

June 15, 2009

The Honorable Jim Oberstar
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Mica
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Oberstar and Mr. Mica,

On behalf of the Water Environment Federation (WEF), I request that you include provisions in the upcoming reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act to require the mitigation of environmental impacts from highway stormwater discharges to the maximum extent practical.

Formed in 1928, the Water Environment Federation (WEF) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization with 35,000 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 members are acutely aware of the need to better manage stormwater runoff from the nation's road network. Roads and related infrastructure comprise two-thirds of all paved surfaces in the United States, and many federal-aid roads were built without stormwater controls. These roads are a major source of water quality impairment. The EPA's most recent list of impaired waters, prepared under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, includes over 28,000 separate waterbody impairments related to highway runoff. In addition being the primary source of pollutants and excess peak flows during storms, highway runoff increases the possibility of flooding and sewer overflows which threaten public health and safety.

Neither the federal NEPA process nor the voluntary option of using transportation enhancement funds for stormwater control practices has resulted in significant stormwater controls on most federal aid roads. Additionally, achieving the goal of swimmable and fishable water that was enunciated in the 1972 Clean Water Act has proven harder and more costly than we originally believed. We now know that this goal cannot be achieved without more effective approaches to limiting nonpoint sources of pollution, including stormwater runoff. We therefore urge you to include specific requirements in the upcoming Surface Transportation Bill to mandate the use of stormwater controls both during highway construction and after project completion to mitigate the impact of these sources of pollution to the nation's waters.

The Water Environment Federation is ready to assist you as you continue to address this important issue. We would be pleased to meet with you or members of your staff to discuss the mitigation of stormwater discharges. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Tim Williams, WEF Managing Director for Government Affairs, at (703) 684-2437.

Sincerely,
Rebecca F. West