

September 3, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman, and The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

The undersigned organizations represent communities across the nation who wish to ensure everyone has access to clean water. We are concerned about the threat of nonpoint source water pollution to public health and the environment. Nonpoint sources are exempt from federal Clean Water Act permitting requirements, and it is therefore crucial that we increase funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's Nonpoint Source Management Program under Section 319 of the Act. We urge you to approve at least \$200,000,000 for Section 319, which is authorized by H.R. 1331, recently passed in the House of Representatives, and by S. 1604, referred to the committee on Environment and Public Works.

The Section 319 program is the primary federal program with a nationwide reach and a mission of cleaning up waterways impaired by nonpoint source pollution. Through the program, EPA provides financial and technical resources to state and local agencies, which direct those resources to improve water bodies listed as impaired. The nonpoint source program has successfully restored thousands of miles of formerly impaired streams and over a hundred thousand acres of formerly impaired lakes, including:<sup>1</sup>

- Dix River, Kentucky: Section 319 funded agricultural best management practices and community outreach in the watershed. In 2016, Dix River was removed from the impaired waters list and residents can now use the river for outdoor recreation.<sup>2</sup>
- Caribou Creek, Alaska, in Denali National Park: Section 319 funded a restoration project to correct erosion damage from mining and its impaired status was lifted in 2010.
- Jaramillo Creek, New Mexico: Section 319 funded projects to restore native species and erect livestock barriers to revive a once-productive trout fishing stream.
- Sauk River Chain of Lakes, Minnesota: Section 319 funding resulted in a 48% reduction in phosphorus levels in this largely agricultural watershed.<sup>3</sup>

These are just a few examples of the Section 319 program's successes, but there is a great need for increased levels of funding. Nonpoint source pollution is harming communities across the nation by impairing drinking water sources, damaging fisheries, and impeding outdoor recreation and tourism. For example, the EPA estimates that nationwide the tourism industry loses close to

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<sup>1</sup> EPA Office of Water, [Highlights of The Nonpoint Source Program](#), 2016.

<sup>2</sup> EPA, [Success Stories about Restoring Water Bodies Impaired by Nonpoint Source Pollution](#), Accessed July 17, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> EPA, [Phosphorus Reductions Achieved in Sauk River Chain of Lakes](#), August 2005.

one billion dollars a year due to toxic algal blooms, which are driven by nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from nonpoint sources.<sup>4</sup> This summer all of Mississippi's coastal beaches were closed due to toxic algal blooms,<sup>5</sup> several of Iowa's lakeside beaches were closed due to microcystin and E coli caused by nonpoint source pollution, and northern Ohio is experiencing this year's wave of toxic algal blooms in Lake Erie<sup>6</sup>, similar to those that shut down Toledo's drinking water system for three days in 2014.<sup>7</sup> The 319 program builds successful partnerships among diverse constituencies with a stake in clean water, ranging from farmers and city residents to universities and regulators.

We ask the subcommittee to invest more resources into the Section 319 program for the benefit of communities across the country that need clean sources of drinking water and who wish to swim and fish in our waters once more.

Thank you,

Alabama Rivers Alliance

American Farmland Trust

American Public Health Association

American Sustainable Business Council

Autauga Creek Improvement Committee

Black Warrior Riverkeeper

Cahaba River Society

California Coastkeeper Alliance

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Clean Water Action

Coosa Riverkeeper

Dog River Clearwater Revival

Earthjustice

Endangered Habitats League

Environment America

Environmental Law & Policy Center

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<sup>4</sup> EPA, "[Nutrient pollution, The Effects: Economy.](#)" Accessed July 31 2019

<sup>5</sup> CBS news, "[All of Mississippi's beaches have been closed for swimming due to toxic algae,](#)" July 7, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> NOAA, "[NOAA, partners predict large summer harmful algal bloom for western Lake Erie,](#)" July 11 2019.

<sup>7</sup> New York Times, "[Behind Toledo's Water Crisis, a Long-Troubled Lake Erie,](#)" accessed July 25, 2019.

Environmental Working Group  
Friends of the Rappahannock  
GreenLatinos  
Harpeth Conservancy  
Heal the Bay  
Healthy Gulf  
Idaho Rivers United  
Illinois Council Trout Unlimited  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Lake Erie Waterkeeper  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Lynnhaven River NOW  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Mississippi River Collaborative  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment  
Montana Trout Unlimited  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
New Jersey Sustainable Business Council  
New York Sustainable Business Council  
Obed Watershed Community Association  
Ocean River Institute  
Ohio Environmental Council  
Passaic River Coalition

Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Potomac Riverkeeper Network  
River Network  
Rural Coalition  
Save EPA  
Sierra Club  
Sierra Club North Alabama  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Tennessee Clean Water Network  
Tennessee Environmental Council  
Tennessee Riverkeeper  
Trout Unlimited  
Virginia Conservation Network  
Virginia League of Conservation Voters  
Western Landowners Alliance