

Protect Missouri Water

Oppose HB 1691 and SB 981



House Bill 1691 and Senate Bill 981 are designed to decrease protections from water pollution by changing the definition of "Waters of the State" which outlines what water bodies the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must protect. In addition, the DNR must govern under the federal "Waters of the U.S." This grants DNR the ability to institute regulations in order to protect these bodies.

Weakens Protections for Groundwater and Wetlands

These bills exclude most groundwater from the definition of the "Waters of the State", weakens protections for wetlands and excludes bodies of water that are not "relatively permanent" and create confusing language concerning "lakes" and "ponds".



Photo source: MO DNR website: <https://dnr.mo.gov/water/how-water/state/wetlands>

Harm to Drinking Water

Groundwater is the drinking water source for almost half of Missourians (dnr.mo.gov/fact-sheet/water-use-by-pub2015-pub2101). Wetlands naturally clean our water. This bill would weaken protections for both and could lead to lower quality drinking water for Missourians and skyrocketing costs for municipal water treatment.

Harms Flood Mitigation and Recreational Areas

Wetlands are crucial for flood mitigation. As areas across the state have seen increased heavy precipitation events in recent years, it is important now more than ever that we invest in natural infrastructure like wetlands that prevent rivers from flooding. Stripping DNR of authority to protect wetlands can only further risk harm to nearby and downstream communities. It would also harm our ability to protect areas used for hunting, fishing and other types of outdoor recreation.

Uncertainty and Lawsuits

Our present water rules have worked for over five decades - there is no reason to change them now. We've seen, at the federal level, that changing these definitions result in costly, time-consuming litigation, and yields more confusion and uncertainty for regulated entities such as manufacturers, farmers and ranchers.

House Bill 1691 is sponsored by Rep. Van Schoiack. Senate Bill 981 is sponsored by Sen. Black.

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Increased Costs for State Agencies and Bureaucratic Nightmares

Missouri is presently operating with a straightforward definition of "waters of the state" that has worked for fifty years. Passage of these bills would end this situation. It would force costly water studies to determine which waters are and are not "waters of the state" in order for the Missouri state government to do its duty for its people and protect our water.

Undermines the Will of the Missouri Voter

In the past 40 years, the people of Missouri have overwhelmingly passed our Parks and Soil tax five separate times, being approved most recently by 80% of voters and passing in every Missouri county in 2016. This tax directs millions of dollars each year for the purpose of reducing pollution of our state waterways. Missourians have spoken clearly through their vote of this tax. Missourians want clean water and are willing to pay for it. These bills undermine the ability to fulfill the clearly articulated will of the Missouri voter.

Undermines Conservation Goals

Both intermittent and ephemeral streams serve as habitat for many aquatic species in Missouri, some that are species of conservation concern, for which government funded programs are working to conserve. The proposed changes would exclude these bodies from the definition of "waters of the state" and thereby undermine current efforts of Missouri agencies and their mission to protect public natural resources.



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