

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 Charles H. Taylor, Chairman  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
B308 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks, Ranking Member  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

***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 Taylor and Congressman Dicks:

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,



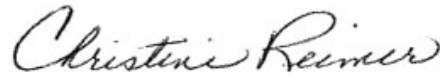
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Vice President for Government Affairs  
American Rivers



Susan Seacrest, President  
The Groundwater Foundation



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



Christine Reimer, Director of  
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Diane Van DeHei, Executive Director  
Association of Metropolitan Water  
Agencies



J. Michael Read, President  
Water Environment Federation



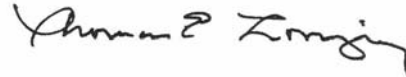
Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director  
American Water Works Association



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



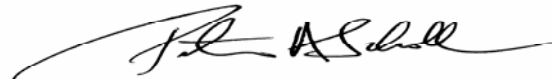
Ed Hopkins, Director, Environmental  
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Clean Water Action



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