

Lajuana Wilcher

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Lajuana Wilcher is the only woman in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) history to have been nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as EPA's Assistant Administrator for Water. Under her leadership from 1989-1993, the Office of Water promulgated EPA's Phase I Stormwater regulations, over 50 drinking water MCLs, water quality standards for toxics, and biosolids (sewage sludge) regulations. During her tenure, the Office of Water (OW) launched EPA's watershed protection approach and the Clean Water Act section 319 nonpoint source grant program. She negotiated and signed the EPA-Corps Memorandum of Agreement for wetlands mitigation, and also led EPA's involvement in the Exxon Valdez oil spill litigation negotiations.

The Combined Sewer Overflow Policy (as drafted), however, is one of the most important accomplishments of her time at EPA because of its unique approach to a significant problem (considering costs and benefits in a way unlike other point source regulations) and because of the manner in which it was developed not by EPA, but by a negotiated policy dialogue consisting of POTWs, environmental advocacy groups, and others.

Ms. Wilcher had the opportunity to implement the CSO Policy while Secretary of Kentucky's Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. From January 2004 until April 2004, she negotiated a novel settlement among the Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District, the State, EPA and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) all in record time.

Ms. Wilcher returned home to Kentucky in 2002 after working for 19 years in Washington DC in private law practice and at EPA. She is a partner with English, Lucas, Priest & Owsley, L.L.P. in Bowling Green, where she advises municipal, utility, individual, corporate and not-for profit clients in a variety of strategic, regulatory, legislative and litigation matters, including environmental permitting, compliance, and enforcement issues. She has advised CSO communities on compliance, negotiations and CSO Policy interpretations and strategy.

Ms. Wilcher has taught environmental law and policy courses at Vermont Law School during the summers (2000-2009), and has served as an adjunct professor of law teaching environmental law courses at Vanderbilt Law School.