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Local Government Organizations Commend EPA’s Memorandum Concerning Financial Capability for Clean Water Act Requirements

Safe and Clean Water in the Nation’s Cities and Counties Depends on Local Budgets

(WASHINGTON, DC) – The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), National League of Cities (NLC) and the National Association of Counties (NACo) welcome U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) announcement that the Agency will work with local governments to clarify how the financial capability of a community will be considered when developing schedules for municipal projects necessary to meet Clean Water Act (CWA) obligations.

EPA’s Memorandum to the Regional Offices is accompanied by a document that outlines a framework for considering expanded information in determining local financial capability. Since 2009, local governments have raised serious concern about the high cost of compliance with several CWA requirements and enforcement action, most notably wet weather overflows and storm water management.

Cities and counties are the premiere environmental stewards in providing clean and safe water to their residents and are the biggest investors in protecting public health and the environment. The cumulative cost of building public water infrastructure and providing these essential services has grown to where segments of the population are hard pressed to continue to afford growing user fees. Additionally, the economic downturn in the last several years and the high level of unemployment has impeded the ability of public water consumers and local governments to afford increased user fees.

The dialogue between local governments and EPA will play a critical role in determining how cities and counties will continue to invest in water infrastructure, provide essential water and wastewater services in their communities, and achieve clean water goals.

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“The mayors of this nation commend Administrator Lisa Jackson and EPA for working with local governments to figure out how we can maintain and improve our water systems in a manner that doesn’t hurt our most vulnerable citizens,” said Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, President of The U.S. Conference of Mayors. “This is a critical conversation that will strengthen the partnership between local and federal government.”

“We thank EPA for not only recognizing the vital role that all cities play in protecting our nation’s water resources, but for realizing that as local governments continue to recover from the economic crisis, there are serious fiscal implications of regulatory compliance on our communities, our constituents and our taxpayers,” said Mayor Ralph Becker of Salt Lake City and Second Vice President of the National League of Cities. “We look forward to engaging in this important dialogue with EPA on the affordability and expediency of bringing clean and safe water to our cities and towns.”

“NACo applauds EPA’s acknowledgement that the input of county and city leaders is critical to achieving the shared goals of the Clean Water Act,” said NACo President Chris Rodgers, Commissioner, Douglas County, Nebraska. “A reasonable balance between the costs to taxpayers and ratepayers and compliance with CWA regulations must be considered as we work to protect and improve water quality in communities across the country.”

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**The U.S. Conference of Mayors** is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,295 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.

**The National League of Cities** is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

**The National Association of Counties (NACo)** is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money.