

January 13, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As a coalition of America's leading sportsmen and conservation organizations, we welcome the opportunity to work with the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works in the 111th Congress. No doubt, there will be many important conservation issues considered during this time to address the evolving challenges facing America's environment and infrastructure needs.

One of your first items of business, considering the nominations for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chairman, will be an important step towards shaping the course of our nation's conservation policy. As you know, the actions of the EPA and CEQ have a profound impact on the daily lives of millions of Americans. We look forward to hearing the views of Lisa Jackson and Nancy Sutley on a host of issues that affect environmental quality and fish and wildlife habitat and we anticipate a positive and informative hearing of your committee when it considers their nominations for these important positions.

Of particular interest to our organizations is the restoration of key federal protections to our nation's waters. Recent Supreme Court decisions (*SWANCC*, 2001; *Rapanos*, 2006) have weakened the federal protections for our nation's streams, lakes, and wetlands provided by the Clean Water Act. These decisions have placed in doubt protections for isolated wetlands and intermittent and ephemeral streams respectively. Moreover, EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers guidance interpreting these decisions have effectively removed protections for many of these waters and placed unnecessarily high hurdles for the protection of other waters. In fact, the EPA estimates that approximately 20 million acres of wetlands and potentially 59% of stream miles are no longer protected as a result of its policies interpreting these Supreme Court decisions.

These waters have a tremendous impact on the lives of all Americans and provide numerous societal benefits. In addition to providing essential habitat to numerous plant, fish and wildlife species that benefit sportsmen, they also serve critical flood control functions, recharge groundwater, filter pollutants from drinking water sources and help control erosion. We seek support in Congress and from the incoming administration for quick passage of strong, bipartisan legislation that will resolve the confusion created by the Supreme Court and restore Clean Water Act protections to their pre-*SWANCC* levels, while maintaining the long-standing exemptions for farming, ranching, mining, and forestry. Strong support from the incoming EPA Administrator and CEQ Chairman are essential to passage of this important

legislation. The sportsmen community is ready to work with Members of both parties, the incoming administration, and representatives of all groups to make this a reality in 2009.

Thank you in advance to the Committee for the important work and collaboration we look forward to sharing in during the 111th Congress. Again, we anticipate an informative confirmation hearing for EPA Administrator and CEQ Chairman and are anxious to work with you and the new administration on restoring federal clean water protections and eliminating the confusion now placing America's waters at risk.

Sincerely,

Ducks Unlimited
Izaak Walton League of America
National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Wildlife Management Institute
The Wildlife Society

cc: Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works