

American Institute of Hydrology ♦ American Rivers ♦ American Society of Agronomy
American Water Works Association ♦ Association of American State Geologists
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies ♦ Association of State and Interstate Water
Pollution Control Administrators ♦ Clean Water Action
Crop Science Society of America ♦ The Groundwater Foundation
The H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economic and the Environment
National Association of Clean Water Agencies ♦ Natural Resources Defense Council
The National Ground Water Association ♦ Sierra Club ♦ Soil Science Society of America
♦ Water Environment Federation

March 20, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns, Chairman
Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
132 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Byron Dorgan, Ranking Member
Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
123 Senate Hart Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

***Request: Support for the National Water Quality Assessment Program and the
Ground-Water Resources Program within the FY07 Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies Appropriations***

Dear Chairman Burns and Senator Dorgan:

We are writing to urge you to provide increased funding for the National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA) and the Ground-Water Resources Program within the budget for the U.S. Geological Survey in the FY07 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. Specifically, we urge that you provide \$70 million for the NAWQA program and \$8.5 million for the Ground-Water Resources Program. These amounts would enable both programs to maintain program capabilities while meeting cost increases due to inflation.

One of the most important challenges we face as a Nation in the coming decades is the management of water resources to provide sufficient quantities of clean and safe water to meet the needs of our growing population, agricultural and industrial demand, and environmental and recreational needs. Two programs within the U.S. Geological Survey conduct basic scientific research on critical surface and ground water resources to assist policy-makers in making informed resource allocations decisions.

NAWQA was established to provide consistent and comparable information across the nation on water-quality conditions and ecosystem health, and the Ground-Water Resources Program was established to assess the availability of ground-water

resources at the regional and national scale. Both programs are the only non-regulatory federal programs that conduct long-term, scientifically-based monitoring of our nation's streams and ground water to support sound management and policy decisions relating to our water resources.

While a number of state and federal programs conduct water resources monitoring, these two programs are the primary sources for long-term, nationwide information on the quality of streams and aquatic ecosystems, and the availability of ground water resources.

The general public as well as local, state, and federal water quality officials charged with managing our water resources rely on NAWQA and the Ground-Water Resources Program and the information they provide.

For example, a 1993 NAWQA study near Denver uncovered the existence of MTBE in ground water which alerted the public and health professionals to unintended consequences of a compound designed to enable gasoline to burn cleaner. In 2005, NAWQA studies conducted in Austin, Texas uncovered a direct link between increased mortality of aquatic life and contaminated storm water run-off caused by polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) found in parking lot and driveway pavement sealants. During drought conditions, the Ground-Water Resources Program provides real-time ground-water measurements to USGS databases for display on the Internet for water managers and the general public.

In 2005, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report examining twenty federal data collection programs that assemble and analyze quantitative measures of the nation's environmental conditions and trends. The report examined whether funding issues or other factors will affect the ability of these programs to continue to generate data comparable to data from past years. GAO found that of the twenty programs examined, only two programs were in jeopardy of continuing to generate quality data, including NAWQA. GAO found that NAWQA's ability to continue providing comparable data has been significantly diminished due to funding constraints.

Congress provided slight increases in funding for both these programs in the FY06 appropriations cycle; however, the FY07 Budget request proposes a reduction for the Ground-Water Resources Program and a slight increase of approximately \$300,000 for NAWQA. If these budget requests were to be accepted, both programs will be required to curtail their research programs. Already, static funding for NAWQA has required it to reduce the number of water study units from sixty to forty-two. And, within these study regions, the impacts of the reductions were amplified by a reduction in the number of stream networks targeted for continuous monitoring from 492 stream sites to just 84.

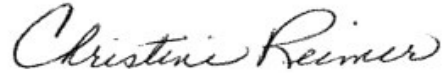
Insufficient funding for these two programs is severely hampering their ability to fulfill their missions and to effectively assist water managers and policy makers at all levels of government. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to develop a stronger cooperative program with existing state ground water research agencies with additional federal funding to these programs. We urge you to support \$70 million for NAWQA and \$8.5 million for the Ground-Water Resources Program in the FY07 Interior, Environment, and

Related Agencies Appropriations Bill so that critical water monitoring data will continue to be available.

Sincerely,



S. Elizabeth Birnbaum
Vice President for Government Affairs
American Rivers



Christine Reimer, Director of
Government Affairs
The National Ground Water Association



Karen Gautreaux, President,
Association of State and Interstate
Water Pollution Control Administrators



J. Michael Read, President
Water Environment Federation



Diane Van DeHei, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water
Agencies



Dr. Miguel A. Marino, President
American Institute of Hydrology



Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association



Ed Hopkins, Director, Environmental
Quality Program
Sierra Club



Susan Seacrest, President
The Groundwater Foundation



Paul Schwartz, Executive Director
Clean Water Action



Ken Kirk, Executive Director
National Association of Clean Water
Agencies



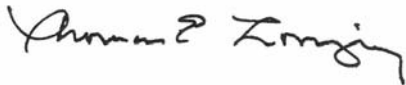
Peter Scholle, President
Association of American State
Geologists



Dave Sleper, President
American Society of Agronomy



Steve Fales, President
Crop Science Society of America



Thomas. E. Lovejoy, President
The H. John Heinz III Center for
Science, Economic and the
Environment



Mary Collins, President
Soil Science Society of America



Nancy Stoner
Director, Clean Water Project
Natural Resources Defense Council