

DATE:

March 19, 2012

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The  
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## Sewer Officials Lobby Federal Policymakers for Flexibility and Rate Relief

Cincinnati, OH –Leaders from the Hamilton County Commission and the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSDGC) are teaming up with community leaders from around the United States to fight for policy flexibility and prioritized spending for federally mandated Consent Decrees. Community representatives have formed the “Perfect Storm Communities Coalition.” Coalition members will be in Washington, DC tomorrow to meet with the EPA and other policymakers to craft a regulatory approach, consistent with the Clean Water Act, which will give communities more flexibility to meet impending regulatory requirements.

“Our goal is to provide communities, like Cincinnati, the flexibility to meet these huge regulatory challenges in a more integrated, affordable and cost effective way,” says Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune. “Rate payers should have the flexibility to prioritize local spending particularly to cover these costs while also struggling with high unemployment rates and a stagnant economy. “

The Environmental Protection Agency recently released a framework to allow municipalities to prioritize their water quality investments to better manage future costs associated with their combined sewer overflows (CSO’s) and sanitary sewer overflows (SSO’s) in a more holistic manner.

“We believe EPA policy changes must be made now so that more innovative, cost effective wet weather solutions can be implemented to help communities deal with the costs associated with these environmental water challenges,” says Tony Parrott, Executive Director of the MSDGC. “It is in our best interest to use sustainable, green watershed solutions that will treat natural streams and stormwater at the source rather than building conventional infrastructure at a higher cost.”

The Communities Coalition is urging the EPA establish 15 to 20 pilot partnerships each year for the next five years in communities across the country facing wet weather challenges. Through these partnerships, the EPA, state regulatory agencies and local communities can work together to implement flexible, practical, affordable wet weather solutions.

“Results from these pilot partnerships can pave the way for broader policy and legislative changes to help financially strapped communities meet water quality requirements,” added Portune.

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*Every day, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) protects the public’s health and the environment through professional water reclamation and watershed management. As we collect and treat more than 180 million gallons of sewage daily from 43 municipalities, villages, and townships in Greater Cincinnati through 3,000 miles of sanitary or combined sewers, MSD serves you with honesty, integrity, accountability, and respect.*

Page 2.

The coalition is recommending that the EPA select the pilot partnership communities based on the following criteria:

- Communities under a Consent Decree
- Communities experiencing high unemployment and home foreclosure rates, economic distress and significant increases in sewer rates to pay for mandated wet weather improvements
- Communities with a well developed wet weather improvement plan that uses diverse alternative methodologies such as green infrastructure
- Communities ability to pay for mandated upgrades
- Communities that are part of regional, multi-jurisdictional partnerships with neighboring communities

“Our hope is that Cincinnati and Hamilton County will be named a pilot community based on our current proposed projects so we can build sustainable solutions at a lower cost that will benefit the Cincinnati community now and well into the future,” says Parrott.

Members of the Perfect Storm Community Coalition participating in the discussion tomorrow represent the following: City of Lansing, Michigan Public Works; City of Fort Wayne, Indiana Water Utilities; City of Kansas City, Missouri Water Department; ALCOSAN (Allegheny County Sanitary Authority) Pennsylvania; Northeast Ohio Regional Water District, City of Cleveland and Wheeling West Virginia.

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