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PRESS RELEASE

Ground-breaking UK study points to future of water management worldwide

London: As World Water Week 2014 convenes in Stockholm today, the [Environment Agency](#) and the [Water Footprint Network](#) launched the results of a pioneering new study of water use in a densely populated region of the UK; the Hertfordshire and North London (HNL) Area (1). The findings of the study signal a breakthrough in water management that can be applied worldwide (2).

The study, entitled '[Water Footprint Assessment for the Hertfordshire and North London Area](#)', was initiated by the Environment Agency to improve their understanding of the problem of water scarcity and pollution. Availability and pollution of water resources has become a key concern for the Environment Agency, and for governments and businesses worldwide as population growth, changing lifestyle patterns, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, as well as climate change, place unprecedented pressure on limited water supplies.

"The Water Footprint Assessment (3) brought new understanding of the local water resources under the existing regulations and could support joined water abstraction and water quality discharge consents. The results of this assessment can also be used for better communication of the issues of water scarcity and water pollution levels to water providers, water users and the public," said Debbie Jones, Environment Manager (HNL East), Environment Agency.

Integrating water scarcity and poor water quality through Water Footprint Assessment highlights the contribution of water management to these growing concerns.

"By looking at water use in this specific area through the lens of a Water Footprint Assessment, we have unearthed an effective, new and innovative approach to tackling water problems that can be applied worldwide. We have a breakthrough on our hands that can revolutionise the way water is managed and regulated so that global demand is met in a sustainable way," said Ruth Mathews, Executive Director, Water Footprint Network.

The results reveal a more robust framework based on Water Footprint Assessment that could form the basis of future regulations.

"We hope this inspires regulatory agencies worldwide to reconsider their approach to assessing how water uses contribute to the ever-increasing issue of water scarcity

and recognize the value of regulations based on the grey water footprint (4) in stemming the rapid decline in water quality faced in many river basins,” added Mathews.

The Water Footprint Network is an international, non-profit foundation that promotes and inspires strategic action towards sustainable, efficient and equitable water use worldwide.

Notes to Editors:

Maps of the results of the Water Footprint Assessment for the HNL Area are available on request.

A related blog, written by *Giuseppe Frapporti* of the Environment Agency, is available on <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-blog-creating-a-better-place>

(1) The Hertfordshire and North London (HNL) Area of the Environment Agency (formerly SENET) consists of the Colne, Lee, Brent and Crane and Roding-Beam-Ingrebourne (RBI) catchments.

(2) The study examines both surface and groundwater use across 35 sub-catchments in HNL Area. It reveals the amount of water consumed and polluted in far greater detail and with finer accuracy than ever before. It proposes a framework for reforming and improving the integration of regulations, based on the Water Footprint Network’s global Water Footprint Assessment Standard. This approach will result in better management of water resources by ensuring that water quality standards and environmental flows are met. It will enable countries in the EU to fulfill the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and help countries worldwide achieve the shared goals of sustainable water use.

(3) For more information on the Water Footprint Network’s Global Water Footprint Assessment Standard, please see: <http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/WaterFootprintAssessmentManual>

(4) The grey water footprint is the amount of the assimilation capacity of a freshwater resource used by a polluter to maintain water quality standards.

Spokespeople are available for interview:

Water Footprint Network:

Ruth Mathews, Executive Director, Water Footprint Network on ruth.mathews@waterfootprint.org, or call +31 (0) 623 815 408.

Guoping Zhang, Programme Director, Water Footprint Network on guoping.zhang@waterfootprint.org, or call +31 (0) 644 313 116.

twitter.com/WaterFootprintN

www.facebook.com/WaterFootprint

www.waterfootprint.org

The Environment Agency:

Dr. Giuseppe Frapporti, Groundwater and Contaminated Land Team Leader, Environment Agency on giuseppe.frapporti@environment-agency.gov.uk, or call + 44 (0) 7810 181 859.

Marta Pluta, Environmental Planning Officer (Water Resources), Environment Agency on marta.pluta@environment-agency.gov.uk, or call + 44 (0) 7557 204 391.

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