

5-24-1994

## American Metropolitan Sewer Agencies

Max S. Baucus

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus\\_speeches](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches)

---

### Recommended Citation

Baucus, Max S., "American Metropolitan Sewer Agencies" (May 24, 1994). *Max S. Baucus Speeches*. 550.  
[https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus\\_speeches/550](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches/550)

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and Special Collections at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Max S. Baucus Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

Printing, Graphics & Direct Mail  
ONBASE SYSTEM  
Indexing Form

Senator \* or Department\*: **BAUCUS**

**Instructions:**

Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series.

Prepare and insert additional forms at points that you want to index.

For example: at the beginning of a new folder, briefing book, topic, project, or date sequence.

Record Type\*: **Speeches & Remarks**

MONTH/YEAR of Records\*: **May-1994**

(Example: JANUARY-2003)

(1) Subject\*: **American Metropolitan Sewer Agencies**

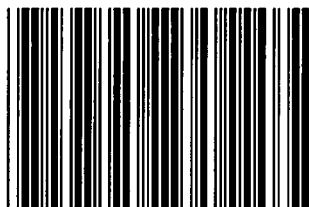
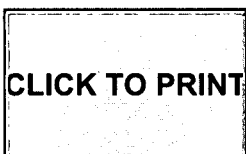
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject\*

DOCUMENT DATE\*: **05/24/1994**

(Example: 01/12/1966)

\* "required information"



BAUCUS

# NEWS

MAX BAUCUS, MONTANA, CHAIRMAN

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, NEW YORK  
GEORGE F. MITCHELL, MAINE  
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG, NEW JERSEY  
HARRY REID, NEVADA  
BOB GRAHAM, FLORIDA  
JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, CONNECTICUT  
HOWARD M. METZENBAUM, OHIO  
HARRIS WOFFORD, PENNSYLVANIA  
BARBARA BOXER, CALIFORNIA

JOHN H. CHAFEE, RHODE ISLAND  
ALAN K. SIMPSON, WYOMING  
DAVE DURENBERGER, MINNESOTA  
JOHN W. WARNER, VIRGINIA  
ROBERT SMITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
LAUCH FAIRCLOTH, NORTH CAROLINA  
DIRK KEMPTHORNE, IDAHO

PETER L. SCHER, STAFF DIRECTOR  
STEVEN J. SHIMBERG, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF COUNSEL

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

(202) 224-6176

Remarks of  
Senator Max Baucus  
to the  
American Metropolitan Sewer Agencies

May 24, 1994

All too often, we here in Washington talk about seemingly abstract issues. Like the standard for developing an effluent guideline under section 304(b)(1)(b). Or the relationship between sediment quality criteria and Superfund "ARARs." So it's refreshing to meet with a group that does not think about water pollution control as a theory, but instead as the difficult and important work of providing public health services to your neighbors, day after day after day.

I also appreciate the opportunity to join you because of the work that AMSA is doing. Under Ken Kirk's leadership, you have been leading the fight for a strong new Clean Water Act that is good for the environment and good for the economy.

Now, some people say that we can't write legislation that is good for the environment and good for the economy. They say environmental protection and economic growth are natural enemies. I say they're dead wrong. In fact, in the long run, we can't have one without the other. And as we write new environmental laws, we have to seek a balance that promotes both goals. That's precisely what the Senate did last week, when it passed a new Safe Drinking Water Act. When all was said and done, we passed a bill that reduces costs for municipalities, but protects public health.

Some of our friends in the environmental groups don't necessarily see it that way. They have attacked the bill as a "plague on the nation." We've got to get beyond that kind of shrill, overblown rhetoric. If we're going to improve our environmental laws, we can't approach environmental policy as a zero-sum game, with each side arching its back and hissing and spitting at the other. We have to seek ways which let us achieve our goals

more effectively, and enable us to make both environmental and economic progress. That brings me to the Clean Water Act.

### The Clean Water Act of 1972

Twenty-two years ago, under the leadership of Senator Edmund Muskie, the Environment and Public Works Committee met to address a national crisis: the crisis of water pollution. The headlines of that era told of lakes so polluted they could support only algae blooms. The Cuyahoga River, which runs through Cleveland, was so contaminated with industrial waste that it caught fire one day and burned down to the waterline. Lake Erie was considered biologically dead. The response was the Clean Water Act of 1972. Since its passage, the Act has been a pillar of our country's environmental and public health policies.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 set three ambitious goals: fishable and swimmable waters; zero discharge of pollutants; and no discharges of toxic pollutants in toxic amounts. Today, 22 years later, we have come a long way toward those goals:

- ▶ Eighty-five percent of municipal waters and eighty-seven percent of industrial sources now comply with the Act's requirements on water quality and conventional pollutants.
- ▶ The quality of our waters -- the Cuyahoga River, Lake Erie, and hundreds of other historic lakes and rivers -- is immeasurably improved. Where 34% of our rivers and streams met the "fishable, swimmable" standard in 1972, more than 60% meet the standard today. Even on toxics, we have made some progress.

Now, some people say that we've done all we can. The Clean Water Act has gotten results, they say -- and we can't get any more. The problems are too complex. The solutions are too expensive. It just isn't worth it. I disagree. The Clean Water Act has done a great deal of good. But when we consider its three original goals, it is clear that we still have significant water pollution problems. If we ignore those problems, they won't go away. They will be passed along to the next generation.

### An Era of Diminishing Returns

The present law focuses on industrial and municipal sources of pollution. In essence, it regulates discharges from about 5,000 individual sources around the country, which carry the bulk of city sewage and industrial waste. It covers them quite well -- and that means that in its present form, the Clean Water Act is not capable of solving our biggest remaining water pollution issues.

Of course, we have 22 years of practical experience in implementing the law, plus 22 years of developments in research and applied science. Together, they allow us to improve the law; make it more flexible and efficient; and make it less costly for people like you to administer. We need to set clear goals, but give states and municipalities

more flexibility in meeting them. We need to focus on prevention rather than treatment alone.

That has been my goal throughout the drafting of the new Clean Water Act. I have worked closely with Senator Chafee and other members of the Committee, and I frankly think we have a good product. So today I want to tell you what the reauthorization bill will accomplish, because the full Senate will take it up next month, and we need your help to get it through.

### Non-Point Source Pollution

First, the new Act takes on our largest remaining cause of water pollution. That is "non-point source" pollution -- runoff from agricultural land, mine tailings, urban runoff from roofs and paved areas and so on. These pollutants -- largely siltation, nutrients and pathogens -- spring from no one identifiable source but from hundreds or thousands of small sources.

Non-point source pollution causes half of America's current water pollution. Back home in Montana, it is at the root of a full 90% of our water pollution. Non-point sources impair three quarters of Montana's river miles and half of our lakes. It endangers our prospect for healthy tourism, natural resource, and agricultural industries.

The other states in the arid, rural West have the same problems. I need not tell any of you from the big cities how frustrating it is for municipal water agencies to live downstream from large concentrations of non-point source pollution. As you all well know, runoff from agricultural operations, city streets and construction sites significantly degrades city waters, and sewage treatment facilities are asked to provide the needed treatment.

The new Clean Water Act will maintain our commitment to control point sources of pollution and to the federal role in financing municipal sewage treatment facilities. But for the first time, it will also include a major effort to reduce pollution from non-point sources.

We phase in a flexible system, which will work with agricultural producers in rural areas, and with industry and metropolitan water agencies in the cities. Over time, the new Act will be as effective in reducing non-point source pollution as the first Act has been in reducing pollution from point sources.

### Water Quality and Toxics

Second, we are nearing a point where we will have reached the maximum return on the technology-based authority in the original Clean Water Act. Point sources continue to cause significant water problems, and we must maintain and improve the Act's existing authority to encourage pollution prevention and address pollutants causing developmental and reproductive effects.

When 60% of our waters meet the "fishable, swimmable" standard, that means 40% fall short. The Great Lakes have more than 5,300 miles of shoreline. Only about 160 miles of that now fully attain water quality standards. The number of advisories against consumption of Great Lakes fish is rising, not falling.

Toxic pollutants continue to pose a major threat to aquatic life, and thus to our fisheries and public health. Industrial sources discharge nearly two million pounds of toxics a day into the water. Together, heavy metals like lead and mercury, organic chemicals, and pesticides impair nearly one in four of our river miles.

As Senator Muskie himself told our Committee on the Act's twentieth anniversary:

"The bad news is that while we have come a long way toward the goals of the 1972 Act, there is a great deal left to be done. Today there is a much better understanding of the enormity of our capacity to irreversibly contaminate our environment. Today we know that the subtle pollutants are often more dangerous than the BOD and suspended solids we targeted in 1972."

We take his words to heart. The Act's coverage of toxic pollutants will widen and improve. It expands the existing authority for imposing technology-based controls on industrial dischargers and directs EPA to consider pollution prevention in developing the controls. It improves the process for development and adoption of water quality criteria and standards. It provides new authority for assessing pollutants that pose a threat to the development and reproduction of aquatic species, wildlife and humans. Under this bill, EPA will reduce pollutants with developmental and related effects by 85% over seven years.

#### Innovative Approaches

Third, the years since the original Clean Water Act passed have given us a great deal of practical experience and improved our scientific knowledge. We can use these advances today to improve the Act, to make it more effective in reducing pollution, to make it more flexible and to make it less costly for people like you, who must live with it.

We can, for example, move from an approach that focuses in a somewhat uncoordinated fashion on individual sources of pollution to a "watershed management" policy that protects entire regions. That is critical for rural areas like the one I come from, and for big cities that lie downstream.

We also promote the use of innovative approaches to pollution prevention. By looking ahead at issues that can develop in the future, and providing incentives for sound management, we will make sure many of the problems never arise. That makes it cheaper and easier to achieve all our goals. We save money on cleanup, reduce regulation and make it easier for industry, agriculture and state and local governments to comply with the law.

Finally, the new Act will greatly improve our wetlands program. Today's program creates confusion and controversy among farmers. It has too much regulation and too much red tape -- and we still lose hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands each year.

The Act will set a national goal of no net loss of wetlands, simplify the present compliance requirements, and give financial help to small landowners faced with wetlands requirements. It will involve state agencies more effectively by providing grants, encouraging wetlands and watershed management planning, and standardizing federal wetlands requirements.

Everyone is going to win from this bill. It will mean faster economic growth, better public health and a more beautiful country.

### Concrete Benefits

It is hard -- in fact, pointless -- to put a price on clean water, but the Act has dollar and job benefits that are as solid as concrete:

- ▶ The bill authorizes a minimum of \$2.5 billion in annual funding for wastewater treatment programs. For every billion dollars in wastewater treatment, we create 50,000 jobs. So this bill means at least 125,000 jobs in our cities and across the country.
- ▶ The extra recreational fishing, boating and swimming we create by improving water quality will bring in nearly \$700 million a year.
- ▶ As we reduce toxics and bring down the number of annual advisories against fish consumption, our commercial fisheries will likely see the value of their fish harvests rise by 20%.
- ▶ Improved water quality will let those who depend on water to manufacture goods save more than \$80 million a year.
- ▶ Reducing risk from consumption of contaminated seafood alone will save us \$200 million a year in health-related costs.

### Consequences of Failure

We will get a lot of important benefits by passing this bill. Conversely, we will suffer some very serious consequences if it does not get through. What will happen if we don't pass a new Clean Water Act?

- ▶ Sewage treatment authorities will lose \$2.5 billion in wastewater treatment funds. The authorization for the revolving loan fund expires this year. It will be gone. The Appropriations Committee is looking to us to reauthorize the program, and if we don't reauthorize it they may well conclude that it has run its

course. That means less money for the cities; lost jobs; and probably higher state and local taxes to make up at least some of the difference.

- ▶ This bill will provide cities with more than \$11 billion in relief from stormwater discharge requirements. That is \$11 billion which can go to tax relief, better police and fire services, schools, and everything else that you as city people know better are absolute necessities. It is \$11 billion that will vanish if the new Clean Water Act does not pass.
- ▶ This bill will clean up the country. It will take on non-point source pollution, reduce toxics and improve water quality. It will make our people healthier and our country more beautiful. If we do not pass it, our water pollution problems will continue.
- ▶ This bill will formally endorse and approve the EPA policy on control of combined sewer overflows. This new policy will save communities billions of dollars in costs of measures to manage overflows.

#### Clean Water "Lite"

In the past months, a few Senators have come up to me quietly and asked me to pass a half-bill or "Clean Water Lite." A bill that solves local problems but gives up on tough national issues. A bill, for example, with a lot of money to clean up the border with Mexico but nothing on non-point source pollution; or with money to city water agencies but no commitment to reducing toxics; or that cuts wetland regulations without asking anything of industry. In effect, a bill that hands out the goodies for free. Something for nothing.

I am not going to do that. "Clean Water Lite" is the politics of selfishness. Solve my problem, but let the others go. That is not going to work. Ignoring an issue only means solving it later at greater cost.

So if this bill is to pass, it will be a package. The days are past in which we can spend lots of money and wait until later to solve the real problems. This year, we will get a comprehensive Clean Water Act or we will get nothing. And it is clear that the Senate schedule will not have time for clean water later in the year. We do not have the luxury of putting clean water on hold while we address other matters. The Senate must pass a clean water bill early next month, if it is to pass any clean water bill this year.

#### The American People Want a Good Clean Water Act

Even if you could ignore the schedule, you cannot ignore a crucial fact: water pollution is a serious national problem. Water pollution is the top environmental concern 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 everything else.



If any of you were here last year, when Dr. Theo Colburn testified to the Environment Committee, you know why. 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 what water pollution means. It is the legacy of a thoughtless, irresponsible past. It is not a legacy we can pass on to the next generation with a clear conscience. We owe America a strong Clean Water Act. We owe America's children a strong Clean Water Act. This year, with your help, we can give it to them.