



## WEF Comments on EPA Draft Clean Water Strategy

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is pleased for the opportunity to submit comment on EPA's Draft Clean Water Strategy. Formed in 1928, WEF is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization with 36,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. WEF and its Member Associations proudly work to achieve our mission of preserving and enhancing the global water environment.

WEF fully supports the Administrator Jackson's vision to "see a huge leap forward in water quality as we saw in the 1970's" and many of the paths required to reach this goal. Several goals and proposed actions outlined in the Strategy are in agreement with current WEF policy and position statements, which are highlighted below. Strategy goals that are inconsistent with WEF positions are also listed below along with comments to explain differences and possible manners to bridge these gaps.

### General comments include:

- WEF understands that this strategy works within the existing Clean Water Act (CWA) framework. However, in its current form, the Clean Water Act is unable to affect significant further advances, nationally, in water quality improvement. This is evidenced by a suite of recent assessments that indicate water quality improvement has plateau in spite of the current level of public and private resources devoted to water quality and ongoing federal and state program delivery. WEF has called for the CWA to be modernized to include the new tools and policies necessary to assure water quality will improve in all US waters [see WEF CWA Modernization position statement at [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org)].
- While the listing of principles and actions in the strategy are informative, more specific information on these points would be beneficial and could provide more insight into implementation of the overall strategy. Assigning a general timeline for each goal along with estimates of staffing and budget needs would provide context for realistically seeing this strategy through to completion.

Specific comments are listed below:

### Item 1

**Section Titled Strategies to Achieve Clean Water Goals - Page 4.** "Systematically assess the nation's waters to provide a baseline for transparently tracking progress".

**WEF Comment:** WEF supports this goal and EPA efforts to address water quality issues and concerns in the U.S. Also, WEF continues to support the USGS National

Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA) including holding briefings on important water quality topics on Capitol Hill in an effort to disseminate important scientific information to Senate/House staff as well as raise the awareness of water quality impacts on the Nation's water in a general sense. WEF encourages EPA to fully coordinate its assessment activities with USGS/NAWQA.

## Item 2

**Section Titled Key Actions for Strengthening Water Protections - Page 4.** "Use bold, new, creative, more effective ways to implement CWA and other programs, more strategically deploy existing regulatory authorities and enforcement programs, as well as voluntary approaches and market-based incentives"

**WEF Comment:** As previously mentioned, WEF believes that the CWA is no longer effective at making major gains in water quality improvement across the Nation. The WEF position statement titled, Clean Water Act Modernization, states that "the Clean Water Act must be updated to incorporate the tools and policies to assure that necessary water quality improvements will occur in all US waters... the overarching principal for a revised Clean Water Act should be employment of a holistic approach to water quality management that integrates water quality and quantity and the benefits provided to the environment, community and economy".

## Item 3

**Section Titled Fix What's Broken – Enhance EPA's Ability to Restore Degraded Waters, Restore Ecosystems, and Take Action to Increase the Number of Restored Waterbodies - Page 6.** Key EPA Actions: (first and second bullets) "Work with states to carry out...TMDL pollution reduction plans and watershed-based nonpoint source plans," and, "Develop...assurance guidelines regarding non-point source reductions identified in TMDLs"

**WEF Comment:** WEF supports the TMDL process to identify all sources of key pollutants within targeted watersheds. Towards this end, WEF will host a conference on Impaired Waters in early 2011 to provide a forum to exchange ideas and information on this topic to further the technical aspects of this field.

## Item 4

**Section Titled Fix What's Broken – Enhance EPA's Ability to Restore Degraded Waters, Restore Ecosystems, and Take Action to Increase the Number of Restored Waterbodies - Page 6.** Key EPA Actions: (fourth bullet) "Use trading offsets and other market-based tools where appropriate, to improve cost-effective clean up of impaired waters."

**WEF Comment:** WEF supports market-based solutions, such as water quality trading and offsets, to improve impacted waters and ecosystems in an economically efficient manner. This is especially important considering the current national economic environment.

### Item 5

**Section Titled Keep it Clean – Reduce Pollution Entering Our Waters - Page 7.** Key EPA Actions: (second bullet) “Develop requirements for POTWs to protect the public and the environment from the harmful effects of sanitary sewer overflows and the release of partially treated wastewater from treatment facilities.”

**WEF Comment:** WEF has developed numerous publications on wet weather issues and has worked closely with EPA staff on these issues. WEF recently developed an updated position statement on this topic (see [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org)) and commented on recent rule-making efforts by EPA on SSOs and wet weather issues. Please see the position statement titled, "Management of Wet Weather Flows by Municipal Utilities" at [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org) for more detailed information on this.

### Item 6

**Section Titled Keep it Clean – Reduce Pollution Entering Our Waters - Page 7.** Key EPA Actions: (third bullet) “Expand municipal stormwater permitting coverage to currently unregulated areas and establish performance standards for stormwater discharges from newly developed and redeveloped sites that result in reduced discharge of pollutants, including through the use of green infrastructure techniques.”

**WEF Comment:** While WEF believes that stormwater discharges should be treated and permitted consistent with current regulatory requirements, WEF cautions that expansions of permitting coverage should be done with financial sustainability in mind. The gap in funding to address the Nation’s aging water infrastructure has been well-documented. Additional regulatory demands to address water quality needs will further exacerbate this growing gap in funding. Increases in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) and other Federal funding sources are encouraged in order to meet this growing need to capture and treat stormwater runoff.

### Item 7

**Section Titled Build for the Future – Enhance Watershed Resiliency and Revitalize Communities - Page 8.** Key EPA Actions: (first bullet) “Promote green infrastructure more broadly.”

**WEF Comment:** WEF fully supports the promotion of green infrastructure to address surface water quality and quantity issues. This growing technology is envisioned as a tool to address urban stormwater problems as well as reduce the number of CSO’s that occur across the Country. Other benefits include a reduction in the urban heat island effect and landscape aesthetics.

### Item 8

**Section Titled Build for the Future – Enhance Watershed Resiliency and Revitalize Communities - Page 9.** Key EPA Actions: (fourth bullet) “Develop policies that will facilitate greater collaboration and accelerate the commercialization of cutting-edge technologies that help deliver clean water such as energy self-sufficient wastewater treatment.”

**WEF Comment:** WEF supports the promotion of sustainable water technologies. This support is expressed through the hosting of events and development of publication on topics such as co-digestion and combined heat/power wastewater plant operations.

#### **Item 9**

**Section Titled Build for the Future – Enhance Watershed Resiliency and Revitalize Communities - Page 9.** Key EPA Actions: (fifth bullet) “Develop comprehensive approaches...to help transform previously degraded urban waters...”

**WEF Comment:** WEF supports the enhancement of urban waters. This support is expressed by the work WEF has done with EPA’s Office of Water to develop the Cities of the Future Conference held in March of 2010. WEF has also been working to promote the EPA’s Urban Waters Initiative, which strives to improve water quality for urban waterbodies and enhance the urban water environment.