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- 225A Main Street • Farmingdale, NY 11735
516-390-7150
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- 744 Broadway • Albany, NY 12207
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- 735 Delaware Road, Box 140 • Buffalo, NY 14223
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Empowering Communities, Advocating Solutions.

EPA Wastewater Infrastructure Funding Announcement for New York

Statement by Dereth Glance, CCE Executive Program Director

Albany Institute of Art and History

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In New York we are blessed with abundant water resources. From the Great Lakes of Erie and Ontario to the Long Island Sound and Atlantic Ocean, our waterways provide food, recreation, energy, and jobs. From the mighty Hudson, St. Lawrence, and Niagara Rivers to the smallest tributaries, water defines our borders, our communities, and our quality of life. We know that clean water is not a luxury; it is essential to human health, recreation, and our economy.

It is a welcome change and a pleasure to stand here today with leaders that not only understand water quality, but champion our most critical natural resource. Due to their leadership, we are here today celebrating the much-needed infusion of capital into our wastewater infrastructure systems.

We applaud our state and federal leaders for securing a significant down payment to address the clean water infrastructure crisis, recognizing that as our sewage plants age-out and fail they release harmful sewage pollution, full of viruses, pathogens, and excess nutrients. Sewage pollution causes our beaches to close, harms our fisheries, and endangers human health.

Recognizing that no one government or group can solve the crisis alone, Governor Paterson's established the Clean Water Collaborative—before any mention of the federal stimulus package. The Collaborative continues to provide a united voice for clean water infrastructure investment from the local government, business, industry and environmental perspective clean water.

The economic recovery and reinvestment act does two important things for clean water. First, it provides a long overdue injection of capital to improve our existing facilities, some of which are over one hundred years old. Upgrading sewage treatment plants and collection systems is essential as we work to improve water quality, protect drinking water sources, keep our beaches open, and restore our fisheries.

Secondly, it 'greens' our wastewater infrastructure by improving water and energy efficiency while also promoting the use of sustainable infrastructure solutions like wetlands, green roofs, rain gardens, and other innovative, low cost, and effective strategies. Like EPA says, when it comes to stormwater, we have to slow it down, spread it out, and soak it in.

While we celebrate today, there is much work left to do. CCE will continue to work with our state and federal partners to advance clean water solutions and to deliver the promise of clean water to current and future generations.