January 29, 2010

Mr. Timothy T. Loftus, Ph.D.
Project Director, Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Planning
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
233 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

Re: Letter of Support for Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Plan

Dear Mr. Loftus:

In the context of the global economy, our region and McHenry County is a single entity. In the years to come, one of the northeastern Illinois' greatest advantages over its competitors will be its water supply. However, the supply is not infinite and McHenry County is solely dependent on groundwater sources. As population grows and businesses expand, demand for our finite water resources will increase. Water supplies in the region – such as deep aquifers and rivers – will bear increasing pressure. Therefore, we must act now to ensure our water supplies are sufficient to meet our growth and development needs locally and regionally.

To ensure our competitive advantage does no run down the drain, we need data – driven planning, coordination across municipal borders, reinvestment in infrastructure, improvements in efficiency, and water conservation. It is for all these reasons the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Plan is so significant. The plan – a set of efficiency and conservation recommendations based on the most current data available – lays out an impressive array of options of ensuring sustainable water supplies and management.

It used to be that communities used low rates to compete against each other for businesses. However, that leads to a race to the bottom, with underinvestment in infrastructure and service, and dwindling supplies. As we gain a better understanding of water supply and demand, it is clear competition should be based on who manages finite water resources most efficiently and innovatively. Whoever does that – be it a company, community, or region – will be the one who comes out ahead economically.

Investment means paying something now for greater returns later. We acknowledge some of the plan's recommendations could result in additional short-term costs, but the benefits will be the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of northeastern Illinois. Moreover, any near-term costs pale in comparison to the alternative – shortages and drought, business and job losses, and new firms locating in more proactive regions.

McHenry County looks forward to incorporating recommendations from the region's first comprehensive water supply plan into our own Groundwater Protection Action Plan. We are also excited about the long-term investments it will trigger. You, your staff, and the volunteer members of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply Planning Group are to be commended.

Sincerely.

Kenneth Koehler, McHenry County Board Chairman