



1199 North Fairfax St, Suite 900 • Alexandria, VA 22314

WateReuse Association
Statement for the Record
On the occasion of the
Hearing on “Building a 21st Century Infrastructure for America: Water Stakeholders’ Perspectives”
Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Held September 26, 2017

The WateReuse Association is pleased to submit this written statement for the record on the occasion of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment’s hearing to receive perspectives from water stakeholders on Building a 21st Century Water Infrastructure for America held on September 26, 2017.

The WateReuse Association (WRA) is the only national trade association dedicated solely to advancing laws, regulations, funding and public acceptance for water recycling, also referred to as reclaimed water. Our members include communities, companies, technology providers and others that embrace water recycling as a key water management strategy to ensure safe and reliable water supplies, control costs, and build resiliency in order to address today’s water environment challenges.

For many communities, reusing water is the only way to provide a safe, reliable and locally-controlled supply of water, especially for communities experiencing significant growth or that regularly experience periods of prolonged drought, such as in the arid West. According to a recently analysis by Bluefield Research, adoption of water recycling by communities and industries is expected to grow by 37% over the next decade to deal with expected uncertainties in water supply.¹

Increasingly, communities incorporate water reuse to meet demand for potable (drinking) water supply through methods such as recharging ground water aquifers and augmenting surface water reservoirs. Much of the non-potable uses of recycled water include agriculture, landscape, public parks, and golf course irrigation. Industrial and commercial uses of recycled water include cooling tower water for power plants and oil refineries, industrial process water for facilities

¹ <http://www.bluefieldresearch.com/research/municipal-water-reuse-opportunities/>



such as paper mills and carpet dyers, toilet flushing, dust control, construction activities, concrete mixing, and artificial lakes.

There are many factors that contribute to the adoption of water recycling by communities, industry, agricultural operators and others. Recycled water is:

- **Safe:** Wastewater can be purified to meet stringent state and federal water quality standards.
- **Reliable:** Because wastewater is renewable, it is the only sustainable source of water.
- **Locally-Controlled:** Communities are not beholden to nature or neighbors for their water supply.
- **Cost-Effective:** Reusing water can be more cost-effective than developing alternative supplies.
- **Environmentally-Sound:** Reusing water alleviates pressure on freshwater sources and natural systems.

Beyond supply concerns, communities in water-rich environments are also incorporating water recycling strategies to build resiliency, confront impacts of climate change, and/or reduce flow to centralized treatment facilities in order to relieve stress on infrastructure assets.

An example of how communities can build resiliency using water recycling approaches is a project being undertaken by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) in Virginia. HRSD is adopting a water recycling strategy not only to augment drinking water supplies, but to help the region, which includes Norfolk and Virginia Beach, combat land subsidence due to rising sea levels. Aside New Orleans, Hampton Roads' population is more threatened by sea-level rise than any other community in the nation. HRSD will take its already highly treated water that would otherwise be discharged into tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay and purify it through additional rounds of advanced water treatment to produce drinking quality water. Minerals will be added to the purified water to match the existing groundwater chemistry before it is added to the Potomac Aquifer, the primary source of groundwater throughout eastern Virginia. This will ensure a sustainable source of groundwater while addressing environmental challenges such as Chesapeake Bay restoration, sea level rise and saltwater intrusion.

An example of how recycled water can be an effective water management strategy for a highly urbanized community struggling with significant infrastructure challenges in a water-rich environment is a 92-acre redevelopment project at Battery Park in New York City. Decentralized water recycling technology services eight residential apartment buildings with reclaimed water that is used for flushing toilets, cooling tower, laundry and green roof irrigation. Collectively, the systems consistently achieve greater than 50% water consumption reduction and greater than 60% reduction in wastewater discharged to NYC's centralized sewer system.

WaterReuse Policy Recommendations:

Water recycling and reuse is quickly becoming an essential approach to sustainable water management for communities and industry alike. WRA recommends several policy strategies to help further the use of recycled water throughout the country:



- **Develop a national vision and strategy for water** - While local governments are clearly responsible for building and maintaining water infrastructure, the President and Congress can align laws, regulation and funding to help communities develop and provide safe, reliable, locally-controlled water supplies.
- **Support science needed to safely increase water supplies** – The Water Environment & Reuse Foundation oversees a robust and well-rounded portfolio of research in water, wastewater, and recycled water stormwater. Providing \$25 million annually for research in water reuse and resource recovery will ensure the science is available to increase water reuse.
- **Amend the WaterSense program to protect water quality** - WaterSense is a program, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, that partners with industries, businesses and utilities to promote products, buildings, landscapes, facilities, processes and services that use water efficiently. While the primary purpose of the program is to promote conservation, the program should also consider how potential products might impact water quality.
- **Transform Title XVI into a competitive grant program and fully fund it** - The Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, more commonly referred to as Title XVI (Public Law 102-575), is the only federal program that provides funding specifically for water reuse projects in 17 western states and Hawaii. Congress recently reformed part of the program to enable a few new projects to receive funding through a competitive process without the need for prior congressional authorization. WRA urges fully funding the program at \$50 million annually.
- **Reform the permitting process for advanced treated water for potable use** - Wastewater treatment facilities that treat water using advanced treatment for potable use currently are regulated under two federal laws – the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. As a result, the federal rules may be duplicative or, at times, even contradictory. When this occurs, regulating advanced treated water for potable use under one federal law – the Safe Drinking Water Act – will provide the greatest protection to the public health and the environment, while cutting red-tape and containing costs.
- **Increase federal investment in key water infrastructure programs** – WRA urges increased investment in key water infrastructure investment programs including: Title XVI program, the Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund Programs, and the Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovations Act (WIFIA) program. In addition, we urge Congress to maintain the tax-exempt status for interest received from investments in municipal bonds, and encourage Congress to explore additional ways in which tax reform can incentivize further adoption of water reuse.



The WaterReuse Association appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record and looks forward to the opportunity to assist the Subcommittee as it crafts legislative recommendations for improving our nation's water infrastructure.

For more information, please contact: Patricia Sinicropi, Executive Director at psinicropi@watereuse.org

