May 6, 2014

Honorable Howard P. “Buck” McKeon  
Chairman  
Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC, 205105


Dear Representative McKeon:

The Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials (ASTSWMO) respectfully requests that the House Armed Services Committee carefully review and reconsider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 budget request for the Department of Defense (DoD) Environmental Restoration Programs.

The FY 2015 budget request of $1.104B for these programs is a significant reduction from previous appropriations; it is 15% less than the FY 2014 appropriation of $1.303B, and 22% less than the $1.424B appropriated in FY 2012. We also understand that an additional $220 million has been proposed by the Readiness Subcommittee which would result in a 32% reduction from the 2014 level. Our primary concern is that the proposed funding reductions will both halt all new investigations on potentially contaminated sites currently scheduled for 2015 and stop many ongoing cleanup activities nationwide. This would be a significant threat to public health and the environment.

ASTSWMO is the national association representing the waste management and remediation programs in the 50 States, five Territories and the District of Columbia (States) and includes State managers responsible for, among other things, oversight of the assessment and remediation of both public and privately owned contaminated lands.

DoD is responsible for environmental restoration of 38,800 sites that are located in all 56 States and Territories. This includes both federal facilities under its control, and for properties contaminated during its use and subsequently transferred to new owners, such as individuals and local governments. Transferred properties include residential developments, urban redevelopments (Brownfields), and public recreational spaces. Contaminants include hazardous substances such as PCBs, chlorinated solvents and petroleum. In addition, many former properties and active installations include military munitions sites with unexploded ordinances that have proved to be particularly hazardous in residential developments.

Protection of public health and the environment is of paramount importance. However, there is also an economic burden for local communities and States where these potentially valuable properties lie fallow and off the tax rolls. Redevelopment of these properties has proven to produce revenue and jobs, which is a legacy that DoD can be proud of. However, without the funding to effectively continue its environmental restoration activities at these federal facilities,
they could be neglected and place a continued economic and environmental burden on the citizens and local communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 501-682-0960 or ASTSWMO Executive Director, Dania Rodriguez, at 202-640-1061 if you need any additional information or would like to discuss this further.

Respectfully,

J. Ryan Benefield (AR)
President

cc: ASTSWMO Board of Directors