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STATEMENT OF
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ON BEHALF OF
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON THE
ON THE FY 2014 BUDGETS OF
THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
AND THE UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
APRIL 10, 2014

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) is pleased to present its views on the proposed budgets for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Geological Survey for Fiscal Year 2015. The budget proposal fails the nation in several critical infrastructure areas.

A. THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The FY 2015 budget proposal continues the trend of toward short-changing America's public-health infrastructure. The president proposes a budget of $7.9 billion for EPA in FY 2015. The budget would continue to reduce spending on essential water infrastructure systems, a practice in recent years that skimps on aging wastewater and drinking-water systems that protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Despite the demonstrated need for much greater investment in wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, the president proposes to reduce spending on drinking-water and wastewater infrastructure from the $2.35 billion enacted in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, to $1.757 billion—a cutback of fully 25 percent in federal funding for aging water infrastructure from FY 2014.

Our 2013 *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* released in March gave the nation's wastewater and drinking-water systems identical grades of D, a slight improvement over the near-failing 2009 assessment of D-.

In 2011, ASCE released a comprehensive analysis of the potential economic costs to the nation of failing to invest in water infrastructure. The report, Failure to Act: the Economic Impact of Current Investment Trends in Water and Wastewater Treatment Infrastructure, determined that water infrastructure in the United States is clearly aging and investment is not able to keep up with the need.

We found that, if current trends persist, by 2020 the anticipated capital funding gap will be $84 billion. The $84 billion funding gap may lead to $147 billion in increased costs for businesses and a further $59 billion for households. In the worst case, the U.S. will lose almost 700,000 jobs by 2020. By 2020, the average annual effect on the U.S. economy is expected to be $416 billion in lost GDP. Not investing in our water infrastructure ultimately means future costs to households and businesses. A water main break – of which there are nearly 700 a day – not only disrupts traffic, but shuts down businesses and commerce.

Drinking Water

The 2013 *Report Card* summarizes the current situation this way:

> At the dawn of the 21st century, much of our drinking water infrastructure is nearing the end of its useful life. There are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks per year in the United States. Assuming every pipe would need to be replaced, the cost over the coming decades could reach more than $1 trillion, according to the American Water Works Association (AWWA). The quality of drinking water in the United States remains universally high, however. Even though pipes and mains are frequently more than 100 years old and in need of replacement, outbreaks of disease attributable to drinking water are rare.

Although new pipes are being added to expand service areas, drinking-water systems degrade over time, with the useful life of component parts ranging from 15 to 95 years. Especially in the country's older cities, much of the drinking water infrastructure is old and in need of replacement. Failures in drinking water infrastructure can result in water disruptions, impediments to emergency response, and damage to other types of infrastructure. Broken water mains can damage roadways and structures and hinder fire-control efforts. Unscheduled repair work to address emergency pipe failures may cause additional disruptions to transportation and commerce.

It is estimated that there are more than one million miles of water mains in the United States. Some pipes date back to the Civil War era and often are not examined until there is a problem or a water main break. These breaks are becoming more common, as there are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks per year in the United States—an average of nearly 700 a day.

Determining pipe condition through cost-effective structural assessments will allow the worst-condition pipes to be addressed first, avoiding potential failures and associated risks, damages, and costs. These structural condition assessments will also help avoid premature replacement of structurally sound pipes to save resources and time. As a result of these benefits, demand for and value from these assessments is expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years.

Wastewater

Capital investment needs for the nation's wastewater and stormwater systems are estimated to total $298 billion over the next 20 years. Pipes represent the largest capital need, comprising three quarters of total needs. Fixing and expanding the pipes will address sanitary sewer overflows, combined sewer overflows, and other pipe-related issues

In recent years, capital needs for the treatment plants comprise about 15 percent to 20 percent of total needs, but will likely increase due to new regulatory requirements. Stormwater needs, while growing, are still small compared with sanitary pipes and treatment plants. Since 2007, the federal government has required cities to invest more than $15 billion in new pipes, plants, and equipment to eliminate combined sewer overflows.

The problems associated with aging wastewater treatment systems are daunting. In the 21st century, many of those neglected systems are in need of maintenance and repairs. Most assessment reports by government agencies and interest groups agree that the bill amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars over the next two decades. In 2009, the EPA reported to Congress that the states had assessed 16 percent of America's stream miles and found that 36 percent of those miles were unfit for use by fish and wildlife, 28 percent were unfit for human recreation, 18 percent were unfit for use as a public water supply, and 10 percent were unfit for agricultural use.

ASCE recommends an appropriation of $2 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) and an appropriation of $1.5 billion for the Safe Drinking Water Act SRF in FY 2014.

B. **UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

Established in 1879, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is one of the nation's premier science agencies. It produces the scientific data essential for the protection of the quality of economically vital water resources, for the prediction of earthquakes and volcanoes, for the cataloging of America's vast biological resources and for dozens of other critically important technical needs.

The president's FY 2015 budget request for the USGS is $1.073 billion, a nearly four percent increase above the 2014 enacted level of $1.032 billion.

The FY 2015 request includes $210 million for the agency's water programs, including an increase of $1.3 million to fund more than 400 streamgages that would enhance the ability to monitor high-priority sites sensitive to drought, flooding, and potential climate change effects.

The budget also proposes to spend $128 million for the agency's natural hazards programs that assess the nation's exposure to earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters. This is a slight decrease from the FY 2014 enacted level. A key function of this program is the Natural Hazards Mission Area, which is responsible for coordinating USGS responses following disasters and overseeing the agency's emergency management activities. It coordinates long-term planning across the hazards science portfolio, including activities funded through many other programs, including floods, hurricanes and severe storms, and wildfires.

Core science programs at the USGS would be funded at $110 million. This important program includes the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, which produces geologic maps and 3-D geologic frameworks to understand natural earth surface processes and groundwater availability and quality, supporting federal land management decisions, mitigating hazards, assisting in ecological and climatic monitoring and modeling, and understanding onshore-offshore sediment processes.

To support these critical science programs, ASCE requests that the committee appropriate the full amount of the president's FY 2015 budget proposal.

ASCE recommends an appropriation of $1.073 billion for the USGS in FY 2015.