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New York Water Environment Association Honors Congressman Brian Higgins with the Nelson A. Rockefeller Award

Syracuse, NY – The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) honored Congressman Brian Higgins with the 2022 Nelson A. Rockefeller Award today at the awards ceremony during the association’s 95th Annual Meeting. The award is given annually to recognize an elected official at the city, state, or national level, who has made a substantial and meaningful contribution to advancing effective environmental programs in New York State.

Congressman Brian Higgins has been a member of the United States House of Representatives since 2005. During his time in Congress, he has been a fierce advocate for environmental issues in the Great Lakes Region. He has been a staunch advocate for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, habitat restorations, and has even worked on more specific matters such as invasive species, glycol contamination of streams from airports, nutrient/phosphorus loadings for Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW)s, and much more. In its latest annual score card, the League of Conservation Voters noted Congressman Higgins had a 100% “Pro-Environment Vote” record and a 95% lifetime score.

Over 30 years ago, the Buffalo River was declared biologically dead and ecologically destroyed, and only through a persistent restoration effort was it remediated. It now shows vastly improved water quality. Congressman Higgins works tirelessly to prevent the recurrence of environmental disasters like Love Canal and Tonawanda Coke in his district. His work in Washington, D.C. focuses on the conservation and care for natural resources from the Great Lakes and other waterways to parks and natural public spaces. Congressman Higgins advocates for federal funding to support a healthy environment and protect those most vulnerable to pollution and exposure to hazardous substances. To achieve these goals of preservation, he has been a strong supporter of federal funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Water Resources Development Act.

As a member of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, protecting the health of the Great Lakes is one of Congressman Higgins’ most important priorities. To that end, Congressman Higgins has been a major supporter and co-sponsor of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) actions. Earlier in 2021, the GLRI was reauthorized until 2026 with increased funding each year. Congressman Higgins has spent years supporting and defending federal funding for projects and programs like the GLRI that help protect the Great Lakes and other waterways of Western New York.

Since 2010, the GLRI has invested over $73 million in federal funding, supporting more than 125 projects in Congressman Higgins’ district. These investments are contributing to the restoration of the Buffalo and Niagara rivers and advancing revival of the Buffalo and Niagara Falls waterfronts. Specifically, the Buffalo River has seen a renaissance in recent years, with contaminated sediment removed, enhancements made to the shoreline to promote a more natural environment, and resultant water quality improvements. This turnaround in the Buffalo River has led to ecological, economic, and recreational benefits throughout the
river corridor. Congressman Higgins has offered the keynote address at a past Greater Buffalo Environmental Conference, hosted by the NYWEA Western Chapter. During his presentation, he gave an impassioned speech about the importance of the water environment to all of us and the critical role water professionals have in sustaining this resource.

About NYWEA: Founded in 1929 by professionals in the field of water quality as a nonprofit educational organization, NYWEA has 2,500 members statewide and hosts several technical conferences each year for environmental engineers, scientists, water resource recovery operators, public officials and others who work in water and wastewater quality management. In addition, NYWEA sponsors a scholarship program, publishes Clear Waters – a quarterly educational magazine, administers wastewater operator training and certification, and supports humanitarian clean water projects. Headquartered in Syracuse, NYWEA has seven regional chapters, 15 college student chapters and is a Member Association of the international Water Environment Federation. For more information, please visit www.nywea.org.

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