



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 16 2009

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
President of the Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

OFFICE OF
WATER

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to transmit the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *National Water Quality Inventory: Report to Congress, 2004 Reporting Cycle*, as required by Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act. This document summarizes, on a national basis, water quality assessment information reported to EPA by the states. It is a companion to ATTAINS Database, an interactive, on-line database of state water quality information which allows users to view assessment findings for individual states, watersheds, and waterbodies. ATTAINS is available at <http://www.epa.gov/waters/ir>.

This Report to Congress finds that the states assessed sixteen (16) percent of the nation's 3.5 million river and stream miles, thirty-nine (39) percent of its 41.7 million acres of lakes, ponds and reservoirs, and twenty-nine (29) percent of its 87,791 estuary square miles. Forty-four (44) percent of assessed river and stream miles, sixty-four (64) percent of assessed lake acres, and thirty (30) percent of assessed estuary square miles were found to be impaired for one or more designated uses. Leading causes of impairment included pathogens, mercury, nutrients, and organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen. Top sources of impairment included atmospheric deposition, agriculture, hydrologic modifications, and unknown or unspecified sources.

EPA and states have embarked on a series of probability-based surveys that are also discussed in this report. Probability-based surveys complement more traditional targeted monitoring and assessment programs, and add substantially to our understanding of water quality conditions at state, regional, and national scales. More information on the national surveys can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/nationalsurveys.html>.

I would be pleased to further discuss the contents of this report at your convenience or your staff may contact Christina Moody at (202) 564-0260.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. H. Grumbles".

Benjamin H. Grumbles
Assistant Administrator