



**New England Water Environment Association, Inc.**  
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March 21, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: New England Water Environment Association  
2019 National Water Policy Fly-In and Congressional Clean Water Meetings  
Wednesday/Thursday, April 3- 4, 2019

Dear Senator Collins,

On behalf of the environmental professionals who comprise the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA), I am pleased to invite you to be part of the *2019 National Water Policy Fly-In and Congressional Meetings on Clean Water Issues Wednesday and Thursday, April 3-4, 2019.*

The National Water Policy Fly-In is an opportunity for Members of Congress and the EPA and other Federal Agencies to engage directly with their constituents in the Water Profession on the most important federal legislative and regulatory matters. We hope you will join us by meeting with NEWEA members and other water professionals from across the nation to make the National Water Policy Fly-In — which is part of Water Week 2019 — the largest annual grassroots advocacy event for water policy issues.

Over the next week, we will be contacting you regarding meetings with your constituents and would also like to invite you to the closing reception where you can unwind and meet with your friends and colleagues in the water profession that have come to Washington during National Water Week. The reception will be held in the Regency Foyer from 5:30-6:30 PM. Further information regarding the day's activities can be found at: [www.wef.org/advocacy/water-week/](http://www.wef.org/advocacy/water-week/). 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 clean water 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 members represent more than 15,000 residents. Our 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 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 2019 budget proposal, just sent to the EPA, proposes a 25% cut to the Agency.

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We call on Congress to:

- Double the Funding for the Drinking Water and Wastewater (Clean Water) State Revolving Funds
- Pass Legislation to Reauthorize and Boost Funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act
- Increase Funding for the National Priorities Water Research Grant Program to \$20 Million.
- Strengthen Protection of the Nation's Waters in the 2018 Farm Bill
- Increase Funding for the USDA's Rural Water/Wastewater (Clean Water) Loan and Grant Program to \$650 Million for Grants and \$2 Billion for Loans
- Increase Funding for Bureau of Reclamations' Water Recycling Program to \$60 Million

We welcome your participation in our annual National Water Policy Fly-In during Water Week, 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 meet with us while we are in DC on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</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 April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,



Raymond A. Vermette, Jr.  
NEWEA President



Mary Barry  
Executive Director

cc: Bob Fischer, Chair, NEWEA Government Affairs Committee