

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



WHY CLEAN WATER IS IMPORTANT

Clean water is vital to our health, communities, and economy. Our communities are impacted by what happens upstream. The water flowing from streams and wetlands ends up in the rivers, lakes, and bays by our homes. Streams and wetlands provide many benefits to communities by trapping floodwaters, recharging groundwater supplies, filtering pollution, and providing habitat for fish and wildlife. We all live downstream and need the water to be clean. By protecting upstream waters, the Clean Water Rule protects national treasures like the Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River.

People depend on clean water for their health: About 117 million Americans – one in three people – get drinking water from small streams that need protection from pollution under the Clean Water Rule. Our cherished way of life depends on clean water: healthy ecosystems provide wildlife habitat and places to fish, paddle, surf, and swim. Our economy depends on clean water: manufacturing, farming, tourism, recreation, energy production and other economic sectors need clean water to function and flourish.

WHAT IS THE CLEAN WATER RULE

Protection for about 60 percent of the nation's streams and millions of acres of wetlands has been confusing and complex since Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006. The Clean Water Rule protects the streams and wetlands that are scientifically shown to have the greatest impact on downstream water quality and form the foundation of our nation's water resources. EPA and the U.S. Army are ensuring that waters protected under the Clean Water Act are more precisely defined, easier for businesses and industry to understand, and consistent with the law and the latest science. The rule **does not** protect any types of waters that have not historically been covered by the Clean Water Act. It also does not interfere with or change private property rights, or address land use.

COMMUNITIES MUST ADAPT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change makes protection of water resources even more essential. Impacts from climate change like drought, sea level rise, stronger storms, and warmer temperatures threaten the quantity and quality of America's water. Protecting streams and wetlands improves resilience to climate change.

RECREATION DEPENDS ON CLEAN WATER

Millions of Americans enjoy recreation around water, whether it is a picnic by a lake, fishing at a stream, kayaking on a river, or swimming in the ocean. Pollution in the water can be a threat to our health and the health of our family and friends. Clean water in streams and wetlands means cleaner water downstream where we live, work, and play. Consider that each year about 33 million Americans go fishing and about 19 million people go paddling in kayaks, canoes, rafts, or standup paddleboards.



DRINKING WATER DEPENDS ON CLEAN WATER

Streams, rivers, and lakes are major sources of drinking water. When utilities can withdraw cleaner water, it means less treatment and cleaner drinking water at your tap. The Clean Water Rule provides clear protection for the streams that are used for drinking water by about 117 million people – that's one in three Americans. Now those streams are clearly protected by the Clean Water Rule.



BUSINESSES DEPEND ON CLEAN WATER

Clean and reliable water is an economic driver, including for manufacturing, farming, tourism, recreation, and energy production. Here are a few examples:

- Manufacturing companies use more than 9 trillion gallons of fresh water every year.
- The beverage industry uses over 12 billion gallons of water annually to produce products valued at \$58 billion. Beer brewers depend on clean water, which is more than 90 percent of beer.
- Fishing is a \$48 billion per year industry that supports nearly a million family wage jobs.
- Fishermen, hunters, and wildlife watchers spent \$144.7 billion in 2011 on activities, equal to 1 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.
- Aquatic recreation is big business. Paddlers alone spend \$86 billion annually on gear and trips.
- Agriculture depends on clean and reliable water for livestock, crops, and irrigation.

PUBLIC INPUT SHAPED THE RULE

We listened closely and carefully to public input. For over a decade, EPA and the Army have received requests for a rulemaking to provide clarity on protections under the Clean Water Act from members of Congress, state and local officials, industry, agriculture, environmental groups, scientists, and the public. In developing the rule, the agencies held about 400 meetings with stakeholders across the country, reviewed over one million public comments, and listened carefully to perspectives from all sides. All of this input shaped and improved the Clean Water Rule.

FOUNDATION IN SCIENCE

Science shows us the most important waters to protect. In developing the Clean Water Rule, the Agencies utilized the latest science, including a report summarizing more than 1,200 peer-reviewed, published scientific studies which showed that small streams and wetlands play an important role in the health of larger downstream waterways like rivers and lakes.