

The *Clean Water Exchange* is pleased to provide you with this *October News Alert*, providing updates on important legislative, regulatory, and legal issues affecting the clean water community.

Stimulus Bill Talk Heats Up in D.C., NACWA Focuses on Wastewater Projects

With economic instability continuing and unemployment on the rise, discussion of a second stimulus bill with a significant infrastructure component to help struggling municipalities, boost the economy, and put people to work has been gathering momentum. Recent remarks by Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, as well as those by President Bush, noting their willingness to consider a second stimulus package are encouraging signs. Similarly, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee held a hearing on October 29, titled *Investing in Infrastructure: the Road to Recovery*, focusing on the need for an infrastructure-based stimulus package.

Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-Minn.) said at the hearing that the T&I Committee will prepare a targeted infrastructure spending package to stimulate the economy, including spending on municipal drinking water and wastewater systems, within two weeks of Congress's return from the election. Nineteen witnesses at the hearing, including government officials, highway and transit groups, utility contractors, manufacturing and engineering organizations, and economists all advocated a massive investment in infrastructure as the centerpiece of any stimulus package. Oberstar stated that the infrastructure package would be similar to an earlier stimulus bill, H.R. 7110, which included \$6.5 billion in funding for the clean water state revolving fund (CWSRF) and \$1 billion for the drinking water state revolving fund. H.R. 7110 passed the House on Sept. 26, but stalled in the Senate. Readers of the *Clean Water Exchange* are urged to discuss this issue with your Members of Congress to make the case for water infrastructure spending in any second economic stimulus package.

NRC Report on Stormwater Calls for Watershed Permitting, Increased Funding

The National Research Council (NRC) issued a [report](#) Oct. 15 identifying watershed-based permitting and increased federal funding to state and local governments as critical components of future efforts to better manage stormwater runoff. The report, *Urban Stormwater Management in the United States*, finds that "the course of action most likely to check and reverse degradation of the nation's aquatic resources would be to base all stormwater and other wastewater discharge permits on watershed boundaries instead of political boundaries" and calls on EPA to implement watershed-based permitting within the next five to 10 years. As part of this new permitting structure, the report recommends municipalities take the lead in implementing and regulating watershed permits, working with both point and nonpoint sources within the watershed to improve water quality. The plan would incorporate a variety of techniques to reduce water pollution, including water quality trading and green infrastructure.

NRC also recommends a substantial increase in federal funding to implement the watershed approach, noting that "EPA should seek significant congressional funding to support the states and municipalities in undertaking this new program, in the nature of the support distributed to upgrade municipal wastewater treatment plants after the 1972 passage" of the Clean Water Act. Such funding would aid municipalities as they take on a new and more critical role in implementing and overseeing a new generation of watershed permits. The report can be used as an important tool for the water sector while advocating for a meaningful federal partnership to address clean water challenges on a watershed basis, renewed federal funding, and incentives to promote the use of green infrastructure as a viable means to control stormwater runoff.

EPA Releases Final Climate Change Strategy for Water

EPA's Office of Water released the final version of its [National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change](#) on October 2. The *Strategy* is EPA's "initial effort to describe climate change impacts on water programs, define goals and objectives for responding to climate change, and identify a comprehensive package of specific response actions." It presents goals and key actions for the National Water Program in the areas of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and research; education of EPA staff on climate change issues; and management of climate change work within the National Water Program. Various water sector groups have asked EPA to develop longer-term strategies for identifying climate change impacts and adaptation needs of the water sector, and are also asking that EPA consider financial resources that will be

required for adaptation. EPA also mentions the need to address climate change impacts with a holistic watershed approach but does not specifically address it through the goals or key actions.

EPA Misses Deadline for Proposing Greenhouse Gas Reporting Rule

In related news, EPA missed its September 26 deadline for proposing a greenhouse gas reporting rule that would require certain industries, including wastewater treatment, to report their greenhouse gas emissions. The rule would set thresholds for each industry, and sources that exceed the thresholds would be required to report emissions. EPA is interested in receiving comments on their proposal and *Exchange* readers are encouraged to comment when the proposal is ready for review.

Water Sector Utilities Complete Security Reporting Tool

The Water Sector Coordinating Council (WSCC) and its government agency partners have launched a reporting tool for the [22 security measures](#) developed by the Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council (CIPAC) Metrics Workgroup. All of the nation's water and wastewater utilities were asked to participate in the anonymous and voluntary reporting, which is being administered by the WaterISAC. The CIPAC Metrics Workgroup, along with representatives of other water sector associations, government agencies, and water and wastewater utilities, developed the 22 measures to support the goals and objectives of the national Water Sector Specific Plan and assess the "all hazards" security progress of utilities. The measures will provide information on security activities, the security of hazardous chemicals, and risk reduction outcomes for the water sector. The proactive security measures taken by the water sector will be illustrated by the reporting results, and areas for improvement will be defined. The information collected will help water sector associations in their advocacy efforts regarding water and wastewater utility security.

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