CWC Members Appear Before Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

Fairfax, Virginia, December 13, 2011 – Two member organizations of the Clean Water Council (CWC) appeared before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee’s Water and Wildlife today at a hearing entitled “Our Nation’s Water Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities.”

After hearing from the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Director of Wastewater Management, witnesses representing the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and Ductile Iron Pipe Research Association (DIPRA) sent a clear message to the subcommittee: America’s water and wastewater infrastructure face very serious challenges. If addressed effectively, however, these challenges can present opportunities to put America’s construction industry back to work while rebuilding critical infrastructure. Both ASCE and DIPRA are active CWC member organizations.

In advance of the hearing, members of the subcommittee were provided CWC’s economic impact study, Sudden Impact: An Assessment of Short-Term Economic Impacts of Water and Wastewater Construction Projects in the United States. The study highlights the economic benefits of investment in water and wastewater on local communities, making the economic case for greater investment in water and wastewater infrastructure through both public and private sources.

Gregory DiLoreto, President-Elect of ASCE, provided an overview of the grim state of America’s underground environmental infrastructure as portrayed in a pending ASCE study, The Economic Impact of Current Investment Trends in Water and Wastewater Treatment Infrastructure. The study concludes that the nation’s wastewater and drinking-water infrastructure is indeed under great strain.
“Our report, which we will release later this week, answers the question of how the condition of the nation’s deteriorating wastewater and drinking-water infrastructure impinges on economic performance,” DiLoreto said. “In other words, how does that D– in our 2009 Report Card for water treatment and transmission affect America’s economic future? The answer is sobering. By 2020 the gap between needs and anticipated funding for wastewater and drinking-water infrastructure will be $84 billion.”

Van Richey, President and CEO of the American Cast Iron Pipe Company, discussed the state of the domestic water infrastructure industry and recommended solutions from both public financing and public-private partnerships to address water infrastructure funding shortfalls.

The “reauthorization of the SRF (State Revolving Fund) programs is important for Congress to address as soon as possible to help provide the core federal funding for state and local water infrastructure,” Richey told members of the subcommittee. “In addition, lifting the volume cap on private activity bonds for water infrastructure is a fiscally responsible complement to existing federal investments in water infrastructure that would generate billions in annual investment at a minimal cost. By meeting the public need for additional water infrastructure through these two measures, Congress could also help protect hundreds of thousands of domestic jobs at a time when they are desperately needed.”

The CWC appreciates the efforts of both witnesses for their testimony today as the coalition continues to advance private activity bond legislation (HR 1802 / S 939) and encourage reauthorization of the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF programs.

For more information contact Eben Wyman at eben@nuca.com or by phone at 703-358-9300.

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The Clean Water Council is a coalition of some 40 national organizations representing underground utility construction and excavation contractors, design professionals, manufacturers and suppliers, labor representatives and other organizations committed to ensuring a high quality of life through sound environmental infrastructure.