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October 28, 2019

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Chairwoman Napolitano,

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is pleased to support the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 1497, the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019. There is tremendous national need for increased funding and financing resources to help communities and utilities assess, repair, replace, and maintain the aging wastewater and stormwater infrastructure that protects public health and the environment. This legislation will provide a significant boost in resources to help tackle our national infrastructure needs, as well as make significant headway towards future challenges, such as climate change resilience and workforce shortages.

A 2016 report by WEF documenting the tax generating, job creation, and economic growth benefits of increased funding for the Clean Water SRF program found several key facts that strongly support H.R. 1497:

- Every \$1 million of federal spending generates \$695,000 in Federal taxes due to economic activity and payroll taxes.
- On average, 16.5 jobs are generated for each \$1 million in SRF spending. Plus, additional jobs are created by indirect spending.
 - SRF spending generates high paying jobs – each job is estimated to bring about *\$60,000 in labor income*.
- Every \$1 million dollars of SRF spending results in \$2.25 million dollars in economic output, on average.

WEF is pleased to see the Committee has provided a significant increase for the Clean Water SRF, as well as expanding the Green Project Reserve, which is necessary to help communities with increasing investments in stormwater management infrastructure and resource recovery from wastewater treatment.

Additionally, WEF strongly backs the workforce development provisions included in H.R. 1497. The municipal drinking water, wastewater and stormwater management sector is facing a massive workforce replacement need and offers significant job growth potential. The high rate of retirements and aging workforce in the sector are placing pressure on utilities to find the next generation of workers. An estimated 30% to 50%

of utility workers will retire over the next decade, taking with them tremendous professional knowledge and experience (WRF/AWWA, *“Water Sector Workforce Sustainability Initiative,” 2010*). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there will be an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 jobs available within utilities over the next six years. These are Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) cluster jobs that do not require a bachelor’s degree and pay family-sustaining wages. They cannot be outsourced and are largely immune to economic externalities. These are jobs that protect public health and the environment, on par with other first responder jobs within communities. These jobs are in every city and county across the nation and are long-term careers that provide excellent healthcare and retirement benefits.

The provisions in H.R. 1497 that support increased stormwater management and resilience to climate change and sea-level rise are critically important. Communities have been planning and investing to better manage and treat stormwater, in addition to current and forecasted climate change impacts. We recognize that there are several provisions within the legislation that specifically support stormwater management and resilience efforts within communities. The funding resources included H.R. 1497 will help facilitated greater comprehensive integrated watershed planning and water quality protection, as well as preparedness to extreme weather events.

WEF also thanks the Committee for including recognition of the financial capabilities report developed by WEF, American Water Works Association (AWWA), and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) titled *“Developing a New Framework for Household Affordability and Financial Capability Assessment in the Water Sector”* in Section 16 of the legislation. Community and household affordability are particularly difficult issues within the water sector, and we appreciate the Committee’s support as the US EPA and stakeholders work to identify solutions.

Finally, WEF welcomes the Committee’s interest in modernizing permit term extensions of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). For most NPDES permit holders, potentially extending permit terms to 10 years will have no impact upon their commitment to protecting the environment and serving their communities but will allow for a significant savings of staff time and resources. WEF thanks the Committee for receiving input from stakeholders throughout the legislative drafting process, and we hope to continue to provide additional input if additional changes to the legislative text are considered. One area of interest will be to allow for the continued authority to provide administrative extensions of NPDES permits, and inclusion of NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits into the final legislation.

Congratulations on developing a much needed and comprehensive bipartisan bill. WEF strongly endorses the bill and we offer any additional assistance needed to get it enacted into law.

Water Environment Federation