



October 26, 2007

The Honorable James L. Oberstar  
Chairman, House Transportation and  
Infrastructure Committee  
2365 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

Outdoor Alliance and Outdoor Industry Association write this letter in support of the Clean Water Restoration Act of 2007 (H.R. 2421). Together, Outdoor Industry Association and Outdoor Alliance represent the vast majority of the recreation industry and the active outdoor recreation community in America. Water quality and quantity are vital not only for clean drinking water and healthy ecosystems, but also to the quality of life in this country. Clean water and healthy headwater areas are particularly important for the outdoor industry and user community.

All outdoor enthusiasts benefit from clean and healthy headwaters. Headwater areas, due to their distinctive topography and varying gradient, tend to provide prime settings for many types of active outdoor recreation, from camping and fishing to pursuits that rely on trails, including hiking, mountain biking, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing. Creeks and streams, regardless of whether they are “navigable” in the legal sense of the term are routinely run in kayaks and canoes. Healthy headwater areas provide a setting for outdoor enthusiasts to do what they do, and thus the outdoor community believes that headwater areas are as much entitled to protection under clean water laws as traditional waterways. Unfortunately, this is not presently the case.

More than 60% of our nation’s river miles are represented by headwater streams that are now at risk due to weakening of the Clean Water Act by recent Supreme Court decisions. Unlike major river systems used for commerce and navigation, headwater streams are among the most important for outdoor recreation because they are where the public comes in direct contact with the water. Protecting the health of these streams is important for public health and safety, and enhances our quality of life.

Protecting headwater areas is critical to protection of our investment in cleaning up downstream areas – all of our nation’s rivers flow downstream to the sea. Over the past several decades we have invested tremendous resources in cleaning up our waterways. Rivers like the Potomac, the Black in upstate New York, Cheat in West Virginia, Cuyahoga in Ohio, Menominee in Michigan, and hundreds of other rivers across the

nation that were once avoided by the recreating public are now enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of Americans each year. If we fail to protect headwater areas upstream of rivers like these we jeopardize our investment and tremendous gains we have made in improving the water quality of all our nation's rivers.

The Clean Water Restoration Act would restore crucial Clean Water Act protections to America's waters. The bill reaffirms the original intent of Congress that the Clean Water Act should provide the broadest possible protection to the nation's waters and reestablishes the basis for providing such protection. We strongly support the Clean Water Restoration Act given the benefits to recreational users who depend on clean water.

Sincerely,

Frank Hugelmeyer  
President  
Outdoor Industry Association

Mark Singleton  
Chairman  
Outdoor Alliance

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of six national, member-based organizations devoted to conservation and stewardship of our nation's public lands and waters through responsible human-powered outdoor recreation. Outdoor Alliance includes: Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Hiking Society, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and Winter Wildlands Alliance, and represents the interests of millions Americans who hike, paddle, climb, mountain bike, ski and snow shoe on our nations public lands and waters.

Founded in 1989, Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the premier trade association for companies in the active outdoor recreation business. OIA provides trade services for over 4000 manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, sales representatives and retailers in the outdoor industry. OIA works to promote funding for outdoor recreation and management policies on public lands that support active recreation.