

## Building Wastewater Utility Resiliency to Changing Climate Conditions

### Climate Change Threatens U.S. Wastewater Systems

Over the next several decades, the Nation's wastewater utilities are expected to face many challenges related to climate change, including increased drought, more extreme storms and floods, and rising sea levels—all of which threaten water quality and quantity and public health and the economy. Though the specific effects of climate change will vary by region, wastewater utilities will likely confront the following challenges:

- Extreme storm events that will result in increased frequency of sewage overflow to rivers, lakes, and coastal beaches from treatment plans that were not designed for climate change-induced conditions. These events could result in increased public health risks and economic losses to commercial fishing and recreation-based economies.
- Wastewater utilities located in coastal areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise will need to ensure the resiliency of their infrastructure or relocate to avoid harmful effects from flooding and inundation.
- In regions where extreme drought conditions persist or where saltwater intrusion compromises freshwater drinking supplies, wastewater reuse and recycling will become a greater part of the water supply solution, at a substantial cost to ratepayers.
- Resiliency actions will be expensive for the local ratepayer, and, in fact, early estimates suggest costs related to building resiliency at drinking water and wastewater utilities can reach \$448 billion to \$944 billion by mid-century.

### NACWA Supports Federal Funding to Improve Wastewater Utility Resiliency

To confront the challenges of climate change, water-related infrastructure and water resource agencies must be part of the solution.

- NACWA urges Congress to pass the *Water System Resiliency and Sustainability Act*, which would establish a program through which the Nation's water supply, wastewater, stormwater, and flood management agencies can compete for funding to undertake projects to adapt their operations and make their infrastructure more resilient to climate change. Sponsors include: Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-CA) and Senators Harry Reid (D-NV), Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Ben Cardin (D-MD).

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