

## **Sportsmen's Letter to Congress in Support of Clean Water Act Restoration**

Dear Senator/Representative:

The undersigned organizations, and the millions of American hunters and anglers we represent, urge you to co-sponsor and vote for the Clean Water Restoration Act, H.R. 2421 and S. 1870. This important bill will ensure that our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands continue to be protected under the Clean Water Act, restoring critical Clean Water Act protections that were in place for some 30 years prior to narrowly divided Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006.

As a consequence of these decisions and subsequent federal agency interpretations, millions of acres of wetlands and thousands of stream miles are now at significant risk of pollution and outright destruction due to the withdrawal of important Clean Water Act protections and increased regulatory confusion and bureaucracy.

Clean water is vital for our very survival. It is also critical for the future of our hunting and angling traditions. These traditions hang in the balance unless we can ensure the protection and restoration of our Nation's wetlands, lakes, and streams.

The links in the chain are easy to follow. Without Congressional action, wetlands, certain lakes, and many streams are currently at risk of being destroyed or polluted. Without healthy wetlands, lakes, and streams, America's fish and wildlife populations will surely decline. Millions of current and future American sportsmen will suffer from diminished populations of the fish and wildlife about which we are passionate.

Agency guidance issued in 2007 has left in doubt the protection of "non-navigable" headwater, intermittent, and ephemeral streams. Yet, these streams account for almost 60% of the total linear length of streams in the United States (excluding Alaska), and about 96% of Arizona's waters. These streams provide valuable habitat in their own right, and are critical to downstream water quality and aquatic habitat. Without Clean Water Act protection, these streams are now vulnerable to sewage and industrial pollution as well as dredging and filling.

Streams are already being polluted because of this loophole. Avondale Creek in Birmingham, Alabama, is a continuously flowing stream that eventually flows into a large, navigable river. Even though a jury found a pipe manufacturer guilty of knowingly discharging oil and other toxins into Avondale Creek and fined the company \$5 million, the conviction was later overturned on appeal and the case will have to be retried because the court questioned whether this stream still qualified for Clean Water Act protections after the Supreme Court rulings.

Lakes, too, are at risk. In Minnesota, an Army Corps office concluded that a 310-acre lake popular with boaters and anglers was not a "waters of the United States" and not protected by the Clean Water Act. Fortunately, EPA and Corps headquarters ultimately overruled this illogical decision.

The risk to America's wetlands is equally dire. A majority of the nation's wetlands have already been lost, making it vital to protect our remaining wetlands. According to Ducks Unlimited

scientists, 96% of the remaining wetlands in the prairie pothole region and the Gulf Coast, and up to 88-90% of the remaining wetlands in the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic Coast regions, might no longer be protected by the Clean Water Act. These wetlands provide critical habitats for waterfowl and other wildlife, provide flood control and base flows for rivers, streams and groundwater aquifers, and protect and improve the quality of water that flows downstream to other users. Without these wetlands, we could face up to \$30 billion in annual flood damages in the continental United States and the loss of \$122 billion of fish and wildlife-recreation expenditures.

For over 30 years following passage of the Clean Water Act, Republican and Democratic Administrations have consistently applied the broad protection to the nation's waters that Congress intended, including protection of "non-navigable" streams and wetlands. Passage of clean water legislation is the only remedy that will restore these longstanding and clear Clean Water Act protections to wetlands, streams, and lakes, and reduce permit delays by reestablishing certainty as to the waters that are protected.

In survey after survey, Americans strongly support clean water and conservation of wetlands and other natural aquatic habitats that support healthy fish and wildlife populations. The American public, including our hunter and angler members across this land, expect Congress to pass Clean Water Restoration legislation that will maintain and restore the health of our waters so that we may pass on clean water and our outdoor traditions to our children.

For all these reasons we urge you to co-sponsor and vote for the Clean Water Restoration Act in order to fulfill the Clean Water Act's explicit purpose: *"to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters."*

## **National Organizations**

American Sportfishing Institute  
Berkley Conservation Institute  
Ducks Unlimited  
International Game Fish Association  
Izaak Walton League of America  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
National Trappers Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Orion-The Hunter's Institute  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
The Wildlife Society  
Trout Unlimited  
Wildlife Forever

## **Regional, State, and Local Organizations**

Arkansas Wildlife Federation  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Indiana Wildlife Federation  
League of Ohio Sportsmen  
Michigan United Conservation Clubs  
Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Mississippi Wildlife Federation  
Nevada Wildlife Federation  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation  
North Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs  
Tennessee Wildlife Federation  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation