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**Ken Kirk**

November 10, 2008

Dear Ms. Browner:

As the leading representative of over 300 publicly owned wastewater treatment agencies across the nation, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) is writing to congratulate President Obama on his recent victory and to provide him and his transition team with our perspective on the nation's water policy priorities. We are aware that you are heading up the transition team responsible for environmental policy and, as such, would like to make you aware of some of our key issues and to set up a meeting with you or the appropriate officials as soon as possible.

NACWA's membership collectively treats and reclaims over 18 billion gallons of wastewater per day and, while our membership includes utilities of all sizes, we represent the vast majority of major metropolitan agencies across the country. As leading environmental stewards, NACWA members work to ensure that the significant water quality improvements made in the 36 years since the Clean Water Act was passed continue and are not reversed.

NACWA very much appreciates President-Elect Obama's and his campaign's focus on protecting the environment and rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, including its aging wastewater treatment systems. Specifically, we greatly appreciate President-Elect Obama's support for an infrastructure-based stimulus package and NACWA has been leading the effort to ensure that ready-to-go wastewater projects are included in such legislation.

Our nation faces a \$300-\$500 billion funding gap for wastewater infrastructure over the next 20 years, without taking into consideration the recent economic downturn and its impacts on our struggling communities. The federal share in paying for clean water has dropped from about 78 percent in the 1970s to less than 5 percent today. In the meantime, our aging infrastructure — vital to ensuring environmental and public health protections and a strong economy — is crumbling. As you know, a reinvestment in our nation's infrastructure will help stimulate our nation's economy and create solid jobs. Moreover, NACWA's public agency members face an EPA-estimated \$150 billion cost to control sewer overflows, a challenge that will only be made more difficult by altered precipitation patterns resulting from climate change.

NACWA members also face a myriad of other 21st century challenges and look forward to working with the Obama administration to address them as well. Our public agency members are being saddled with more stringent regulations and new challenges, including control of nutrients and contaminants of emerging concern. However, we believe the solution can be found by working together on innovative,

holistic, watershed-based approaches that suit the complexity of 21st century water quality and quantity challenges. We also recognize that addressing climate change will be paramount in your administration and share your interest and concern because we believe this issue is fundamentally about water. Countless scientific studies provide strong evidence that a changing climate will lead to more precipitation and stronger storms in some areas and increased drought in others. The anticipated rise in atmospheric temperatures will produce thermal expansion of the oceans, leading to potentially catastrophic rises in sea level. As you know, many wastewater treatment facilities are located in coastal areas or in floodplains and would be threatened by a significant rise in sea level. On the other end of the spectrum, drought conditions could affect other regions of the country. We have already seen the enormous problems caused by the severe drought that ravaged the southeastern United States last year. In certain regions of the country, water supply issues have long been of concern, and water quality managers must continually look for innovative ways, including water reuse and reclamation, to ensure enough water is available to meet the demands of a growing population.

These are but a small sample of the clean water community's many challenges that we would like to discuss further with you and others on your transition team. NACWA member agencies are seeking a recommitment to a strong, long-term federal-state-local partnership that was so instrumental in helping us achieve the water quality improvements under the Clean Water Act that we enjoy today. Through this strong partnership, not only will we be able to maintain the clean water progress achieved to date but we will also have the tools and resources needed move forward toward the next level of water quality improvements

Please do not hesitate to contact me, Ken Kirk, at [kkirk@nacwa.org](mailto:kkirk@nacwa.org) or (202) 833-4653 for more information on these important issues and to set up a meeting with me and my staff at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Kirk". The "K" is large and stylized, with a long vertical stroke. The "Kirk" is written in a cursive, flowing script.

Ken Kirk  
NACWA Executive Director