

# AMERICA'S CLEAN WATER FOUNDATION



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## **Statement of Roberta Haley Savage President of America's Clean Water Foundation**

**Before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee  
October 8, 2002**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Robbi Savage, the President of America's Clean Water Foundation (ACWF) and the national coordinator for the Year of Clean Water: The Commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clean Water Act.

America's Clean Water Foundation was established in 1989 to coordinate the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Clean Water Act. The Foundation's Board of Governors was, at that time, co-chaired by the House and Senate Floor Leaders of the 1972 statute:

Senator Edmund Muskie  
Senator Howard Baker  
Representative John Blatnik  
Representative William Harsha

These environmental statesmen were all personally and actively involved in the Commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary attending clean ups, festivals and the World Water Summit hosted by President Carter at the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia.

As we convene here today, we are celebrating 30 years of progress under what has been called by members of this body "the most successful environmental statute in history." Throughout October, America's Clean Water and its many partners (see attached list) are sponsoring four national events that include:

**The Youth Watershed Summit:** October 6-10, 2002 at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater, Maryland. ACWF, and its two primary co-sponsors, the Smithsonian Institution and the Environmental Protection Agency, have invited the nation's governors to select 4 students and a teacher/advisor to accompany the students to SERC for a four-day program designed to educate, inspire and train young



people from throughout the 50 States to be water quality monitors and advocates for cleaner water. Three of the young people attending this Youth Watershed Summit are here with me today.

**National Water Monitoring Day:** October 18, 2002, thirty years to the day after the passage of the Clean Water Act. This national event is expected to bring together upwards of 100 thousand Americans into the nation's waters taking samples for pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature and turbidity on the same day. With our partners at Earthforce, USEPA, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Interior's US Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers, we have developed a nationwide effort that will occur annually and provide citizen-monitoring data that can be tracked over time. And, Mr. Chairman, at the culmination of National Water Monitoring Day, we will begin the synthesis process and will provide you and the House Committee chair with our report.

**The Senior Watershed Summit:** October 28-30 in Sandy Cove, Maryland. This Summit is being co-sponsored by ACWF and the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI). At this Summit we will bring together seniors from around the country to learn about in-stream monitoring techniques and to help with the establishment of Senior Water Body Monitoring Corps in all 50 States.

**The World Watershed Summit:** October 30 – November 1, at the JW Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC. President George W. Bush has been invited to keynote the Summit. Senator Howard Baker and former Administrator Bill Ruckelshaus are also expected to participate in the culminating event. This World Watershed Summit is being co-sponsored by The Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators (ASIWPCA) and the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies (AMSA).

The purpose of these events and of the Commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clean Water Act is to focus national attention on the improvements made to our national water resources and to highlight areas where additional attention should be targeted.

As the Committee is well aware, in 1972, Congress enacted the Federal Water Pollution Control Amendments (Public Law 92-500), known as the Clean Water Act. The Act was designed to respond to public demands on the government to clean up and protect our nation's waterways.

Public interest was intense because throughout the 1960's many communities experienced extensive fish kills, discolored streams, fouled beaches and contaminated water supplies. Before the law, government response to these issues varied according to the limits of available science, technical and institutional capacity and available funding. Legislators tried to respond to the problems, often without solid technical evidence or insight as to the economic and environmental consequences of the actions they championed.

The Clean Water Act, one of the first and most successful national environmental laws to be passed by the Congress had as its primary goal to "...restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation's waters." The goals called for water to be "fishable and swimmable" by 1983 and for the elimination of pollution discharges to navigable waters by 1985.

In the past three decades, Clean Water Act programs have yielded measurable improvements in water quality. Streams that were once devoid of fish and other aquatic life now support an abundant and varied population. Lakes that were once choked by eutrophication are now vastly improved. Yet even with these improvements, we are far from attainment of our national goals and the stringent water quality objectives of subsequent amendments.

With the passage of time, the public's attention to these goals has waned, even though Americans consistently cite clean water as among their highest priorities. Ironically, even with the priority Americans consistently place on clean water, there has been a decline in public awareness, technical innovation and youth education relative to clean up and protection of our water resources. The spirit of cooperation and enterprise, the hallmark of early efforts to craft an effective national water pollution control act, has also faded since the early 1970's. The public stewardship ethic needs to be rekindled in order to address the intricate web of human activity that consistently degrades water quality.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to extend a special thank you to the nation's Governors, the majority of whom have issued proclamations designating 2002 as the Year of Clean Water. Many of the States have developed comprehensive outreach programs, which include but are not limited to:

- 1) Stream and lake clean ups
- 2) Water festivals
- 3) Governors' water conferences
- 4) Training and education programs and materials
- 5) Public service announcements
- 6) Press education symposia
- 7) Poster, photo and essay contests
- 8) Exhibits and documentaries

It is our hope and expectation that the activities and events taking place throughout this nation during the month of October will foster awareness of our clean water successes and challenges and strengthen our commitment to finding solutions. The response to our programs has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are most grateful for the willingness of so many to dedicate their time and talents to support the Year of Clean Water. A comprehensive list of the plethora of celebratory events can be found at [www.yearofcleanwater.org](http://www.yearofcleanwater.org).

Finally, I also want to thank you and your staff for putting this hearing together so that we may revisit the accomplishments of the past three decades and refocus national attention on the importance of continuing our efforts to provide Clean Water Everywhere for Everyone!