STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM A. STEIGER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN

Mr. STEIGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I will not take the time, because of the number of witnesses that you have, I would ask that the statement that I have be made a part of the record.

Mr. WRIGHT. Without objection, it will appear in the record at this point.

(The prepared statement by Congressman William A. Steiger follows:)

LAKE POLLUTION CONTROL

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM A. STEIGER

Mr. Chairman, the legislation before us today, HR 13312, is not complicated. The purpose of this bill is to authorize a program of research and demonstration for the control of pollution in lakes. It authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into contracts with or make grants to, public or privae agencies or organizations or individuals for the conduct of research and demonstration projects for the purpose of developing effective and practicable remedial measures, including, without limitation, measures for the prevention of nutrient entry and the removal of existing nutrients and vegetation, to improve the quality of the waters of the inland lakes of the United States.

This bill is an outgrowth of my proposed Clean Lakes Act, HR 12759, submitted on August 31, 1967. Review of that bill by the Department of the Interior in a letter of September 26, 1967 resulted in the incorporation of their proposed changes. The Department of the Interior supports HR 13312, and this bill is in agreement with the Administration's program.

There is a serious threat to the more than 100,000 lakes in this country, a threat not fully recognized until recently, but one which must be met now with a sense of urgency and adequate resources, if we are to reverse the increasingly deleterious effects of man's activities on our inland lakes. HR 13312 specifically identifies the need for a greater focus on the problems of our lakes and the immediate need for many more demonstration projects and further research into the pollution of our lakes. Much has been accomplished in the past with our research efforts, and it now is time to test these new methods with demonstration projects. Efforts must be accelerated. Funds allotted in this bill are but a start to what the total needs will be, and these needs should be further defined by the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration in the coming year, if we are to knowledgeably appropriate the necessary funds in future years. It is imperative that we assign a higher priority to work on the causes and effects of lake pollution. The Clean Lakes Act identifies this priority.

The lakes are suffering mainly from what is commonly called eutrophication. Much has been said about this phenomenon, especially in relation to the plight of one of our most valuable natural resources, the Great Lakes. There is little need to take your time with detailed discussion of eutrophication except to briefly state the problem. The process is not fully understood, hence the crying need for increased research and demonstration projects that will put our findings into workable solutions. It is presently agreed that the build-up of various chemicals, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, increases the growth of aquatic plants, mainly algae. Nutrients promote excessive growth, just as fertilizers promote the yield of crops. Nutrients are fed into a lake via the atmosphere (rainfall), groundwater flow, surface runoff from surrounding lands, and man's activities, which include draining of marshes, cutting of forests, fertilizing his crops, and drainings from sewers and urban centers. While the build-up of nutrients is a slow process under normal conditions, man has accelerated this process. And a lake that has become nutrient-rich is a lake that is extremely difficult to restore. The effect is to limit or to completely eliminate recreational use of the water and surrounding areas, and to impair the use of a lake for a water supply. There is a direct effect on tourism and the economic base of an area. The economic cost of correcting seriously polluted water is fantastic. The cost to society is serious whether measured in terms of dollars or in benefits lost.

Phosphorus is the nutrient that is presently considered the most accessible sector for control. The uncertainty as to the exact role played by other elements