October 23, 2007

VIA FAX

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steelworkers (USW), I urge you to support H.R. 2421, the “Clean Water Restoration Act”.

As the largest industrial union in North America, our Union has long recognized that some of the industries represented by our membership have historically been contributors to water pollution. The USW firmly believes that a clean and healthy environment is a fundamental human right, and that the industries that employ our members have a responsibility to ensure this for our members and their communities. Our members depend upon clean lakes, rivers and beaches for recreation. The safety of our drinking water depends upon clean source waters. We believe that good jobs and a clean environment go hand-in-hand, and because of this, have made it a point to establish a role for our members and for our Union in the shaping and development of sound and realistic environmental policies for our nation.

The Clean Water Act has been responsible for much progress since it was enacted 35 years ago, but now the future of this successful law is in doubt. We are concerned that confusing Supreme Court decisions and guidance issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers will result in the destruction and pollution of headwater and seasonal streams and so-called isolated wetlands. If these waters lose federal Clean Water Act protections and are polluted or paved over, downstream water quality will suffer, and the quality of drinking water sources for more than 110 million Americans will diminish.
The loss of these important waters would be inconsistent with the goals and history of the Clean Water Act. The law’s intent was to restore and maintain the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the nation’s waters. Achieving that goal would be impossible without protecting headwaters, which make up a majority of the nation’s streams. Accordingly, for three decades, the law broadly applied to all of the nation’s waters.

Passing the Clean Water Restoration Act is essential to ensure that the broad scope of waters that Congress originally intended to protect, and which has historically been protected, remains protected. The bill does not expand the reach of the law; it merely maintains the protections it has always provided. We hope that you will support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Holly R. Hart
Legislative Director

HRH/ctl