

**American Rivers, American Water Works Association,
Association of Metropolitan Sewer Authorities,
Association of Metropolitan Water Authorities, Sierra Club,
Water Environment Federation**

December 22, 2004

Mr. Marcus Peacock
Associate Director for Natural Resources
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
Room 262 Old Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Peacock:

We are writing to express our concern over recent reductions to the National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA), administered by the U.S. Geological Survey in the FY05 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

For the past several fiscal years, NAWQA funding has remained flat or has been reduced - for FY05, the NAWQA budget was reduced nearly 3% from \$63,285,000 in FY04 down to \$61,450,000. NAWQA is the only federal non-regulatory water monitoring program and is the primary source for long-term, nationwide information on the water quality of streams, groundwater, and aquatic ecosystems. It is relied upon by federal, state and local water quality managers for critical water quality data that assists them in managing the nation's water resources.

As a coalition of state and local users of NAWQA data, we are extremely concerned that these funding cuts threaten the program's ability to provide the highest quality of scientific data it is known for. This funding pattern has required NAWQA to reduce the number of water study units from sixty to forty-two. Within these study regions, the repercussions of the reductions were amplified requiring the number stream networks targeted for continuous monitoring to be slashed from 492 stream sites to 84 sites nationally. And this year, rather than weakening the data collection due to the funding cut, NAWQA has been forced to extend the time in which it analyzes data, which will result in national data being released every five to seven years as opposed to every two to four years.

Congress established NAWQA in 1991 to provide consistent and comparable data on water-quality conditions and ecosystem health from across the nation in order to support sound water management and policy decisions. One of the most valuable pieces of information that NAWQA provides is identifying the causes of current and future trends in water quality health. The reductions in NAWQA monitoring sites and the frequency with which NAWQA data is released, severely hampers the program's ability to fulfill its

mandate and to effectively assist water quality managers and policy makers at all levels of government.

We urge the Administration to fully fund NAWQA so that this critical water monitoring data is available to determine the success of the ongoing efforts to protect and restore our nation's waters.

Sincerely,

Eli Weissman
Director of Government Relations
American Rivers

Diane VanDe Hei
Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Authorities

Tom Curtis
Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association

Ed Hopkins
Director of Environmental Quality Program
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Chris Hornback
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