4. POLICY POSITION

URGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

BACKGROUND

Implementation of the Clean Water Act has been a major stimulus to the nation’s efforts to achieve and maintain a high level of water quality and a strong state/federal program must be continued with administration and enforcement responsibilities given to the states where they are willing to accept them.

Further, a continuing need exists for the federal government to provide technical and fiscal support to carry out a nationwide water quality control effort, and the nation’s water pollution control program is in need of some significant adjustments to streamline requirements, reduce red tape and bureaucracy, and assure efficient use of public funds.

RECOMMENDATION

The Southern Legislative Conference commends the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended Clean Water Act amendments to the Congress for its consideration with the exceptions and conditions outlined as follows:

1. Although SLC recognizes that balancing the federal budget and coming to terms with inflation means that program funding in many areas cannot continue to grow, there must not be any reductions that would compromise the advances made to date in water pollution control.

2. The federal wastewater treatment facilities construction grants for local governments must be fully funded, as stability of funding and program requirements is essential to achievement of the goals of the Act.

3. States must be given greater flexibility to adopt and enforce water quality standards that meet their individual needs. If state-adopted standards meet the requirements of the Act to protect the environment, the federal role should be limited strictly to concerns of national or interstate interest and/or protection of public health.

4. States must be given the flexibility to develop and implement industrial pretreatment programs in cooperation with local governments. Tailoring the program to individual community and industry needs will assure protection of the environment and minimize unnecessary cost and red tape.