



The New York Water Environment Association, Inc.
The Water Quality Management Professionals

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15 November, 2013

Honorable Robert K. Sweeney
Chair, Committee on Environmental Conservation
New York State Assembly Legislative Office Building, Room 625
Albany, NY 12248

Honorable Mark Grisanti
Chair, Committee on Environmental Conservation
New York State Senate Legislative Office Building, Room 902
Albany, NY 11247

**Re: New Environmental Bond Act of 2014 (Bill No. A8121/S5925)
Letter of Support**

Dear Assemblyman Sweeney and Senator Grisanti,

As you know, the New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) is a statewide nonprofit organization of 2,500 water professionals dedicated to the preservation, protection and enhancement of New York's water resources. NYWEA members have been in attendance at various public hearings held across the State regarding the proposed "New Environmental Bond Act" (or Act). NYWEA would like to commend both of you and your respective Committees for leadership on this important topic and to officially support the infrastructure investment provisions proposed in the Act.

NYWEA plays a key role in supporting municipal organizations that provide wastewater services for more than 15 million people across the State. New York State's waterways, public health, and economic future rely on the dedicated staff that operate, maintain, and improve these essential public assets. Since the passage of the Federal Clean Water Act in the 1970's, tremendous environmental gains have been achieved through projects and programs implemented by these wastewater service providers.

Unfortunately, there is still work to do. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's 2008 report entitled Wastewater Infrastructure Needs of New York State estimated that over \$36 billion will be required in the next 20 years for upgrading of the State's aging and deteriorating wastewater infrastructure that delivers this critical service. These costs will primarily be shouldered by local ratepayers as there is no sustainable grant program available for wastewater infrastructure similar to the Highway Trust Fund or "gas tax" for roads and bridges.

For municipalities that are subject to “2% Tax Cap” constraints, there are onerous fiscal constraints that impact progress on critical wastewater improvement projects. In short, there is an extensive need for investment in infrastructure and a significant need for additional funding.

Furthermore, wastewater collection and treatment not only protects our health and the quality of our lakes and streams, it is a significant driver of economic development and job creation. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that each public dollar invested in water infrastructure increases private long-term Gross Domestic Product output by \$6.35. The Department of Commerce estimates that each job created in the local water and wastewater industry creates 3.68 jobs in the national economy and each public dollar spent yields \$2.62 in economic output in other industries. It is clear that investment in wastewater infrastructure will also stimulate the economy and create good paying jobs while protecting public health and the environment.

NYWEA believes that New York State has an opportunity to be a leader in the nation regarding modernizing the clean water regulatory paradigm. NYWEA recently proposed that the State consider a “New Pure Water’s Program” by:

- Enhancing the partnership between New York State and the local municipalities through coordinated work groups, improved communication, and transparency;
- Better prioritizing water quality investments based on proper planning and up to date scientific data;
- Providing municipalities additional flexibility to meet critical water quality and public health needs; and
- Easing the cost burdens required to manage and improve these vital wastewater assets.

This proposed Act dovetails well with the intent of the “New Pure Water’s Program” white paper (enclosed) as it demonstrates New York State’s commitment to addressing today’s problems through a partnership with municipal wastewater organizations. The funding allocated to infrastructure investment will be entrusted with the environmental professionals that tirelessly protect public health and the environment, while also being mindful of the cost burden to the local ratepayers. New York State as a whole will be the beneficiary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Koester
President, NYWEA

cc: Hon Sean M. Ryan–Chair, NYS Assembly Subcommittee on Oversight of the NYSDEC

Encl. – “A New NYS Pure Water’s Program” White Paper