Topline Messages:

- We are opening for public comment flexible standards to protect the United State's aquatic ecosystems. The Clean Water Act protects the health of our nation's lakes, rivers and other waterbodies so that they can be safely used by the American public for drinking, recreation, fishing, agriculture, and to support a strong, vibrant economy.

- This proposal establishes a strong baseline level of protection and then allows additional safeguards for aquatic life to be developed through a rigorous site-specific analysis, an approach that ensures the most up to date technology available is being used.

- By setting flexible technology standards for cooling water structures, EPA's common sense proposal would greatly reduce the damage to ecosystems while accommodating site specific circumstances and providing a cost effective options.

- EPA is proposing these standards to meet its obligations under the Clean Water Act pursuant to a recent settlement agreement with environmental groups whereby EPA agreed to issue cooling water intake regulations in three phases.

- By the time the agency takes final action in July 2012, industry will have been waiting nearly twenty years for the regulatory certainty that facilitates sound investment decisions. The public will have been waiting just as long for reassurance that the aquatic environment is being protected. With this action, we are closer to doing both.

- The public's comments will be instrumental in shaping sensible safeguards for aquatic life and providing the case-by-case details we need to build a commonsense path forward. The input we receive will make certain that we end up with a flexible and effective rule to protect the health of our waters and ecosystems.