



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUL 28 2011

Mr. Tom Cochran
United States Conference of Mayors
CEO and Executive Director
1620 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Cochran:

We appreciate your continued interest and support in discussing how we can jointly achieve our shared goals of meeting water quality standards, protecting community health and revitalizing local economies by reducing raw sewage discharges. EPA recognizes that local municipalities are facing significant financial and economic hardships, but we also believe that through innovative solutions, green infrastructure and other tools, costs can be minimized while achieving the goal of having healthy and clean water for all.

Over the past several years, and most recently at a joint meeting between the United States Conference of Mayors member representatives and EPA in March, considerable progress has been made towards providing needed flexibility while addressing combined sewer (CSO) and sanitary sewer overflows (SSO). However, there is more work to be done. We write to re-affirm our commitment to continuing our dialogue with you on this important work.

Municipalities know firsthand the importance of clean water and its direct impact on the health of their citizens and social and economic health of their communities. Communities recognize that improving the quality of their water brings with it many socio-economic benefits, including economic and energy savings, green jobs, neighborhood enhancements, recreational opportunities and increased property values.

As such, many municipalities are implementing programs that involve water infrastructure improvements - that are in some cases, long overdue - in order protect the water resources on which their local communities depend. It is our hope that vigorous promotion of green infrastructure solutions to wet weather events will assist local communities in capturing these benefits, while often reducing public sector costs. This is why our April 20, 2011 memorandum, "Protecting Water Quality with Green Infrastructure in EPA Water Quality Permitting and Enforcement Programs," directed all EPA offices to work with communities to identify and implement green infrastructure solutions that are cost-effective, flexible and environmentally-sound.

EPA is now working closely with many communities to incorporate these green infrastructure solutions into long-term control plans. EPA recognizes that it will need to provide municipalities with flexibility to try to implement green infrastructure and adaptive management solutions for there to be a sustained investment in such solutions. Our recent work with the cities of Kansas City, Cleveland and St. Louis is evidence of our ability to find workable solutions. Moreover, as evidenced by our work with the City of Indianapolis, when better and more cost-effective approaches are identified, we are willing to revise existing plans and requirements and embrace new approaches that demonstrate flexibility and achieve comparable and measureable results.

We recognize that municipalities face numerous challenges in meeting their water quality goals and that it is imperative to focus resources first on those projects that will have the greatest environmental benefit. We would like to work directly with you, your members and municipalities to find common ground on an approach that allows municipalities to evaluate all of their Clean Water Act related requirements and develop a comprehensive plan to meet these requirements.

To this end, we would like to extend to you and your members an invitation to meet again in September to discuss additional approaches that would allow municipalities to develop effective and affordable solutions with accountability to ensure that our communities receive the clean water they depend on for drinking, recreation and overall community vitality.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Giles
Assistant Administrator
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance



Nancy Stoner
Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Water