



**NEWEA**  
WORKING FOR WATER QUALITY

**New England Water Environment Association, Inc.**  
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March 15, 2017

The Honorable Niki Tsongas  
1714 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: New England Water Environment Association  
2017 Congressional Lunch and Briefing on Clean Water Issues  
Tuesday, March 21, 2017; 11:00 AM-1:00 PM  
Cannon House Office Building Room 121

Dear Representative Tsongas,

On behalf of the environmental professionals who comprise the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA), I am pleased to invite you to speak at the *NEWEA 2017 Congressional Luncheon and Briefing on Clean Water Issues to be held Tuesday, March 21, 2017. The session will take place from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM at the Cannon House Office Building, Room 121, Washington, DC.* We look forward to having you share your insight with us.

NEWEA is a dynamic organization of over 2,200 highly qualified and motivated water and wastewater professionals from throughout New England who volunteer their time, energy and expertise in order to preserve, protect and manage one of our most precious resources here in New England – our water environment. NEWEA is a member association of the Water Environment Federation, an internationally renowned organization. NEWEA's mission is to provide education and technical training via an open and interactive forum for water quality professionals while advancing public understanding and advocating sound water policy.

Effective water and wastewater infrastructure is vital to our economic and environmental health. Our towns and cities are built around water, and maintaining good water quality is critically important to the value of our communities. Providing adequate water supply and wastewater collection and treatment is essential for development and redevelopment of our nation's cities. Investments in these systems drive economic health, both in terms of essential support for economic growth and direct creation of jobs from construction of upgrades to water and wastewater systems.

Our water resources are threatened, as much of our nation's wastewater infrastructure is in poor shape and in dire need of significant repair and replacement. The just released American Society of Civil Engineers Report Card gives our wastewater collection and treatment systems only a D+ grade. It is expected that 56 million new users will be connected to centralized treatment systems in the next 20 years and an estimated \$271 billion is needed to meet current and future demands. By contrast, federal funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund has stayed flat (approximately \$1.5 billion per year) for more than a decade, covering a diminishing percentage of the needed investment and the 2018 budget proposal, just sent to the EPA, proposes a 25% cut to the Agency.

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We welcome your participation in our annual Congressional Briefing, at which we will hear about the important issues facing our water environment. These issues include:

- While the 1972 Clean Water Act has been highly successful in helping achieve national clean water goals, it is outdated and in its current form is unable to affect significant further advances, nationally, in water quality improvement.
- Climate change, regardless of one's beliefs about its cause, has caused a notable rise in sea level and we are enduring more severe storms in many areas. Our water infrastructure is facing increasing wet weather challenges, and critical improvements to resiliency are needed.
- Aging infrastructure strains the budgets of utility systems to repair and replace, and if not addressed before failure, poses threats to water quality and public health.
- Wastewater treatment plants, which have spent billions improving their effluent quality, are reaching the limits of technology for further improvements.
- Non-point source pollution continues to degrade water bodies, particularly with nutrients, bacteria, and sediment, and accounts for a significant percentage of impaired waters nationally.
- Local taxpayers and utility customers are questioning ever-increasing fees required to address both aging infrastructure needs and advanced wastewater treatment limits.

We hope you can join us on March 21<sup>st</sup> to share your insights on these challenges. We realize your time is valuable, and we ask that you have a member of your staff let us know about your availability that morning so that we schedule the appropriate time for your speaking session.

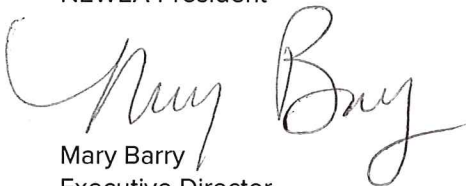
In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns please contact Mary Barry, Executive Director, New England Water Environment Association, 10 Tower Office Park, Suite 601, Woburn, Massachusetts, 01801, 781-939-0908, 781-939-0907 (fax), [mbarry@newea.org](mailto:mbarry@newea.org), [www.newea.org](http://www.newea.org).

Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to seeing you on March 21, 2017 in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,



James Barsanti  
NEWEA President



Mary Barry  
Executive Director

cc: Bob Fischer, Chair, NEWEA Government Affairs Committee