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Water Environment Federation Urges White House, Congress to Rebuild Resilient Water Infrastructure After Hurricanes

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is urging the White House and Congress to provide robust funding and prioritize resilience in rebuilding the water infrastructure in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that was damaged by the recent hurricanes.

WEF also requests that the Administration and Congress act to remove any restrictions that prevent certified drinking water and wastewater operators from providing assistance in a disaster area.

“It may have been impossible to prevent water systems from failing due to the severity of the storms, but it is possible to rebuild them in ways that will reduce future risks and safeguard public health and environmental impacts,” said Eileen O’Neill, Executive Director of WEF. “While recovery will take time, and will not be easy, we have seen following Hurricane Katrina and Super Storm Sandy, that recovery is not only possible but can offer an opportunity to make the impacted area more resilient.”

Specifically, WEF strongly urges Congress to take three important steps:

- Provide robust grant or very low-interest loan funding for the damaged drinking water and wastewater systems;
- Direct or urge utilities receiving federal funding to incorporate greater resilience in the design and location of the systems, and;
- Support mutual aid efforts within the water sector to make disaster response more effective by placing the water sector under its own Emergency Support Function (ESF).

“Greater resilience ensures that taxpayer dollars are used wisely, and systems perform to standards that protect public health, the environment, and promote economic growth,” said O’Neill. “Unfortunately, the impacts of climate change such as stronger storms and sea level rise will continue to pose a threat to these areas, so it is vital to be prepared for future events.”

WEF members include water professionals in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands who were directly impacted by the hurricanes, and are directly involved with the recovery and rebuilding processes. Restoring water supply and wastewater treatment service following a disaster is clearly vital to recovery. The size and scope of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria demonstrate the need for drinking water and wastewater professionals from other parts of the nation to be able to readily provide their professional expertise to help quickly restore services.

As the recovery from the hurricanes continues, WEF will monitor impacts on the water sector, assist any way the organization is able, advocate for needed assistance, and provide information to its membership. The WEF Board of Trustees recently authorized a donation of \$10,000 toward hurricane relief efforts and is encouraging members who wish to support hurricane recovery to consider financial donations. To assist members affected by the recent hurricanes and by the earthquake in Mexico, WEF extended the membership status for members from affected areas through the end of the year. WEF also relaxed refund rules for WEFTEC registrants and exhibiting companies who are in the impacted areas.

To read the letter to the White House and Congress, click [here](#).

Read about WEF's response to the hurricanes: <https://www.wef.org/hurricanes2017>

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About WEF

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 34,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals; enrich the expertise of water professionals; increase the awareness of the impact and value of water; and provide a platform for water sector innovation. To learn more, visit www.wef.org.