October 18, 2022

PA Announcer: Thank you for joining us. Please welcome to the stage the CEO of Cleveland Metroparks, Brian Zimmerman. (Applause)

Brian Zimmerman: I appreciate the applause and it helps keep your fingers just a little bit warm here this morning as well. So again, I'm Brian Zimmerman. I'm the CEO of the Cleveland Metroparks, a 25,000-acre park system. And only be fitting today on the 50th anniversary celebration that we got some rain here this morning on the shores of the Cuyahoga River. I can only thank our team for putting the yeoman’s work together to get this event coordinated. And a warm welcome to the secretary. Let's give him a warm round, the second trip here to Cleveland. (Applause) We love that DC is making Cleveland a priority and it's an amazing opportunity here to celebrate the 50th anniversary with the EPA and folks here. It feels more like a family reunion than a press conference or an opportunity here, so to see folks from all over the country coming to Cleveland is wonderful. So here we sit at Rivergate Park. This is a very unique ecosystem here, a partnership with the city of Cleveland, the Cleveland Rowing Foundation, the Sewer District, a whole host of people. And again, I think that's the focus of what's going on here in Cleveland is the collaborative spirit, how we get things done, the port, the sewer district, the city, the county. Armond Budish is here, Mayor Bibb is here. You're going to get to hear from the black environmental leaders. There are so many wonderful things happening here in this wonderful ecosystem on the shores of the historic Cuyahoga River. Again, it is my true pleasure to talk about the engagement that we have done to get the Cuyahoga River working on the delisting. Jen Grieser from our natural resources team has been spearheading that. We have so many different miles of riparian corridors between the Cuyahoga River, the Rocky River, the Chagrin River. And again, we couldn't be more proud then to be hosting this wonderful opportunity here on the shores of the Cuyahoga River. Our friends and partners at the Cleveland Water Alliance, West Creek Conservancy, again you'll hear the theme of partnerships and progress here in Cleveland. So again, it is my true pleasure to welcome everyone here to Cleveland. Cleveland Metroparks is a proud host and thank you and have a wonderful morning. (Applause)

PA Announcer: Please welcome to the stage the Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water, Radhika Fox. (Applause)

Radhika Fox: Good morning, everybody. Good morning. Happy anniversary. Happy anniversary. So, I just want to begin on behalf of the entire team at EPA, we want to thank Brian and his team at Metroparks, Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells and her team at Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. They have been terrific local partners, local host partners for today's celebration, so

thank you. I also want to thank all of you for traveling from all across the country to join us today. I have to say when I woke up this morning, I was like, is anyone going to show up, it's cold, it's raining, there was even sleet this morning. But it just reminded me that you all are clean water champions and if there is anybody that has grit, it is anyone that has determination, it is you all our clean water stewards, and I knew you were going to come. So, thank you again for making it out. So, as we gather here at this really special place and in this special moment, EPA wanted to really first express our gratitude and appreciation for those who have lived here and worked here before us. Those whose stewardship and resilient spirit makes the residents, our residents possible on this traditional homeland of the Lenape, the Delaware, the Shawnee, the Wyandotte, the Miami, the Ottawa, the Potawatomi and other Great Lakes tribes. The EPA also acknowledges the thousands of Native Americans who now call northeast Ohio home. (Applause) So, for the past 50 years, the Clean Water Act has been the regulatory, the policy, the funding framework, the regulatory framework that has guided all of your work in protecting our nation's waters. And so here we are at the 50th anniversary, you know the EPA we wanted to take a moment to take stock to celebrate all of the successes that are happening because of this legislation around the country, but also to really recommit ourselves to the next 50 years of progress. And so, we have had the opportunity, our regional administrators, the administrator, myself, to travel and visit many communities around the country, and you know visiting the Boston Harbor, visiting the Puget Sound, visiting the Chesapeake Bay. You know we certainly saw all of the wonderful Clean Water Act tools at work right, NPDES permits, TMDLs, water quality certifications. But you know what we really saw is that the Clean Water Act really came to life. We saw the people behind the Clean Water Act, the partnerships that are driving progress on behalf of our nation's waters. And so, you know what we all hope for today at the EPA, is that this moment is a powerful reminder of when we come together, when we work together, anything is possible, that's what today is about for us. And of course, what better place to celebrate than here at the banks of the Cuyahoga River. Now I imagine and hope for sunshine and blue skies, but I actually think it's more beautiful with the rain behind us. This has certainly been an iconic symbol for our nation, right? It's the theme of songs, the topic of documentaries, and photos of rivers burning are just imprinted in history books. And it is what inspired the passage of the Clean Water Act and so we are excited to celebrate with you and we have an amazing lineup of speakers to help us reflect and help us renew and restore our commitment for the next 50 years. And so, with that, it's my honor to introduce Justin Bibb, the Mayor of Cleveland to kick us off. (Applause)

Justin Bibb: Thank you so much Radhika. It is such a great honor to welcome you here to the birthplace of the climate justice movement right here in Cleveland, Ohio. And I'm just so thrilled to join you today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. I also want to acknowledge Administrator Regan for his leadership. You know, we are so honored and blessed to have a president in D.C., who truly believes that we need to change America one city at a time. So, let's give the administrator, the entire Biden-Harris Administration a round of applause. (Applause) You know this backdrop has so much significance in our city and in our nation, and we don't get today's event without the great leadership of former Mayor Carl B. Stokes. (Applause) And as the youngest black mayor in Cleveland's history, it is a major, big steps to walk in. As you know Carl Stokes when he became mayor had a big bold agenda. He wanted to fight for good jobs for black folks in our city, he wanted to fight for a good education, he wanted to fight for wealth creation all across our community, but he probably never imagined that he would be a climate justice mayor. But sometimes you don't find the moment, the moment finds you. And Carl Stokes, when this river caught on fire, he led a cross nation tour to show folks the importance of making sure that cities like Cleveland had the resources they need to truly make sure that everyone had access to good clean drinking water. Now 50 years later, 50 years later, we have one of the freshest rivers in America, and that speaks to the leadership of everyone in this room. And so, as the mayor of this great city, I look forward (inaudible) and from the great Carl Stokes to make sure that Cleveland will always lead America and the climate justice movement. So again, thank you for being here today and let's keep the fight and progress alive. Thank you so much. (Applause)

PA Announcer: Please welcome to the stage, representing the 12th District of Michigan Potter's own Debbie Dingell. (Applause)

Debbie Dingell: Good morning, everybody. And I can't tell you how great it is to be here with the environmental champions of this country now to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Thank you, Administrator Regan, for bringing all of us together today to recognize the progress that we've made on clean water, and to acknowledge we’ve got a lot more work ahead of us still. Clean water is a basic human right, it is a basic human right that we've got to remind too many people of yet today, that every man, woman, and child deserves across every generation. And if this is a belief that I fight, I believe deeply and I fight for every single day in Congress. And it's a belief that inspired the man that I loved, and was married to for almost 40 years, who is one of the architects of the Clean Water Act, with Senator Ed Muskie to craft our nation's preeminent clean water law. And Mr. Mayor, I'm glad to be here with you and be welcomed to Cleveland. The Stokes have been friends of the Dingell family, some people might say forever (laughter), but they are, they’re good people. You know, I want to say to many of you, you think it's unimaginable in this day and age that people would denounce an effort to clean up waterways, but that's what happened 50 years ago, and I want to remind people of that. And it wasn't just the Cuyahoga River that was on fire. In fact, there were three rivers in the two-year period that caught on fire. One was the Buffalo, the river behind me, but one was the Buffalo River and the other was the Rouge River in Detroit or Dearborn, actually, it was both. That river still runs through my district, but ran through John Dingell’s district, and that is probably what impacted him more than anything to join the Stokes and others, that we had to do something about our dirty water. In fact, to give you just a little, to give you something to laugh about on this cold day, this is the Midwest, we're glad you're here, (laughter) you don't have the 15 inches of snow the Upper Peninsula got last night. (Laughter) On the 50th Anniversary of the Rouge River fire October 9, 2019, Rashida Tlaib and I decided to kayak the Rouge River that day. And it was an incredible experience, despite all three television stations sent helicopters to (inaudible) because they were convinced one of us was going to tip over or both of us were and we'd drown, but we didn't. But to go down that river, and to see the Rouge Steel, the rouge auto pipes and the steel, they're all still there. But Rashida, she beat me, got the best picture of a painted turtle. To see the heron flying over. To see what had come back because of the efforts of the Clean Water Act. And I remember the day that Joe Knollenberg, a republican on an appropriations committee who made this as important to him as John and John Dingell as they were cleaning up the Rouge River, celebrated the catching, Joe actually called it junking of the salmon, in the Rouge River as it came back. So, this is what we got to remember. And with the Clean Water Act, John did not imagine a law that simply reduced water pollution. He envisioned a law that would work together with other environmental laws to eliminate the discharge of pollutants into our drinking water supplies and to require the adoption of drinking water standards that protect the public health. And at the time that the Clean Water Act was proposed, it was denounced across the country. I don't remember it. I was too young. (Laughter) They want to make that point. (Laughter) But I pulled up scrapbooks as I was moving John's papers, and Drew Pearson wrote an article about John Dingell and Ed Muskie and what was happening to them across the country. He called them two brave men that people were attacking all over the country. And I found clips from the News Herald where the Downriver Community Conference, which was all the cities that were on the Rouge River were like Dingell, you're crazy, we're going to defeat you, it's going to cost too much money. And it was even vetoed by President Nixon before being acted into law, thanks to the House and Senate overriding the veto. So now, 50 years later, we've seen the importance of the Clean Water Act. (Rain) This is the Midwest, we love this kind of weather. It helps our rivers, doesn't it Mr. Mayor? Now 50 years later we've seen the importance of the Clean Water Act. That's God and John Dingell and Ed Muskie agreeing with me, (applause) and you too (laughter), which has enshrined the right to clean drinking water by bringing important water sources back to life, ridding pollutants and dangerous toxins from our rivers, lakes, and streams, protecting our waterways from future contamination, and we need to hold polluters accountable. (Applause) We do (applause). That’s one of my…the administrator knows I'm getting tougher on that. (Applause) We've got to be tougher. And for 50 years we've had to defend the Clean Water Act from those who want to undermine it, and roll back its protections, often in the interest of corporate profit over public health. And we cannot let that happen. We're fighting it in Michigan right now, and we will not let it happen. (Applause) But we know that protecting and cleaning up our waterways is critical for public safety, well-being, environmental conservation, and ultimately, it's good for business too. Too many people around our country are still without safe and clean drinking water. Michigan told the story in Flint and Benton Harbor, but it's a fact across the country. So, we've got to continue to strengthen the Clean Water Act for the next generation. It's important that we find ways to expand access to clean water for every community, especially, for our front-line and environmental justice communities, and develop policies based on the best available science. Yes, science, facts. (Applause) We must continue, I already said this, because I feel it so strongly, but to hold polluters responsible, upgrade our clean water infrastructure, ensure its resilience in the face of climate change. We also, and I know the administrator hears me, the poor administrator has heard me say this to him from the very first second, he met me. We need to continue establishing strong drinking water standards to clean up our water, as science continues to advance, and as we learn about the harmful effects of new substances, and emerging contaminants all around us. I thank the secretary, or the administrator for his work on PFAS. We have made progress, and hexavalent chromium’s the next one, you've just seen this bill. But we are making real progress. We're modern under modernizing. I want to before I close talk about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included $15 billion for lead service line replacement for communities across the country that have been suffering. (Applause) We're going to get the lead out of every pipe in America if we keep fighting, and I know we're going to do that together. And we got another $11.7 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Funds. (Cheers) Let's use today, this celebration and this anniversary, as a reminder for all of us, that the good can get done. As the people who spoke before me have said, “when we work together to protect our most precious life-sustaining resources, and this is the day we recommit to that critical work”. Thank you for letting me be here with you today. It’s a deep reminder of my love for John Dingell and what he did. And the promise he made me, that I would never stop fighting to keep this true. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PA Announcer: Welcome to the stage Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Michael Connor. (Applause)

Michael Connor: Thank you everyone. Wow, Debbie Dingell. It’s an honor, but it's a challenge to follow Debbie Dingell, but I will do my best. And it's an honor to be here with all of you today. Leaders from across the country, local leaders, community leaders, federal leaders, all charged with a great passion that we all have, which is to ensure we have water and clean water. And I cannot do justice in talking about the Clean Water Act, it's an understatement for me to talk about its importance, but I think it's important to acknowledge that it established an all-encompassing program to regulate water pollution. And I can't say this about all federal legislation, I say that as a former congressional staffer. All federal legislation doesn't always

work. The Clean Water Act worked. And from that standpoint, I think it's most important to be here to celebrate the progress that's been made in those goals that were articulated in that broad vision, which is restoring chemical, physical, and biological integrity to the nation's water. Yes, we know it's a job that's not complete yet, but the evidence of progress is all around, it's behind us. Communities across the nation have reconnected with the lifeblood of those communities, which was the original source and the basis for those communities, which is their rivers. The Cuyahoga, the Potomac, the Mississippi, the South Platte, where I'm from in Denver, the Rio Grande, where I grew up, all these rivers are part of the histories of these communities and now they're a source of great enjoyment and that's because of the Clean Water Act. I am proud to be here with all of you representing the Army Corps of Engineers. And I'm laughing because the president of the council meeting said, “you're the dredgers”. (Laughter) We are the dredgers, but we have a broader role and vision for our work in the water resources arena. But I have been to Cleveland three times in the last six weeks and yes, part of that is because of dredging (laughter). But I'm proud to be here as part of a Clean Water Act celebration. We are joined at the hip with our friends at EPA. We are, you know, responsible for administering the act with respect to section 404. So, we have a large role, and we take that role very seriously. But in addition to that very significant regulatory role that we have under the Clean Water Act, we are trying at the Army Corps of Engineers to lead in the efforts to retain the natural state of our waters. Aquatic ecosystem restoration is now a fundamental part of the Army Corps of Engineers mission. Engineering with nature will continue to evolve as a priority for our programs and how we engineer to beat the challenges of water resources in this era of extreme events. So, we want to use nature, not just fight with nature, which has been our tradition. In addition, I think it's important to recognize, it's been alluded to earlier, and it's important particularly if this is the climate and justice birthplace, that we are trying to broaden our mission and work with communities that quite frankly, the Army Corps of Engineers hasn't historically worked with. We've invested in and protected the highest value properties across communities, across this nation. It's time for us to work with all communities across this nation, and we intend to do that. (Applause) The bottom line is under President Biden's leadership, we don't just administer the Clean Water Act, but we apply its goals to all of our programs, climate resilience, justice inequity, and ultimately clean water. I didn't start with this. I appreciate the land acknowledgment. I am a tribal member from Taos Pueblo in the southwest, I’m a New Mexican. So, I say that because I want to conclude, but all right we've got some New Mexicans here. I'm going to quote a Texan to end my talk here, and that's really hard from anybody from New Mexico (laughter), probably should be hard for all of you (laughter). Lyndon Baines Johnson, President Johnson, he signed over 300 conservation measures into law including the Water Quality Act of 1965. In making the first water resource assessment to Congress, in his letter he stated, “a nation that fails to plan intelligently for the development and protection of its precious waters will be condemned to wither because of its short-sightedness. The hard lessons of history are queer, written, clearly written on the deserted sands and ruins of once proud civilizations”. The Clean Water Act heeded his call to plan intelligently, to continue to focus on our precious waters, and to use the far-sighted tools that were inherent in that act. Our challenge now, is to continue to use those tools, to ensure that we meet that goal of clean water and waters that all of our communities can enjoy. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PA Announcer: Please welcome to the stage White House Chair on the Council on Environmental Quality, Brenda Mallory.

Brenda Mallory: Hello friends, it's such a pleasure to be here today. And I have to say I didn't realize how much of a rally I was coming to this morning and it's just great to be here and feel the spirit of everyone who has already spoken before me and just to see this room full of people who I know are fighting every day to make a difference on clean water. So, thank you for everything you're doing, and thank you for inviting me to join you for this special day. And I think the weather is appropriate in some ways just to remind us of how all of our systems are connected, and we need this rain, and this rain is important, even though it ruins our visuals for the day, but that's okay. So, first of all, just thank you to Mayor Bibb for hosting us. It's a pleasure to be here in Cleveland. And it's such a thrill to be here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. As some of you in the room know, I started out as a water lawyer, and so everything that takes me back to an opportunity to kind of remind me of those roots is really much appreciated. Yesterday, President Biden issued a proclamation commemorating this milestone. He noted how clean water is of paramount importance to our planet, to our nation, to communities, and how the Clean Water Act has been an invaluable tool in protecting this precious resource. The president also celebrated how far we've come, and we've already heard a little bit about that today, over the last 50 years. And it's truly something that we as a nation have to celebrate or appreciate as much as we recognize that

there's more work to be done. In the months and weeks leading up to this anniversary, I’ve been asked many times, what does the 50th anniversary mean, and to answer that question I think it's important to contextualize what led to the Clean Water Act. The genesis of this landmark law was the public outrage over the visible severe degradation of our planet and our communities, like the Cuyahoga River catching on fire. And although that river had burned over a dozen times, that last fire in 1969 occurred during an awakening of environmental consciousness and prompted a grassroots movement calling for basic rights to clean air, to clean water and to livable communities. So spurred by the actions of activists and advocates across the country and overwhelming public support, Congress enacted several hallmark environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, which is responsible for the creation of my organization, but the Clean Water Act was among those. It's important to remember that this did not happen overnight, rather it was the result of advocacy for healthier rivers, waters, communities. And as I reflect on the last 50 years, I'm reminded of the power of the collective voice, all pulling in the same direction. We've heard that theme already today, that's why I love these people for one simple and sacred idea, every person deserves to have access to clean water. President Nixon said during his State of the Union around the same time, clean air, clean water, open spaces, these should once again be the birthright of every American. Indeed, the mission of safeguarding clean air and clean water has long been a shared American value. And it's a value that underpins our work 50 years later in the Biden-Harris Administration, and that CEQ, and at a number of the other agencies we've heard from today. So, while the Cuyahoga River no longer catches fire, in fact, it is now so clean that its waters are once again fishable and swimmable, we have a planet on fire. Clean water has always been a shared resource that we ignore at our peril, but this is especially true as we confront climate change. We can't separate the need for clean water from other pressing issues we face, like climate change and environmental injustice. Nor can we separate clean water from the opportunities that those challenges present. President Biden often talks about the United States as a nation of possibilities. Many of those possibilities are rooted in access to clean water and a healthy community. The next 50 years of environmentalism centers in so many ways around clean water. And if we work together to steward this resource, the investment pays off in a healthy environment, in a healthy people, and in a healthy economy. But the next 50 years of environmentalism must also include a more holistic picture. It's about clean water and climate change. Clean water and environmental justice. Clean water and equitable green and blue space. Clean water and economic development. So, President Biden recognizes the opportunity we have at this moment, and he knows that if we do this right, we can protect lives and livelihoods, while making our communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change. I want to focus for one minute on that nexus of clean water and environmental justice because President Biden has made clear from the start of this Administration that we would work to benefit all communities in all that we do. All right cold fingers. And for too long our environmental policies have not benefited at all. So, the president committed on the campaign trail to tackle this issue head on. He committed to bring books to the table so that together we can develop policies that advance a healthy and safe environment for every community. So much of the water policy in this Administration is geared towards delivering on a basic goal, striving to ensure that everyone, regardless of zip code, or race, or income, has access to clean water. And that's why the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act make an unprecedented investment in our nation's water infrastructure so that we can protect clean water for generations to come. We have a lot of work ahead of us and EPA is a critical leader and a critical partner in that work, but so are all of you. Remember, the reason we have a Clean

Water Act was because folks of all generations and races and backgrounds came together to say enough is enough. We need that spirit, that activism, from folks all across the country if we truly want to solve the challenges we are facing today, and I know we can do it. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with each and every one of you in this room as we work to protect clean water for all people over the next 50 years. Thank you so much. [Applause]

PA Announcer: And now, please welcome to the stage, the Co-Director of the Black Environmental Leaders Association, SeMia Bray. (Applause)

SeMia Bray: (Laughs) Hello everyone. Thank you so much for the invitation here today to join you. Wow, Administrator Regan, thank you. Thank you for celebrating this 50th anniversary in Cleveland. Thank you so much. To all of the distinguished guests who have preceded me, thank you. To Mayor Bibb, I'm going to peek around here, to Mayor Bibb (laughter() thank you for hosting today's gathering and for accepting that baton, because just because somebody passes a baton, doesn't mean you have to accept it. So, thank you. Thank you for doing that. As he said my name is SeMia Bray and I have the honor of greeting you today with peace and ease. I'm the Co-Director of the Black Environmental Leaders Association, and there are several of our members here today. The power is in the association. Yes, so even though I stand here today, the power is in the association. I also serve along with David Wilson and in the legacy of Jacqueline Giillon though members and allies are aligned as stewards of both the built and yes, the natural environment, we work collectively to provide a forum for community environmental education and climate, which can serve as a basis of deeper understanding and commitment to land, water, air, transportation, energy, and yes, climate justice issues. There is no one way to integrate equity, justice, and inclusion within this climate and environmental movement, but many. I am so pleased of all the perspectives that I've heard today as we think about clean water. But along this journey, I have observed something. How some people make things happen. Some people watch things happen. And then there's a whole lot of other people that just wonder what happened (laughter). So let me tell you today, it warms me on this chilly midwestern day to know that we are in the room today with a room filled with people who make things happen. And yes, I'm looking at each and every one of you. Today, I'm also thinking about as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, it is in part influenced by each one of you. I also celebrate being a granddaughter, and this is probably of all the things that I've been blessed to be able to accomplish and do in my career, to be a granddaughter of the great migration. You see nearly a decade before the creation of the Clean Water Act, my maternal grandmother exercised her agency, just as each one of us are doing today, and she came to Cleveland, Ohio from Laurel, Mississippi. Now for some of you who know about Mississippi, that's about 200 miles away from Money, Mississippi. Somebody can look that up on the way home and see the significance (laughter). She got in a (inaudible) as a result of some activity that was happening in Money, Mississippi. She got in her pickup truck with her five children and all that they could carry in trash bags, and they headed north. Why did they head north? Because the Jim Crow South had a different perspective on who should have clean water, clean air, and live in a community that was safe. And she headed north, and we, our family, ended up in Cleveland because, yeah, you guessed it, she ran out of gas (laughter). And so I stand here today, people ask me sometimes they say, “SeMia when did you start in the environmental and climate Justice movement?” I said you know, I think I was born into it. So those of us who are leaders in the room we know that sometimes, and I think it was one of those on the dais today who said sometimes you choose a thing, sometimes a thing chooses you, and when it does, you answer that call. And so today, we have answered the call. Today our water is much cleaner than it was 50 years ago when my paternal grandfather arrived here and was fishing in that Lake Erie. But today I'm proud to say that I can stand here and say with confidence that it's a lot safer and a lot cleaner than it was then. And for that, I am thankful for so many people in this room for taking the time and every day what you do to make sure that this water is cleaner in you know in Lake Erie than ever before. And so now as we look forward to the future, I think about CHEERS, the Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Study. Yes, CHEERS is much easier to say (laughter). And I think about it with excitement because if ever there were people who could make that project come to form, Region 5, blacks and green, Enterra, and all of those who are working here today, it is the people in this room. So, thank you for all that you do and as we think about 50 years from now, I look forward to, well I don't know if I'll be standing here, but I look forward to people celebrating another 50th anniversary of the amazing things that came forward for climate, clean energy, and clean water justice, as a result of us being in this room today. You know when we think about the people who inspire us, if we had asked them at the time that they did what they did that they think they would be making history, they would probably say no. So, as I close, I close as I came to you with peace and ease. And I leave you with this thought. The decisions that we make today somebody will be thinking about the results 50 years from now, let's let it be another celebration even bigger than the one that we're having today. Thank you. (Applause)

PA Announcer: Once again, please welcome back to the stage EPA’s Assistant Administrator of the Office of Water Radhika Fox. (Applause)

Radhika Fox: So now I have the honor of introducing our keynote speaker EPA Administrator Michael Regan. I know that some of you in the room know Administrator Regan from his time when he was the Secretary for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, and incredible work he did on issues like PFAS and the Cape Fear River to negotiating the largest coal ash settlement in the nation. Many of you have had the opportunity to work with Administrator Regan in his current role and the incredible things he's doing at the EPA restoring science, helping guide all of us in the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, to launching a new first-ever national program office dedicated to environmental justice and civil rights. So, he's accomplished so many things on behalf of people. But for all of the EPA staff, who are here can you just raise your hands? All the EPA staff who are here raise your hands (applause). What I can say fairly on behalf of the EPA staff here, and also watching on the livestream that Administrator Regan is a great boss. He's a really great boss and he's a true thought partner to all of us. And you know one of my favorite quotes about, from Alice Walker is this, “people will forget the things you say, people will forget the things you do, but people will never forget how you make them feel”. And what I can say about Administrator Regan is that he makes us all, all of us at EPA, feel a sense of endless possibility. You do that, you do that. You make us feel empowered to advance the mission of the of the EPA across all of our media offices, across all of our regions. That's how you make us feel administrator. So please join me in welcoming the 16th Administrator for the EPA Michael Regan. (Applause)

Administrator Michael Regan: Must be performance review time (laughter). Thank you so much Radhika. You know we talk about our lakes and our rivers and our streams as national treasures. Well, Radhika Fox is EPA’s national treasure. So, thank you (applause). And I think Radhika would really encourage me to say that there are some of us that come and go as politicals, and we really have to say thank you to the EPA career staff and all of the federal career staff across the government. Without you we would not be here celebrating the things that we’re celebrating. (Applause) Mayor Bibb thank you for hosting us. Thank you for your leadership. I won't go as far as saying that this weather is appropriate (laughter). I'm from the South (laughter), but we're doing the best we can. Thank you. Congresswoman Dingell such a great partner. The only thing I request is that you tell us a little bit more about what's on your mind (laughter). I do know one thing, and this is no joke, that John Dingell is definitely looking down and saying, “go, Debbie go”. So, thank you. (Applause) Chair Mallory, Assistant Secretary Connor, thank you all for the strong partnership. The president has talked about a whole of government approach and you all are leaders that are helping us exercise the president's vision. It’s great to be back here in Cleveland, Ohio, a city and a people whose past and present are intimately bound to the environmental movement as has been stated earlier. As EPA Administrator, you know, I have the privilege of traveling quite a bit and spending time with people on their front porches, in their churches and along the banks of rivers and lakes and streams that have shaped so many of our lives, much like the lake right behind us. Just yesterday I had the opportunity to visit a little town called Goldsboro in eastern North Carolina, which just happens to be the place that I was born and raised. I was there to celebrate the 2022 River of the Year. Now, being a proud North Carolinian, I can be a bit competitive, I recognize that. But I have to say I understand and recognize that the Cuyahoga River was also selected as the river of the year just three years ago. But this year the good old Neuse River took home the trophy. The Neuse River, one of the oldest rivers in the United States of America, is near and dear to my heart. It may not be as widely known as the Cuyahoga, but like so many rivers it's a community treasure to those that get a chance to experience them. It was one of the places that ignited my passion for the outdoors, my passion for environmental stewardship. When I was in high school, I was a member of a group called Serteen. The mission of our organization was to encourage young people to pursue public service. We would volunteer, we would deliver food to those in need, and most importantly Serteen kept us out of trouble. One of my favorite memories was camping along the Neuse River. Now I need for you all to imagine this, a group of high schoolers who could have been doing anything that they're big enough to do, gathered alongside a river to fish, to have fun, to enjoy the outdoors, and to plan our next volunteer opportunities. There was a little bit of mischief as well (laughter). This is a true story, and for so many that's exactly what rivers like the Neuse and the Cuyahoga provide, a home away from home, a place to dream and think, plot and plan, peace and tranquility, outside of the city. You know rivers and streams across this country provide an opportunity for education, for cultural connections, and recreation, while existing as magnificent natural resources, central to the cities and towns that depend on them. That's why our work to preserve and protect and invest in these waters for the next generation is absolutely so vital. There was a time not long ago that our waters were overridden with pollution. Rivers were covered in oil slicks and caught fire. Bays couldn't support fishing. And children were often forbidden from having the experience I just articulated and playing alongside of those riverbanks. Of course, there are a few places in America that better capture this history than the Cuyahoga River. And there are a few places that are better suited to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passage of one of the most significant, most significant pieces of environmental legislation in United States history, the Clean Water Act. The Cuyahoga River was one of the major catalysts for the environmental movement and captured the attention of Americans near and far. Like too many waterways across our country in the 1950s and 60s, the Cuyahoga River had fallen victim to years of unchecked pollution. I'm talking about the days when our rivers were treated as nothing more than dumping grounds for sewage and industrial waste. Throughout this period, the Cuyahoga River had caught fire so many times that people just expected a new blaze every single week. They would barely bat an eye when they saw people fighting those fires. An article in Time Magazine described the Cuyahoga River as “the river that oozes instead of flows”. It wasn't until 1969 when Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes, the first black man to serve as mayor of a major American city, helped turn around, turn the tide, by pushing Congress to take action. He joined a growing chorus of Americans who were beginning to advocate for the protection, rather than the exploitation of our environment. A few years later in 1972, just two years after the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Congress finally passed the Clean Water Act. In the years since, the Clean Water Act has played a transformational role in protecting people's health and safeguarding our natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. From establishing legal policy to driving technological innovation, the Clean Water Act has led to standards, regulations, policies and protections for waterways across this great nation. Combined with other key initiatives, the Clean Water Act has helped reduce pollution and clean up rivers throughout the United States, from the Cuyahoga River to right to my home state of North Carolina and the Neuse River. While we've come a long way over 50 years in the time since rivers would spontaneously catch on fire, as Debbie Dingell has said, we have a lot more work to do. I've traveled across the country, and I've seen firsthand the effect that years of neglect and indifference have had on our nation's waters, water systems and the very people who rely on them. Many presidents have tried time and time again to pass legislation to address these long-standing and pervasive issues. We can all recall infrastructure plan after infrastructure plan. But one president got it done, (right), Joe Biden got it done (applause). Thanks to Joe Biden's leadership, along with the support of partners like Congresswoman Dingell, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the lynchpin to the next 50 years of water progress in the United States of America. The Infrastructure Law makes the single largest investment in water infrastructure in United States history. Over $50 billion, and that's billion with a “B”, to replace lead pipes, tackle emerging contaminants like PFAS, build drinking water and wastewater systems resilient to climate change, and protect and restore treasured national waters through our geographic programs, and national estuary programs. We know that investing in water infrastructure is one of the single best investments we can make, not only to protect public health and safeguard the environment, but to stimulate local job creation while laying a strong foundation for economic vitality. In 2022 alone, Ohio is set to receive more than $240 million. And there will be more money to come over the next five years to create roughly 3,700 jobs and to invest in our nation's waterways. Delivering on the promises of infrastructure means more than just passing multi-billion-dollar legislation. It means working closely with governors and local leaders like Mayor Bibb to ensure these historic resources reach the places and the people that need them the most. It means making sure that everyone, that every single person has a seat at the table, especially our communities who have been historically failed to have their voices heard and concerns addressed. It means ensuring that solutions aren't developed from the top down but developed from the bottom up. Because although we've come a long way, there are still families in Lowndes County, Alabama, who live with the ever-present threat of raw sewage entering their homes. There are children right now in Jackson, Mississippi who are still suffering from the culmination of decades of neglected water infrastructure. There are businesses and homes in Pittsburgh and Milwaukee that are still working to eradicate these lead pipes. Stories like this, unfortunately, in 2022, exist in every corner of our country. But the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, along with unprecedented resources from the Inflation Reduction Act, well they're changing that. And this Administration is changing that by prioritizing environmental justice and equity in every single decision we make, every dollar we spend, because all people in this country, no matter the color of their skin, the community they live in, or the amount of money they have in their pocket, deserve the opportunity to lead a healthy and blessed life. That opportunity begins and ends with the clean air we breathe and the clean water we drink, and no child and no person in America should be denied those fundamental rights. (Applause) You know some of my best childhood memories involve playing outdoors and fishing in rivers and streams. The freedom to play, the freedom to live, without thinking twice about the pollution in the water that many face, that’s the kind of freedom that every child in America deserves and it's our responsibility to deliver on that level of freedom. The Biden-Harris Administration has taken some very critical steps to translate this into action. And at EPA we're going to keep our shoulder to the wheel. So, I'm very hopeful. I'm very optimistic that we can build on the progress over the next 50 years because we have the tools people, we have the resources, we have each other and now we have the ability to write our future differently. And I know together we can get it done. I know that all of you want to get it done, so let's go. (Applause)