



**American Water Works
Association**

Dedicated to the World's Most Important Resource™

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March 24, 2021

Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Chairmanship of Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry,
and Natural Resources

Dear Senator Bennet:

Congratulations on your appointment as chair of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources. As the CEO of the Denver-based American Water Works Association (AWWA), I view your subcommittee as being absolutely critical to advancing the Nation's efforts in solving our long-standing water and climate issues. Our 4,500 utility members and 50,000 individual members collectively provide drinking water to more than 80 percent of the American public.

The critical importance of your subcommittee cannot be overstated. Before his passing, William Ruckelshaus, the first Administrator of EPA, stated that in 1970 some 85 percent of our water quality impairments came from point sources, while 15 percent came from nonpoint sources. By the year 2010, 40 years later, the figures were reversed, with 85 percent of water impairments coming from nonpoint sources and 15 percent from point sources.¹ Nonpoint runoff, particularly nutrients, has manifested itself in the growth of harmful algal blooms and the proliferation of hypoxic zones in our lakes and estuaries. Consequently, we experience greatly increased costs in providing safe, potable drinking water. Source water protection, measures to help protect and improve waters sources used for drinking water, was emphasized in the 2018 Farm Bill for the first time.

We also face the dire necessity of addressing global climate change and urgent needs to sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop alternative energy sources.

Given that agriculture accounts for the bulk of privately-owned land in the continental United States, your subcommittee stands squarely in the nexus of these issues and the ability to address them is within your jurisdiction.

¹ Source: William Ruckelshaus, *A New Shade of Green*, The Wall Street Journal, April 17, 2010

Your efforts to advance conservation in the 2018 Farm Bill were much appreciated, and we continue to support your approach of working with agricultural interests in a voluntary, cooperative manner. We, too, believe that farmers, ranchers and woodland owners have a key role in addressing the issues described above. In Colorado, we have been fortunate to have worked cooperatively with both the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Two recent examples: Denver Water worked cross jurisdictionally with the Forest Service and NRCS to restore both Federal and private lands burned by wildfires and, most recently, NRCS designated a key future water supply watershed for Denver as a National Water Quality Initiative area which will receive extra funding and emphasis to protect source water.

We are particularly excited to know that your subcommittee will soon begin developing the conservation and forestry titles of what will be the 2023 Farm Bill. During development of the 2018 Farm, Bill, AWWA advocated emphasizing source water protection to help protect the nation's drinking water using established voluntary conservation methods. AWWA also has a keen interest in simplifying and expanding the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, as many of our members are active partners in projects around the country.

AWWA is willing to provide any input you feel would be helpful. If you wish to discuss this further, I can be reached at 303-910-4618 or at dlafrance@awwa.org. Alternatively, your staff can contact Tracy Mehan, executive director of AWWA Government Affairs, in Washington, D.C., at 202-326-6125 or at tmehan@awwa.org.

Again, congratulations on becoming the chair of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David LaFrance", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

David LaFrance
CEO, American Water Works Association

cc: Honorable Michael Bennett
Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building
1244 Speer Boulevard
Denver, CO 80204