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Ken Kirk

December 13, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid

Majority Leader

U.S. Senate

522 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Daniel Inouye

Chairman

Committee on Appropriations

U.S. Senate

722 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell

Minority Leader

U.S. Senate

317 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran

Ranking Member

Committee on Appropriations

U.S. Senate

113 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Senator Inouye, and Senator Cochran:

As Congress prepares an emergency appropriations package to assist recovery efforts in states impacted by Hurricane Sandy, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) urges you to support the President's request for \$60.4 billion in aid for states impacted by Hurricane Sandy and ensure that sufficient money is available to help repair the impacted region's municipal wastewater treatment plants and strengthen their resiliency to withstand future natural disasters.

Hurricane Sandy crippled many wastewater treatment plants in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, and Delaware, causing major service disruptions and the unfortunate release of hundreds of millions of gallons of raw and partially treated sewage into local waterways, underscoring the need to commit to a federal-state-local partnership to harden these systems against such future catastrophic events. As the New York Times reported in a November 29 article¹, New York City alone estimates damage from Hurricane Sandy to the wastewater sector will total around \$1.1 billion. Based on preliminary assessments, total damage to the municipal wastewater sector in all of the affected states will far exceed this amount.

Local communities already struggling to recover from one of the deepest and most prolonged economic downturns in history should not be asked to shoulder these

¹ Schwartz, Michael. "Sewage Flows After Storm Expose Flaws in System." *The New York Times* 29 November 2012. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/nyregion/sewage-flows-after-hurricane-sandy-exposing-flaws-in-system.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

costs alone – assistance from the Federal government is necessary. Prior to Sandy, utilities in these regions already confronted enormous investment needs to meet regulatory standards related to combined sewer overflows and nutrient control as well as other Clean Water Act requirements. And while much of the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy was unavoidable, the storm served as a painful reminder that much of the country's wastewater infrastructure is in dire need of upgrade and repair. Modernizing and replacing the country's aging water infrastructure is among the top public works priorities our Nation faces, and it will require a serious and long-term investment. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates \$298.1 billion in wastewater and stormwater needs over the next 20 years.

NACWA was pleased to see the Administration request for \$60.4 billion in Federal resources specifically included "efforts to repair damage to . . . public infrastructure and to help communities prepare for future storms." NACWA also urges support for the Administration's request to include \$600 million in the relief package for the affected region's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds to help utilities build resiliency to confront future extreme wet weather events that are becoming more and more common. For many years, NACWA has advocated for this type of support for water and wastewater utilities as key first responders dealing with our changing climate. In fact, we have worked closely with key members of the House and Senate on legislation, *The Water System Resiliency and Sustainability Act*, which would target assistance to water and wastewater utilities seeking to improve their systems' resiliency to these weather-related events. Helping our communities adapt to more extreme weather events has never been more important and NACWA urges your support of this critical funding piece.

NACWA is also conducting a survey of its members affected by Hurricane Sandy and will share any relevant financial or other information garnered from this survey as appropriate. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact Hannah Mellman at hmellman@nacwa.org should you need further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Kirk".

Ken Kirk
Executive Director

Cc: Members of the Senate