



STATEMENT OF THE  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES  
ON  
"THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT: SUCCESSES AND  
FUTURE CHALLENGES."  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION and INFRASTRUCTURE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
OCTOBER 18, 2007

On the 35<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Clean Water Act, the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) is pleased to offer its views on the Act's successes and challenges. We commend the Committee for its long-standing approach to solving water infrastructure issues in a bi-partisan manner and are gratified that you have made the effort to look back at the significant accomplishments of the Clean Water Act, as well as identifying its continuing challenges. The hearing today will help to bring much needed attention to the severe funding shortage for clean water that exists in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, and it is our hope that the additional focus will help with the enactment of legislation by this Congress. If enacted into law, the Committee's bill, HR 720, which is aimed at reauthorizing and expanding the SRF program will be of great benefit in helping to closing the growing gap between the federal-state-local investment in the nation's wastewater infrastructure and the needs of our communities.

**The Need**

The need for increased investment in our nation's 16,000 wastewater systems is tremendous and has been well documented. In 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that capital investment needs for wastewater treatment will have to be at least \$331 billion by 2019 to keep the nation's systems in service. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concluded in 2002 that "costs to construct, operate, and maintain the nation's water infrastructure can be expected to rise significantly in the future." The CBO conservatively estimated that the needs would be \$13 billion annually for wastewater systems over the next 20 years. The Water Infrastructure Network (WIN) – of which ACEC is a member -- reported in 2001 that wastewater systems

faced a capital investment shortfall of approximately \$12 billion each year over the next 20 years

As you know, sewer overflows are a chronic and growing problem. Many of the nation's urban sewage collection systems are aging; some are more than one hundred years old. Because of budget constraints, many systems have not received the essential maintenance and repairs necessary to keep them working properly. The existing pipes, bricks and mortar that are holding the current system together are severely outdated and in need of repair. States are forced to delay construction projects in order to comply with important health and safety mandates by the EPA. As a result, it should not be a surprise that states and local governments are falling further behind in their efforts to repair and replace pipes and related facilities. Without a significantly enhanced federal role in providing assistance to communities for wastewater infrastructure, critical investments will not occur.

The nation's needs are large and growing because our systems are at a critical juncture in their life cycles. A combination of reduced federal spending over the past decade and increased federal mandates to meet treatment requirements is taking its toll. The collective aging of pipes and systems complicates the ability of communities to meet the objectives of the Clean Water Act. Seventy-five percent of the nation's capital investment in wastewater and drinking water infrastructure is buried underground and generally becomes visible to the public only when a system fails or a catastrophic event occurs. The useful life of many of these pipes and systems is coming to an end. Any additional deferral of the needed investments to repair and renew these systems will lead to greater increases in the future costs associated with protecting the nation's rivers, streams and lakes.

Congress has considered a number of bills in the last several years to alleviate the wastewater infrastructure funding problem. While they represented good steps forward in proposing to update and expand the SRF program, unfortunately, no new legislation has yet been enacted into law. In the meantime, the federal government has increasingly relied upon states, local governments, and utilities to finance the funding gap. It is time for the federal government to resume its shared responsibility for clean water by making a significant commitment to help remedy the problems associated with our nation's water infrastructure.

## **Conclusion**

From the early days of the Clean Water Act, and for decades before, ACEC's member firms built much of this nation's clean water infrastructure. We are now fighting an uphill battle to maintain the collective investment made by the federal government, states, and local governments. The job must be done, and will only be more expensive 10 or 20 or 30 years from now. The engineering

community stands ready to help rebuild and replace the aging and failing infrastructure that puts so many communities and citizens at risk. We have the technology, the capability, and the expertise. We need a comprehensive federal re-commitment to clean water.

We commend the Chairman for his leadership, and the Committee for recognizing the enduring need for a strong federal investment in water quality and in the security and stability of the nation's wastewater infrastructure. By passing HR 720 this year to assist communities with upgrading and improving water treatment facilities and making the State Revolving Fund more flexible, the Committee has shown that its allegiance to the goals of the Clean Water Act is still strong. On behalf of the member firms of ACEC, we look forward to working with the Congress to improve our nation's water infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration.

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*ACEC is the business association of America's engineering industry, representing 5,700 independent engineering companies throughout the United States. ACEC members are directly engaged in the development of America's infrastructure, and play a particularly critical role in the effort to improve the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure. ACEC member firms represent the broad spectrum of the industry, from very large firms to small, family-owned businesses. Overall, our members employ well over 300,000 people throughout the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., ACEC is a national federation of 51 state and regional organizations.*