia Olmstead  
Policy Analyst  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Joe Wilkinson  
President  
Iowa Wildlife Federation

Brad Redlin  
Agricultural Program Director  
Izaak Walton League of America

Brad Simpson  
President  
Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Don Snider  
President  
Kansas Wildlife Federation

Tom FitzGerald  
Director  
Kentucky Resources Council

Judith Petersen  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Terry Harris  
Executive Director  
Kootenai Environmental Alliance

Mark Mattson  
Waterkeeper  
Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

Richard Bronson  
President  
Lake Watch of Lake Martin

Michelle Hurd Riddick  
Lone Tree Council

Michael G. Bienvenu  
President  
Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association

Paul Orr  
Riverkeeper  
Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper

Katy Wortel  
Mankato Area Environmentalists

Gary Botzek  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Conservation Federation

Tom Bell  
Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Cathy Shropshire  
Executive Director  
Mississippi Wildlife Federation

Kat Logan Smith  
Executive Director  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment

Bill Smith  
President  
Mo. Valley Waterfowlers Association

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders  
July 11, 2011  
Page 6

George Santucci  
Executive Director  
National Committee for the New River

Marion Hilliard  
Chairman, Environmental Concerns/Legislation  
Committee  
National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Chad Lord  
Director, Water Program  
National Parks Conservation Association

Melissa Samet  
Senior Water Resources Counsel  
National Wildlife Federation

Lisa Pohlmann  
Executive Director  
Natural Resources Council of Maine

Steve Fleischli  
Senior Attorney, Water Program  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Albert Willis  
Treasurer  
NoPort Southport NC, Inc.

Todd Miller  
Executive Director  
North Carolina Coastal Federation

John Runkle  
General Counsel  
North Carolina League of Conservation Voters

Dianna Wedincamp  
Executive Director/Riverkeeper  
Ogeechee Riverkeeper

Kristy Meyer  
Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs  
Ohio Environmental Council

Rich Cogen  
Executive Director  
Ohio River Foundation

Ani Kame'enui  
D.C. Legislative Coordinator & Healthy Rivers  
Campaign Coordinator  
Oregon Wild

Ed Tichenor  
Director  
Palm Beach County Reef Rescue

Ella Filippone  
Executive Director  
Passaic River Coalition

Kim Knowles  
Staff Attorney  
Prairie Rivers Network

Jeff Ruch  
Executive Director  
Public Employees for Environmental  
Responsibility

Bill Schultz  
Riverkeeper  
Raritan Riverkeeper

Nate Holscher  
Rivers Unlimited

Wayne Cummins  
Director  
Sand Mountain Concerned Citizens

Shani Kleinhaus, Ph.D.  
Environmental Advocate  
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Wendy Seesock  
Executive Director  
Save Our Saugahatchee, Inc.

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders

July 11, 2011

Page 7

John Torgan  
Narragansett Baykeeper  
Save the Bay

Ann Ward  
Board of Directors  
Save the River

Ed Hopkins  
Director, Environmental Quality Program  
Sierra Club

Nicholas Pinter  
Professor, Dept. of Geology and Environmental  
Resources & Policy Program  
Southern Illinois University

Dana Beach  
Executive Director  
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League

Chris Hesla  
Executive Director  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation

Rick Eichstaedt  
Spokane Riverkeeper Program  
Director/Attorney  
Spokane Riverkeeper

Paul Chakroff  
Executive Director  
St. Croix Environmental Association

Neil Armingeon  
Riverkeeper  
St. Johns Riverkeeper

Sister Mary Lapping  
St. Louis Intercommunity Environmental Council  
of Women Religious

Andrew Mencinsky  
Executive Director  
Surfers' Environmental Alliance

Chad Nelsen  
Surfrider Foundation

Dana Wright  
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs  
Tennessee Clean Water Network

Melanie Winter  
Director  
The River Project

Jennifer Mckay  
Policy Specialist  
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Brian Wegener  
Watershed Watch Coordinator  
Tualatin Riverkeepers

Joshua Lewis  
Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental  
Research

Laura Hartt  
Water Policy Director  
Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

Jim Perkins  
Upper Cumberland Watershed Watch

Elizabeth Courtney  
Executive Director  
Vermont Natural Resources Council

Michael Baron  
Member, Board of Directors  
Virgin Islands Conservation Society

Frank Austenfeld, J. D.  
Executive Director  
Watershed Institute and Land Trust

David Groenfeldt  
Director  
Water-Culture Institute

Vote No On Dirty Water Bills and Riders

July 11, 2011

Page 8

Tim Guilfoile

Steering Committee Co-Chair

Water Protection Network

George Meyer

Executive Director

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Cindy Rank

WV Highlands Conservancy