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The Association of Clean Water Administrators
Written Public Testimony on FY22 Appropriations
for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
for Water Programs
April 30, 2021

Chairwoman Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

To Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce,

The Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. As the national voice of state, interstate, and territorial officials responsible for the implementation of programs that protect surface waters across the United States, ACWA supports the President's FY22 Discretionary Budget Request's suggested increase to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget. This request funds EPA at \$11.2 billion, which represents a \$2 billion or 21.3% increase from the FY21 enacted level, including increased funding for items that critical are critical to the mission of ACWA's members.

A recent Gallup poll found that, "of six environmental problems facing the U.S., Americans remain most worried about those that affect water quality. Majorities express 'a great deal' of worry about the pollution of both drinking water (56%) and rivers, lakes and reservoirs (53%)."¹

The President's discretionary request outlines many key areas throughout which this additional funding will be used, including: fighting climate change; promoting environmental justice; gathering data on polluters and holding them accountable; and investing in water infrastructure projects and contaminated site clean-ups. These functions are all are essential to carrying out the EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment.

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/347735/water-pollution-remains-top-environmental-concern.aspx>

This proposed increase comes with many benefits, especially as states begin to recover from the economic hardship and disruption of the pandemic. Our nation's water and wastewater systems are critical to supporting economic growth and protecting public health. Investing in infrastructure and building a skilled labor force enable water and wastewater utilities across the United States to rebound, recover, and prepare for the future. Therefore, it is vital that we support these efforts by providing consistently robust financing for water infrastructure and workforce development, as well as state programs charged with administering the Federal Clean Water Act. The President's proposed budget increases in these areas would not only help states resume pre-pandemic actions, but ensure states are equipped to tackle emerging challenges and issues.

ACWA appreciates Congress's support of Clean Water Act programs in the FY21 Omnibus Bill, particularly restoration in Section 106 Categorical Grants for the administration of the Act within the states. The CWA Section 106 Water Pollution Control Grant Program gives states the flexibility to conduct essential pollution prevention, inspection, monitoring, permitting, and compliance activities as EPA's co-regulator. Sustainable funding for Section 106 State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) is necessary to ensure states have the programmatic capacity to meet demands for cleaner water. Strongly funding Section 106 ensures water infrastructure projects are constructed with the appropriate public health safeguards and environmental permits, without delays or bottlenecks, and operated such that they fulfill their intended purpose.

State surface water programs play an integral role in building water infrastructure, from planning to design permitting to construction and maintenance, to permitting and compliance. State agencies are responsible for a myriad of infrastructure-related tasks including: providing technical assistance to small, rural, disadvantaged, and underserved communities; marketing investments in green infrastructure; processing loan and grant applications; prioritizing projects to meet the greatest need; conducting environmental reviews; performing engineering analyses; permitting projects; monitoring compliance; and providing fiscal accountability.

In the 2021 Omnibus, Congress maintained 2020 funding levels for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and increased support for the Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (WIFIA). Those financing vehicles are the national flagship of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure investment. Annual report cards from the American Society of Civil Engineers consistently point out the marginal-to-poor condition of our infrastructure, thwarting economic growth, diminishing the American quality of life and inadequately protecting public health and safety. It is essential that Congress build on the momentum to increase financial support in water and wastewater infrastructure to improve our Nation's grades.

The Clean Water Act Section 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program enjoyed a modest increase in funding in 2021 and buttresses the quality of our national waterbodies in the face of ever-increasing and evolving non-point source contributions to pollutant loadings. Regional programs assisting the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, Long Island Sound, Gulf of

Mexico, New Hampshire's Great Bay, and Lake Champlain protect some of our nation's most important waters to promote human health, support economic activities, and preserve habitats for wildlife. Each of these programs need ongoing funding at 2021 levels or more in 2022 and beyond.

Many of the funding increases seen in 2021 reversed years of declining support for state water programs. For example, STAG programs are now funded at the level they were 19 years ago. Shortfalls in funding undercut the proven success of states administering these programs to fulfill the goals of the Clean Water Act. Not only do increases in federal investment help reverse declines in water quality, but they also create a multitude of construction jobs, boost the national economy, and benefit private-sector development. With this in mind, ACWA asks for your support in delivering to states the resources they need to carry out these critical programs as you consider the President's budget request.

In conclusion, we ask that the Subcommittee use the President's discretionary budget request as a starting point and stoutly fund the above noted CWA programs. The proposed FY22 budget empowers states to invest in critical water solutions through infrastructure investment, technical assistance, data acquisition and analyses, and regulatory compliance. These investments will have significant benefits for states, interstates, territories, and all Americans across the country by fostering progress toward our nation's water quality goals and simultaneously, stimulating economic growth, supporting tourism, providing recreation, and improving nationwide health with a clean environment. True to the spirit of cooperative federalism, the states cannot do this task alone – so we ask for a vigorous federal-state partnership through the FY22 appropriations process. The essential key to achieving the goals of the Clean Water Act is Federal government support for the work of the state members of ACWA.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Stiles
Director, Bureau of Water, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
ACWA President