

April 9, 2007

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Young:

On behalf of the Clean Water Network of Florida and the organizations listed below that work to keep our drinking water safe and our lakes, rivers and streams clean, we urge you to sign up to be an original co-sponsor of the **Clean Water Authority Restoration Act of 2007**. This legislation, which is needed to protect the nation's waters from pollution, will soon be reintroduced in the 110th Congress by House Representatives James Oberstar, John Dingell, and Vernon Ehlers and Senator Russ Feingold.

The bill would reaffirm the historical jurisdiction of the 1972 Clean Water Act and ensure all "waters of the United States" that have been covered by federal safeguards against pollution for more than 34 years retain Clean Water Act protection. This bill does not create "new" protective authority, but simply restores the regulatory status quo. The bill is needed because decisions by the Supreme Court over the past few years (Rapanos/Carabell 2006; SWANCC 2001) and administrative actions by the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers have muddied the waters regarding the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act, making this bill critically important now.

Waters most at risk of losing federal protections because of these actions include small and seasonal streams and rivers, and nearby wetlands. According to the U.S. EPA, 59 percent of the nation's streams and rivers, measured in miles, fall into this category of waters. Source water protection areas containing these small or intermittent streams and rivers provide water to public drinking water supplies serving more than 110 million Americans. Wetlands also provide important functions in our watersheds, from reducing flooding to offering habitat to ducks and other wildlife. Wetlands are also critical in the fight to mitigate global warming since they are natural carbon sinks, where carbon is stored rather than released into the atmosphere.

Great strides have been made in the 34-year history of the Clean Water Act in cleaning up and restoring our nation's lakes, rivers and streams, but there is much work still to do. Today, over forty-five percent of the rivers and lakes in the United States are still too polluted to be safe for fishing, swimming, drinking water supply, wildlife habitat, and other uses. Polluted waters and beaches has become one of Florida's biggest problems and it is affecting our health, our economy and our quality of life.

The Clean Water Authority Restoration Act (CWARA) will return us, in Florida and throughout the country, to the path toward further progress in cleaning up the nation's waters and making them safe and clean. We are also enclosing postcards from some of your constituents who would like for you to become a leader on this issue.

Please become an original cosponsor of the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act.

Thank you for supporting clean water.

Sincerely yours,

Linda L. Young, Director
Clean Water Network of Florida

45 groups signed on to this letter.