

# Clean Water and Health



**Clean water is a basic human right and is essential to public health. Repealing the Clean Water Rule threatens the drinking water of over 117 million Americans and puts their health at risk.**

- **Repealing the Clean Water Rule puts Americans' health at risk.** Clean water is one of the greatest public health advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, thousands still become ill each year from contaminated drinking water and there are more than 30 outbreaks of waterborne illnesses yearly. By limiting the EPA's ability to address upstream sources of contaminants such as human and animal waste, industrial pollution, and harmful pathogens potential public health threats will not be addressed.
- **Upstream headwaters and wetlands contribute to clean water for drinking, bathing, and recreation.** We now know that these upstream water resources are important sources of freshwater and provide drinking water for 1 in 3 Americans. The Clean Water Rule provides a framework for the EPA and public health and water officials to address public health threats from upstream contamination.
- **Protecting wetlands and headwaters helps combat the effects of climate change.** Wetlands store a significant amount of carbon and help protect coastal areas during extreme weather events.
- **The Clean Water Rule defines "waters of the US" in three different groups depending on how they will be regulated.** This rule was developed following significant public input – over 400 stakeholder meetings and over 1 million comments (87% of which were in favor of the rule).
  - Those protected by the rule in all cases – such traditional navigable waterways, territorial seas, and interstate waters.
  - "Those waters found after a case specific analysis to have a significant nexus to traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, or the territorial seas, either alone or in combination with similarly situated waters in the region."
  - A lengthy list of waters excluded from the rule such as ornamental ponds and puddles.
- **Vulnerable communities will feel the greatest impacts if the Clean Water Rule is repealed.** Low income communities and communities of color are already disproportionately impacted by contaminated water. Contaminated water can cause a variety of health problems, especially for children. Small and rural communities, who rely on private wells or whose water systems lack the resources to deal with polluted sources, may be hit the hardest if the rule is repealed.

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments **strongly supports** efforts to stop the repeal of this rule and ensure clean, healthy water for all.

*For more information, contact the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments:*

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