April 16, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

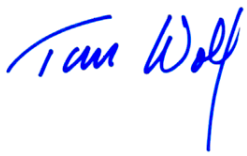
As the Governors of five states from the Great Lakes region and representing 46.9 million Americans, we join those across the country in expressing our opposition to President Trump's April 10, 2019 executive order on water quality certifications, which disregards mounting environmental concerns to the public. The Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA) is the primary federal law that governs water quality, while restoring and preserving the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of water in the United States. By passing the CWA and subsequent amendments, Congress recognized states (and authorized tribes) as a separate authority over the protection and administration of water resources. By seeking a "single point of accountability," this executive order seeks to defy statutory intent and damage the division of state, tribal, and federal authorities reflected in statutory language in the Clean Water Act.

Our Great Lakes remain one of our most vital economic and ecological resources in the United States, accounting for one-fifth of the freshwater surface on the planet. As Governors, it is our duty to safeguard the Great Lakes and other waters within our boundaries. State authority to certify, revoke, or revise federal permits of discharges into waters of the United States per Section 401 is crucial to the CWA's framework of cooperative federalism. This authority allows states to maintain state water quality with respect to activities associated with federally permitted discharges.

We strongly oppose any attempt by this administration to undermine state authority and ability to enforce water quality standards. We remain committed to do what is necessary to protect sources of drinking water, public health and our environment. The residents of our states deserve to have this critical work continue unimpeded. We urge this administration to reconsider this executive order and respect the rights of states to protect our waters.

Sincerely,

Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan



Governor Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania

Governor J.B. Pritzker, Illinois

Governor Tony Evers, Wisconsin

Governor Tim Walz, Minnesota