



September 2, 2011

Honorable Jan Perry
Chair, Energy and Environment Committee
~~Los Angeles City Council~~
200 N. Spring Street, Room 420
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Support of the Clean Water (Wastewater) Program Rate Proposal, CF 10-1947

As a community based environmental non-profit organization that works to protect and restore our water and the quality of life in communities throughout Los Angeles, Santa Monica Baykeeper is in full support of the City's Clean Water Program Rate Proposal. The proposed 10-year financial plan and rate proposal provides the minimum funding level necessary to ensure that Los Angeles continues to maintain a citywide collection and treatment system that protects public health and the environment.

In 1998, the City's sewer system experienced sewer overflows in Los Angeles communities on the average of 2 spills per day. Children and families suffered from common occurrences of sewer overflows caused by a lack of maintenance, upgrade and investment. Sewer odors backed up into homes and businesses impacting people's lives. Our waterways and beaches were also impacted as we experienced large numbers of beach closures and elevated levels of bacteria. After Santa Monica Baykeeper sued the City in 1998 for pollution in LA waterways, the City entered into a settlement agreement with the federal government, the state, local community groups in south LA and Baykeeper to enhance the maintenance and upgrade of the City's aging sewer system.

Since then, the City and its Bureau of Sanitation have done an excellent job maintaining and upgrading the sewer system, resulting in an over 83% reduction in overflows and a significant improvement in water quality in Los Angeles. We applaud and commend the City of Los Angeles and the Bureau of Sanitation for its efforts and the excellent results. However, we all need to recognize that more needs to be done and we cannot allow or afford to go back to the conditions we had in 1998.

A well-functioning wastewater collection and treatment system that protects public health and the environment is imperative to a strong city and economy. The wastewater system is getting older every day. Unless we properly operate and upgrade our aging system, our communities will be exposed to increased risk for breaks, spills and odors. We must invest proactively in our essential wastewater facilities.

We ask you to approve the Clean Water Program rate proposal. We should invest money in our system now to prevent severe public health and environmental problems later. It is the right thing to do to provide our communities a safer and cleaner place to live.

Sincerely,

Liz Crosson
Executive Director