

EPA predicts at least 36 states could face local, regional, or statewide water shortages by 2013

Washington, DC – Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1145, the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act. This bill coordinates national research and development efforts on water and provides a clear path forward to ensure adequate water supplies for generations to come. Included in the bill is an amendment authored by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.).

This amendment would help communities around the country undertake water reuse and recycling projects by creating a program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to demonstrate, evaluate, and test the techniques and technologies to reuse and recycle wastewater and stormwater at the building, site, neighborhood, and watershed scales for urban, industrial, agricultural, environmental, and recreational uses as well as to augment potable water supplies.

Rep. Blumenauer's statement on passage of this amendment is below:

"I am pleased that the House of Representatives passed my amendment to help the EPA promote water reuse and recycling. Right now we reuse about 5-6% of municipal wastewater for beneficial purposes, only a 'drop in the bucket' compared to what we could be doing.

"Water reuse involves treating wastewater and storm water and using the resulting reclaimed or recycled water for a new beneficial purpose. These beneficial purposes can range from agriculture and landscape irrigation to industrial process, to flushing toilets, to replenishing groundwater. This is not a new technology - reclaimed water has been used for crop irrigation for more than 100 years. Indeed, the earth has recycled waters for many years through the natural water cycle.

"Across the globe, water consumption has tripled in the last 50 years. According to the EPA at least 36 states are anticipating local, regional or statewide water shortages by 2013, even under non-drought conditions. As communities grow and water supplies decrease, they will be forced to seek alternative sources of water. In an era of climate change and water stress, water reuse and recycling has a great deal of potential to help alleviate pressures on water managers, to help communities become less dependent on ground and surface water resources. A demonstration program will reduce the cost of these technologies and help communities overcome technical and social barriers to water reuse and recycling."

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