



NARC National Association of Regional Councils

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

WATER QUALITY

BUILDING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES – LARGE, SMALL, URBAN AND RURAL – THROUGH ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports increases in funding levels for water quality projects in order to meet the needs and additional requirements that have been placed on regional councils and their local government members.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

- Pass HR 135, the Twenty-First Century Water Commission Act of 2007 to study and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water strategy to address future water needs.
- Pass HR 569, Water Quality Investment Act of 2007 to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to authorize appropriations of sewer overflow control grants.
- Amend Sections 604 (b) and 205 (j) to increase pass through for planning from one percent to two percent of a state's allocation.
- Pass HR 1495, the Water Resources Development Act, which authorizes key projects throughout the nation.
- Assure that states pass through funding for water quality planning to existing, qualified regional entities that are area-wide coordinating agencies as currently required in the Clean Water Act. Such agencies deal with land use issues, transportation and other issues that impact water quality and need to be taken into consideration in developing comprehensive water quality and supply strategies.
- Explore the development of a Water Trust Fund, a dedicated funding sources committed to clean and safe public water.
- Increase funding to regional planning organizations involved in developing regional water allocation plans.
- Seek coordination among all federal agencies that deal with water issues to maximize the impact of federal water quality programs.

BACKGROUND

The quality and the quantity of our water supply are critical to our nation's future. According to a recent poll, nine out of ten Americans believe safe and clean water is a national priority that deserves federal investment. Congress should assist states and local communities to address the growing infrastructure needed to maintain a clean and safe supply of water. Planning is a major component of any regional ecosystem assessment and information programs to guide management decisions. Congress should recognize the work of regional councils in their efforts to assist local governments address quality and supply issues by increasing the amount of funds available for planning, technical assistance, and responding to emerging water issues.

States and local governments have utilized Regional Councils because of their ability to bring together stakeholders and funding, access and experience to technical tools, and their proficiency in carrying out mandated sections of the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. Regional Councils play an important role in bridging the gap between the bureaucracies of State and Federal agencies and the local community interests that frequently do not have the resources and expertise to adequately address the complexities of water quality issues.

Without continued financial support of regional planning services and water quality studies by the Federal government, many projects would have to be supported entirely by local funds, which are already cash-strapped and facing budget deficits. In order for Regional Councils to continue their programs to stay in Federal compliance of clean water standards, they will have to come up with new and innovative ways to deal with the lack of Federal funding.