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Water Associations Collaborate with EPA on Utility Management

Alexandria, Va. - Six associations representing the U.S. water and wastewater sector will collaborate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a series of activities designed to assist local water utilities that would benefit from new management practices. The collaboration was formalized in a joint Statement of Intent signed today by the executive directors of the American Public Works Association, Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, American Water Works Association, National Association of Clean Water Agencies, National Association of Water Companies, Water Environment Federation, and the EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, Benjamin Grumbles.

"This is an historic step forward in cementing our partnership on sustainable infrastructure," said Grumbles. "Today we begin an unprecedented and unified effort to advance effective management of water and wastewater utilities and to accelerate the pace of environmental protection."

"Our existing network of treatment facilities, distribution and collection systems are significant public assets worth an estimated \$1 trillion," said Bill Bertera, executive director of the Water Environment Federation. "Huge additional investments and adoption of new management practices will be needed over the next generation in order to maintain these aging assets and the gains we have made in public health and environmental protection. Legislators, ratepayers, and individual citizens need to know that utility managers are acting as good stewards of these assets if they are going to support this vital investment."

While each association has existing programs and services related to utility management, this is the first time that such a broad group of organizations has formally agreed to cooperate with each other and EPA on this topic.

"Based on the shared acknowledgment that effective management can help utilities enhance the stewardship of their infrastructure, improve performance in critical areas, and respond to other challenges, NACWA is pleased to join with other associations to facilitate cooperation, coordination, and effective communication among our organizations and with EPA," said Ken Kirk, executive director of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies.

Over the next 12 months, the water associations and EPA will identify the attributes of effectively managed utilities, identify methods for measuring utility progress toward goals, and develop a strategy to promote more widespread adoption of effective management practices across the water sector.

“Many water utilities employ exemplary management practices - meeting high levels of efficiency, cost of operation and quality of service - while maintaining their infrastructure and ensuring future water supplies, but this level of performance is not consistent across the industry,” said Diane VanDe Hei, executive director of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies. “This collaboration allows us to encourage the use of best management practices at systems throughout the nation.”

The associations will appoint a Steering Committee of water utility leaders to guide the effort, and additional input will be solicited through focus group meetings and meetings with the members of the individual associations. The first meeting will be in June 2006.

“Smart and efficient management of water systems serves each customer and protects public health,” concluded Jack W. Hoffbuhr, executive director of the American Water Works Association. “This agreement to collaborate underscores the importance of sound management practices today and in the future.”

A copy of the Statement signed today is available at www.wef.org.

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