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Clean Water Act Markup

Max S. Baucus

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(1) Subject*: **Environment**

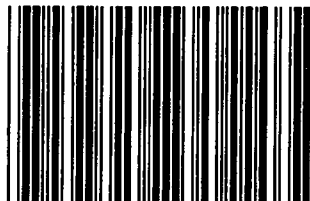
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(2) Subject* **Clean Water Act Markup**

DOCUMENT DATE*: **02/23/1993**

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* "required information"



BAUCUS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Remarks of Senator Max Baucus Clean Water Act Markup

February 23, 1993

Good morning. Twenty-two years ago, under the leadership of Senator Edmund Muskie, this Committee met to address a national crisis. The headlines of that era told of lakes so polluted they could support only algae blooms, and of rivers so contaminated with industrial waste that one caught fire and burned to the waterline.

Our predecessors were up to the challenge. They passed a Clean Water Act which set three ambitious goals: zero discharge of pollutants; fishable and swimmable waters; and no toxics in toxic amounts. Today, as a result of their vision, 85% of municipal waters and 87% of industrial sources are in compliance with the Clean Water Act. The quality of our waters - the Great Lakes, the Charles River, the Hudson and other historic lakes and rivers -- is immeasurably better.

NEED TO UPDATE THE ACT

But for all the good the Clean Water Act has accomplished, there are some problems it does not adequately address. It does not address, for example, the largest source of water pollution in Montana and other Western states. That is "non-point source" pollution -- pesticide runoff, mine tailings and so on, which spring from no one identifiable source but from hundreds or thousands of small sources.

Non-point source pollution causes 90% of Montana's pollution problem. It has impaired three quarters of our river miles and half of our lakes. And it endangers our prospect for healthy tourism, natural resource, and agricultural industries.

I visited Muddy Creek last week, near Great Falls. At Muddy Creek, runoff from an Irrigation District has led to severe erosion that threatens a bridge, an ancient Indian encampment, farmhouses and even Interstate 15. A local landowner says Muddy Creek now looks like "the Grand Canyon of Montana." Erosion there threatens everything from recreation to flood control to fisheries.

Montana and the West cannot afford to ignore this problem. My constituents -- farmers, ranchers, hikers and fly fishers alike -- will all benefit from cleaner lakes and streams. And we can only get cleaner lakes and streams with a stronger Clean Water Act.

At the same time, two decades worth of experience with the Act show that it needs to be improved. We need to cut regulation and give states and industries more flexible ways to meet our broad goals. We must consider the risks of various contaminants more carefully. State and local governments make reasonable complaints about the Act's unfunded mandates. And we can control pollution more effectively by using scientific and management techniques developed over the past two decades.

THE CLEAN WATER ACT OF 1994

Our bill will address those issues. For the first time, the Clean Water Act will take on non-point source pollution. This will improve the quality of 150,000 miles of threatened rivers -- sixty times the length of the Mississippi -- and over seven million acres of impaired or threatened lakes. The fly fishers who come from all over the world to Montana; recreational hunters in the West and the Appalachians; and people who simply want a day at the beach will all benefit.

The Act's coverage of toxic pollutants will widen and improve. We will reduce urban pollutants -- sediments, toxics and nutrients -- by up to 80% in developing areas and up to 25% in developed areas. Every year, we will provide treatment for over a trillion gallons of raw sewage, urban runoff and industrial wastewater that now get no treatment at all.

And we will do it with much less spending. The Clean Water Act of 1994 will cut our national bill for clean water by \$30 billion per year. Industry will save \$17 billion a year. Cities and towns will save nearly \$11 billion. And to reduce unfunded mandates, we significantly raise the funding of the States Revolving Loan Fund.

And we will do it with less regulation. This legislation will give states and cities more flexibility in meeting requirements, and encourage innovative approaches like watershed management and pollution prevention. It will bring together local businesses, government and citizens' groups to meet clean water goals in the most appropriate way for each community.

CONCRETE BENEFITS

It is hard to put a price tag on the value of clean water and environmental stewardship. But we can put a dollar and cent value on some parts of this bill.

For example, benefits to recreational fishing, boating and swimming from improvements in water quality will be nearly \$700 million a year. Commercial fisheries will likely see the value of their fish harvests rise by 20%. And improved water quality will let those who depend on water to manufacture goods save more than \$80 million a year.

Finally, let us not forget the expected savings from reduced health risks. The reduction of risk from consumption of contaminated seafood alone will save us \$200 million a year in health-related costs.

Most important, however, we will meet the concerns of the American people. Ninety-six percent of the public considers water quality the most important environmental issue, ahead of toxic waste, air pollution and all others. Water pollution is our country's top environmental concern. All of us who heard Dr. Theo Colburn testify here last year know why.

Water pollution is not just a bad smell and a stream without fish. We don't see its worst effects for a generation. Dr. Colburn examined babies born to women who ate two to three meals of Lake Michigan fish a month for six years before getting pregnant. She found that the babies were on average lighter in weight, had smaller skulls, and were born earlier than the babies of mothers who didn't eat fish. At four years old, they were physically smaller and had poorer memories. That is the legacy of a thoughtless, irresponsible past. It is not a legacy we should pass on to the next generation.

We in this Committee owe the people a strong Clean Water Act. We owe our children a strong Clean Water Act. And the work we do today will give the country a strong Clean Water Act.

CONCLUSION

No Senators here today served on the Committee when it passed the first Clean Water Act in 1972. Only our superb Committee Editorial Director, Paul Chimes was here on that occasion; and only eleven of those who voted on the Act, and passed it over President Nixon's veto, remain in the entire Senate. Our predecessors set a high standard. But I am confident that our bill lives up to it. And with Senator Muskie's 80th birthday coming next month, it is the most appropriate present I can imagine.

The bill does not give everyone everything he or she might want. But it reflects a consensus -- in the Senate, in the scientific community, within industry and agriculture, and among environmentalists -- that we need a stronger Clean Water Act which also considers the needs of business and local government. And it reflects the desire of the American people for waters that are cleaner, safer and more beautiful.

In closing, I want to express my deep and sincere gratitude to Senator Chafee, who cosponsored the bill and whose hard work has made it a bipartisan effort from the first day of the 103rd Congress. Senator Graham, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Clean Water, Fisheries and Wildlife, has been an integral part of the effort. And the Committee as a whole can be very proud of its work.