



The New York Water Environment Association, Inc.

The Water Quality Management Professionals

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RE: Environmental Advocates Report – Turning a Blind Eye to Illegal Pollution

Dear Editor:

There is a shortage of funds for keeping our rivers, streams and lakes clean, but it is completely different from that singled out in the recent Environmental Advocates report suggesting that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is failing to keep “polluters” in check. This misplaced effort fights yesterday’s battles and fails to fully address the real challenges of today. A productive dialogue would focus on finding new sources of money to repair pipes and treatment plants, and most fundamentally, on creating a consensus about prioritizing infrastructure investments that yield the most sustainable benefits.

Water Utility Executives take great pride in protecting our environment. Across New York there are over six hundred wastewater treatment facilities that serve 1,610 municipalities and provide wastewater treatment for more than 15 million people. We represent millions of ratepayers in small and large municipalities. We manage thousands of people that work every day to protect our waterways from pollution using state of the art technology, ingenuity and know how. We are not polluters; we are in fact hands-on environmental professionals who take responsibility for successfully implementing the Clean Water Act to turn pollution into resources.

We welcome an honest dialogue on how we might best continue to improve the health of our waterways. Many of our treatment systems built in the early days of this struggle are now reaching the end of their useful life and require costly replacement or repair.

We must collectively do more to educate our customers about where their water and sewer fees are invested and how any necessary increases will help to protect public health and our environment for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Mark Koester, NYWEA President, on behalf of the Utility Executives from Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Westchester, Long Island and New York City and other small and large municipalities across New York State.