

The Clean Water Act at 40 ...

Past Success and a 2020 Vision for the Future

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is 40 years old. The CWA is widely and justifiably hailed as one of the Nation's most successful environmental statutes.

Goal of the Clean Water Act -

To Restore and Maintain the Integrity of the Nation's Waters

Key questions:

- 1) Have we been successful?
- 2) How do we become even more successful?

The legal and regulatory framework of the Clean Water Act prevent organic and toxic pollutants from reaching America's waters—daily, protecting our environment and public health while providing unparalleled ecosystem improvement.

It has spurred a national investment of more than \$600 billion in federal, state, and local dollars to build, repair, and replace wastewater infrastructure since its 1972 enactment, creating jobs and expanding the economy.

It has ensured that power to implement the program was vested in delegated state agencies, signifying the intent to keep decision - making close to the communities that would benefit most from its implementation.

In 1972, nearly two-thirds of the Nation's waters were impaired; today, that fraction has been reduced to one-third. Although this is progress, we have a long way to go to meet the goal of completely eliminating water quality impairment.

After 40 years of accomplishments, we all need to refocus on ideas and solutions that will ensure another 40 years of water quality progress.

To achieve this goal, we need a 2020 Vision for Clean Water.

A 2020 Vision for Clean Water

This effort must focus on:

- Developing holistic watershed approaches that can effectively address the diffuse and complex sources of water pollution that hinder additional progress.
- Ensuring that maximum flexibility, creativity, authority, and innovation under the Clean Water Act are supported and that barriers which may stand in the way of these objectives are addressed.
- Spreading awareness of the value of our Nation's water including the vital role of water and wastewater infrastructure in job creation, economic expansion, and public health protection.
- Maximizing the effect of limited human and capital resources by focusing on the initiatives and projects that achieve the greatest water quality gains relative to the collective effort invested.
- Ensuring that municipalities and states have the funds and financial tools needed to implement programs that will ensure 40 more years of clean water improvements.

We need another 40 years of progress.

We must renew, revitalize, and reinvest in our commitment to clean water.

We have inherited the water quality and infrastructure of the 20th century from our parents and grandparents—our children and grandchildren deserve the same from us in the 21st century.

