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DESALINATION COALITION DIRECTORS TO MEET IN KEY WEST

WASHINGTON D.C. – The U.S. Desalination Coalition (USDC) will hold its 2004 Fall Conference and Board of Directors meeting on October 14-15, 2004 in Key West, Florida, it was announced today.

Comprised of fourteen water utilities located throughout the nation, USDC promotes desalination technology used to remove salt from seawater and brackish water as a means of helping to solve America's growing water crisis. Florida members include the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority, JEA of Jacksonville, South Florida Water Management District, St. John's River Water Management District, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and Tampa Bay Water.

"It is appropriate for Key West to be the site of our 2004 conference," stated Hal Furman, Executive Director of USDC. "Florida has been at the forefront of efforts to promote the effective use of desalination and the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority recently approved the creation of a desalination project to meet that area's growing water needs."

"Key West was the site of the first desalination plant, an admittedly crude forerunner of today's technology, to support military personnel at Fort Zachary Taylor in 1862," Furman added.

According to Jim Reynolds, the Executive Director of the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority, "The inadequate source of potable water is a national crisis and one that is particularly acute in Florida. Given the fact that our state is surrounded on three sides by seawater, desalination represents a highly promising answer to Florida's growing water shortages."

USDC has urged Congressional passage of H.R. 3834, a bill that would provide federal funding to encourage the use of desalination by providing grants to operators of qualified desalination facilities to partially offset the cost of electrical energy required for their operation. H.R. 3834 is co-sponsored by 33 Members of Congress including Florida congressman Jim Davis (FL-11) Florida U.S. Representatives Clay Shaw, Jr. (FL-22), Ginny Brown-Waite (FL-5), Mark Foley (FL-16), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL-18), John Mica (FL-7), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (FL-21), Peter Deutsch (FL-20), Alcee Hastings (FL-23) Corrine Brown (FL-3), and Ander Crenshaw (FL-4). Hearings were held last month in the House Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources.

"Tremendous population growth coupled with record high drought conditions have combined to create a national water crisis that we cannot afford to ignore," added Furman. "Once only a dream, desalination is today a realistic and viable answer to this crisis."