

The Honorable Jim Oberstar, Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chairwoman  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Mica, Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable James Inhofe, Ranking Member  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

February 10, 2009

Dear Representatives Oberstar and Mica and Senators Boxer and Inhofe:

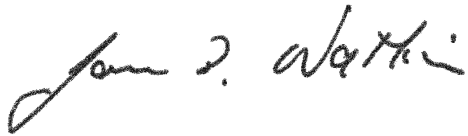
As an entity representing the broad interests of organizations and individuals that support our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative commends the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment for its hearing exploring water-efficient and energy-efficient technologies that can be incorporated into the nation's system of wastewater infrastructure. The Joint Initiative recognizes the need to upgrade the country's wastewater infrastructure as a key step to reducing a major source of pollution that threatens the ecological and economic health of our oceans and coasts.

Our oceans are one of the nation's greatest assets, yet they have been subject to chronic and acute influx of pollutants from multiple sources. Wastewater treatment plants and sewer system overflows represent major sources of pollution to our waterways. The heavy concentration of population in coastal areas combined with pollutants flowing from rivers and streams far inland are the primary causes of nutrient enrichment, hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, toxic contamination, and other problems that plague coastal waters. Not only do degraded waters cause ecological damage, they also pose significant economic impacts, such as beach closures, contaminated seafood, and increased human health care costs. With over half the nation's population living along our coasts and economic activities in our coastal areas generating more than half of the annual Gross Domestic Product, upgrading our wastewater infrastructure is an important step in the broader strategy to secure clean coastal and ocean waters, healthy habitats, and the important economic benefits they provide.

The Joint Initiative strongly encourages the House and Senate to include funds for the Clean Water State Resolving Fund as part of the economic stimulus bill, as these funds are crucial to helping states improve wastewater treatment plants and sewer systems. Increased investments in modernizing wastewater infrastructure are critical to restoring, maintaining, and improving the nation's water quality.

The Joint Initiative applauds the Subcommittee for its commitment to addressing the challenge of aging wastewater infrastructure and for exploring a variety of sustainable technologies and approaches for meeting this challenge. Taking action on this issue is critical to protecting our ocean and coastal ecosystems and the many economic benefits we derive from them. We hope that your Committees will continue to make improvement of our nation's wastewater infrastructure a priority in the pending stimulus bill and during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Sincerely,



James D. Watkins  
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)  
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

cc:

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chairwoman  
House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg, Chairman  
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality

The Honorable David Vitter, Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality

Lisa Jackson, Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency