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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS NEWS

NOWRA Urges Congress to Ensure Funding for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

The passage of a federal stimulus bill will pave the way for funding a number of sustainable water and infrastructure projects. The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) sent a letter to the leadership of the U.S. Congress advocating for the prioritization of funding for decentralized treatment systems in infrastructure building.

NOWRA encourages its members to use the letter on the next two pages as a template to write to their own representative. Members across the county can voice their support for investing in decentralized wastewater treatment systems as a “green technology” and as a way to stimulate employment and the economy in the United States.

The following websites will help you locate your legislators’ contact information.

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

The document referred to at the bottom of the letter entitled *21st Century Water Infrastructure and Fiscal Stimulus Strategies* is available in the News Release section of the NOWRA website.

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February 11, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Patty Murray, Democratic Conference Secretary, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable John Boehner, House Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable John Carter, Republican Conference Secretary, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable James Oberstar, Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives

SUBJECT: National Economic Stimulus Funding for Clean Water Infrastructure

On behalf of our more than 5,000 members, the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) supports your efforts to craft an economic stimulus bill that includes funding for critical and sustainable water and wastewater infrastructure projects. NOWRA is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing leadership and promoting the onsite/decentralized wastewater treatment and recycling industry, and therefore we urge you to ensure that the stimulus package includes adequate funding to help sustain this country's lesser known wastewater infrastructure—onsite wastewater treatment systems, also known as decentralized systems or septic systems.

Onsite systems are utilized to meet approximately one quarter of the wastewater treatment needs of our nation. They are one of the original "green" industries because the treated water is returned to the ground near the source, thereby recharging local water supplies, keeping the water in the watershed, and avoiding large disturbances and construction costs. Energy costs are reduced since it is not necessary to pump large amounts of wastewater many miles to a centralized treatment plant.

Almost 35 percent of all new growth and development in the last few decades has used decentralized wastewater technology. In its 1997 "Response to Congress on the Use of Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems," the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated, "Adequately managed decentralized wastewater systems are a cost-effective and long-term option for meeting public health and water quality goals, particularly in less densely populated areas... *Properly managed* decentralized wastewater systems can provide the treatment necessary to protect public health and meet water quality standards, just as well as centralized systems... Decentralized onsite and cluster wastewater systems *can be the most cost-effective option* in areas where developing or extending centralized treatment (sewers) is too expensive (e.g., rural areas, hilly terrain)."

NOWRA's goal is to ensure that the onsite/decentralized wastewater industry continues to play a vital role in the wastewater treatment infrastructure and economy of the United States and the rest of the world. Our association is comprised of members from many different professions within the onsite industry: engineers, soil scientists, research scientists, academicians, designers, regulators, installers, operation/maintenance providers, septic system pumpers, general contractors, product manufacturers/suppliers, and homeowners. NOWRA meets its members'

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needs through education, training, communication, and the development of quality tools to support excellence in performance.

Our country's decentralized infrastructure consists not only of systems that service single family homes, but also those that service institutions, schools, libraries, churches, state parks, rest stops and county buildings that are not in urban settings and must rely on decentralized wastewater treatment systems. Many onsite systems in rural areas, however, are not functioning properly because of old age, poor design and installation, or lack of maintenance. These systems contribute to surface and groundwater contamination through the release of bacteria and nutrients. Establishing grants or tax incentives to upgrade or replace these malfunctioning systems will benefit the environment and public health by improving the nation's water quality. It will also create jobs at a time when they are desperately needed.

NOWRA applauds your efforts to develop an economic stimulus plan that not only puts people back to work, but also repairs water infrastructure throughout the country, including rural America. Having an adequate supply of clean water is vital to this nation's economic and environmental well-being. Our organization has been a leader in the decentralized wastewater field since 1990 and we can offer our assistance and expertise. For your use, please find attached a proposal that was developed by the Coalition for Alternative Wastewater Treatment and the Clean Water Fund which includes recommendations for funding strategies. NOWRA supports the recommendations in this proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me or the NOWRA office at 800-966-2942 if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas W. Groves".

Thomas W. Groves
President
NOWRA

Encl: 21st Century Water Infrastructure and Fiscal Stimulus Strategies