

Testimony of

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Regarding the Draft Legislation Titled,
“National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2008”

Given to

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Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

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Chairman Lampson, members of the Illinois delegation, and fellow members of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to comment today. I come before you to speak of implementing a new National Water Research and Development Initiative. Never before has the need for a fresh and more coordinated federal role in addressing our nation’s water use, demand, and supply been so urgent.

On behalf of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and with funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), I have had the privilege for the past two years of leading a new regional water supply planning initiative in the 11-county, greater Chicago region. This regional planning effort was initiated following Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich’s Executive Order 2006-1, which called on the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in coordination with the State Water Survey, to define a comprehensive program for state and regional water supply planning and management. CMAP has been charged by IDNR to lead the planning process in northeastern Illinois.

Water supply planning in the Chicago region, an iterative process that is expected to evolve over the years ahead, could be greatly strengthened by the promise of the National Water Research and Development Initiative. The National Initiative could provide states, local partners, and the private sector with the guidance and information

necessary to meet the challenges similar to what we have encountered during this initial phase of planning in Illinois.

For example, earlier this month CMAP issued a water-demand study¹ for our region that reveals gaps in data due to inadequate water-use reporting. It has been said that you can't manage what you don't measure. Thus, the current status of water-use reporting must be addressed if we are to fully grasp how future water demand will reconcile with our water supplies. The National Initiative should enable states and their local planning partners to address the need for comprehensive reporting across all water-use sectors as part of a new National Water Census that has been recommended by the Subcommittee on Water Availability and Quality.²

The population in the Chicago metropolitan region is projected to grow by over 3 million people or 38 percent by 2050. Water-demand scenarios for northeastern Illinois indicate that water use could increase as much as 64 percent during that time absent any policy intervention and without specific strategies for actively managing both demand and supply. Factoring in climate change scenarios reveals that demand for water in our region could grow even further.

While our regional analysis of demand and supply is not complete, there is ample reason for concern. On the supply side, our region's water sources are generous, but finite. Illinois access to Lake Michigan water is constrained by U.S. Supreme Court Consent Decree. The deep-bedrock aquifer underlying northeastern Illinois is being dewatered. The system of shallow aquifers shows evidence of increasing contamination from chlorides (i.e., road salts). Our two inland river sources are threatened by nonpoint-source pollution and required to maintain minimum in-stream flows. Overall, as elsewhere in the United States, our challenge in the Chicago region is not so much water scarcity, but water waste.

As part of our charge from the State, CMAP created a 35-member Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Planning Group (RWSPG) composed of elected officials, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders. The RWSPG has already adopted several water-use conservation and efficiency measures as the centerpiece of the nascent regional water supply plan that is expected next year. In July 2009, this diverse group is scheduled to issue its plan with recommendations for managing water supply through 2050. While our regional study's funding is currently jeopardized by State of Illinois budget issues, CMAP is committed to moving forward with our partners to complete this important effort.

¹ *Regional Water Demand Scenarios for Northeastern Illinois: 2005 – 2050. Project Completion Report, June 15, 2008.* Prepared by Benedykt Dziegielewski and Farhat Jahan Chowdhury, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Geography and Environmental Resources.

² *A Strategy for Federal Science and Technology to Support Water Availability and Quality in the United States.* Report of the National Science and Technology Council, Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Subcommittee on Water Availability and Quality. September 2007.

I can tell you from experience that it is difficult to get people to take a long-term view. That can be one important function of the National Water Research and Development Initiative: To define and help implement a water conservation and efficiency agenda that encourages long-range planning by giving clear guidance to states and the private sector alike.

The inherent complexity and uncertainty associated with planning for our nation's water resources, water availability and quality, make for a formidable challenge that needs to be met now. Those of us working on this front should benefit from the National Initiative achieving its purpose of improving the federal government's efforts with research, development, and outreach as it pertains to water use, supply, and demand.

The National Initiative's promise of improved horizontal cooperation among federal agencies should be coupled with improved vertical coordination with those of us at state, regional, and local levels who are working to increase stewardship of our most vital resource. Among other considerations, the effort should also recognize that:

- 1) Water quality is a prime attribute of water availability.
- 2) Improved water monitoring is prerequisite to informed decision making.
- 3) Achieving water conservation and efficiency goals will help achieve energy efficiency goals.
- 4) It is in our nation's best interest to improve our understanding of water related ecosystem services and ecosystem needs for water.

At CMAP, we believe our region is at a turning point, and that could apply equally to other urban areas and the U.S. as a whole. Pressures in the economy -- particularly housing and fuel costs -- are increasing public support for compact growth patterns and other policies that planners have long promoted. Sensible growth will be an important component of our regional water strategy, to discourage development in locations that will strain supplies. Water-supply planning can benefit from the heightened public awareness of how quality of life can be preserved and improved through effective stewardship of regional resources. Again, federal support can provide key incentives for effective planning, especially when local pressures tend to promote short-term rather than long-term thinking.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and I look forward to the National Water Research and Development Initiative becoming law and fulfilling its promise to ensure adequate water supplies for the nation.