

**Congress of the United States**

**House of Representatives**

Room 2165, Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE (202) 225-9446

May 5, 1995

Dear Colleague:

When your constituents sent you here, did they tell you that what they thought was wrong with America was that its lakes, rivers, and beaches were too clean? Mine didn't, and I doubt yours did either.

In fact, the goal of clean water is one of the most widely supported environmental goals in our society. And the Clean Water Act, which is how we are working toward achieving that goal, is one of the most successful and widely supported environmental statutes.

But HR 961, the Clean Water Amendments of 1995, which we will consider on the floor next week, is a drastic weakening of the existing Clean Water Act. The lakes, rivers, and beaches of America will actually be cleaner if we pass no bill than if we pass this bill.

Why? Because most of the cleanup the Clean Water Act has achieved over the past two decades has been from major dischargers, the factories and sewage treatment plants which discharge into our Nation's waters. The Act has limited the amount of pollution they can discharge, and, for the most part, they have complied and real improvements have resulted.

HR 961 would allow these major industrial and sewage treatment dischargers to do less than they are already doing today. In many instances, they would be able to turn off treatment facilities they have already built and are successfully operating.

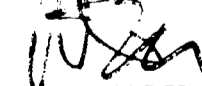
How did this happen? After the bill was introduced and hearings were held, and just before markup, a new bill text was unveiled with over one-hundred new pages, nearly doubling the size of the bill, most of it waivers, loopholes, and rollbacks for major industrial dischargers and treatment works. None of this was subject to hearings and none of it enjoys popular support, yet it now constitutes much of this bill.

This is not what people wanted done to the Clean Water Act. Most people wanted the wetlands provisions made to work in a more reasonable way, but without doing fundamental harm to wetlands which are important for flood protection, groundwater recharge, water quality, and many other purposes. Most people wanted the stormwater permit program requirements to be limited to what was reasonable for municipalities to do on stormwater. And there was some disagreement as to whether and to what degree people wanted certain parts of the Act strengthened.

But there simply is no popular support for the idea of rolling back the core of the Clean Water Act, which is the control of pollution from major industrial and sewage treatment dischargers. Yet that is precisely what much of HR 961 would do.

There will be efforts made on the floor to strike these weakening provisions. But if those provisions are not stricken, I would urge you, whatever your views on the other features on the bill, to vote no on the bill itself. None of us should want to endorse the rollback of the core provisions of the Clean Water Act, and unfortunately that is what HR 961 is now mostly about.

Sincerely,



NORMAN Y. MINETA  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure