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Keep Our Nation's Public Drinking Water Sources Safe



We all need safe and healthy drinking water. And the best way to protect our drinking water is to protect its sources – surface water and groundwater supplies – from pollution. For the last 35 years, since the enactment of the Clean Water Act, America's waters have been protected and the quality and safety of our waters have improved. But now, the oil industry, mining companies, some sewage treatment plant operators, developers and other polluting industries are trying to weaken these longstanding clean water protections. If these efforts succeed, they will introduce more pollution into our drinking water supplies, threaten public health and force communities to pay more to treat drinking water.

Protecting headwater streams and wetlands is critical to protecting drinking water quality. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 90 percent of source water protection areas (areas protected for surface water intakes used for drinking water) contain headwater or intermittent streams, streams that flow only part of the year. Furthermore, the EPA estimates that more than 110 million people get their drinking water from public drinking water systems which use the intakes in these source water protection areas (as well as other sources).

Historically, federal agencies, in their regulations, have interpreted the protections of the Clean Water Act to broadly cover waters of the United States, including many small streams and wetlands. Since 2001, court rulings and administration actions have sought to limit protections for small streams and wetlands under the Clean Water Act.

Absent protection of headwater streams, the quality of drinking water sources is at risk. The failure to protect our sources of drinking water imposes an unfair burden on municipal water treatment providers, who will be forced to treat dirtier water to provide the public with safe and affordable drinking water.

In 2006, the EPA conducted a preliminary estimate of the public drinking water system intakes that get water from surface water protection areas in headwater stream and/or seasonal or intermittent streams. Their data (shown on the back of this document) includes the percentage of streams that are either start reaches and/or intermittent and ephemeral streams in each state, as well as the population in each state served by sources water protection areas that receive water from start reaches or intermittent/ephemeral streams.

Now is the time for Congress to act. By supporting the **restoration of the Clean Water Act** Congress can help assure communities that their water will be safe from pollution. The Restoration Act would simply adopt the existing regulatory definition to confirm that all "waters of the United States" are protected under the Act. This would reaffirm and restore critically needed protections for the streams, wetlands, and other waters now at risk.

[OVER]

**Drinking Water Sources Potentially at Risk of
Losing Clean Water Act Protections**

State	% Streams Potentially at Risk from EPA's Policy Directive ^{1,2}	Population Served by Source Water Protection Areas Receiving Water from Streams Potentially at Risk from EPA Policy Directive ^{3,*}	% of State's Population Served by Source Water Protection Areas Receiving Water from Streams Potentially at Risk from EPA Policy Directive
AL	61	2,581,768	58
AR	63	911,466	34
AZ	94	818,881	16
CA	66	14,272,000	42
CO	68	3,583,330	83
CT	52	2,223,112	65
FL	29	916,454	6
GA	57	3,810,208	47
HI	55	40,084	3
IA	62	620,639	21
ID	51	242,589	19
IL	56	1,623,780	13
IN	54	1,668,898	27
KS	81	1,372,206	51
KY	55	3,097,903	77
LA	38	1,071,156	24
MA	52	4,733,465	75
MD	59	3,690,933	70
ME	55	389,174	31
MI	48	298,007	3
MN	51	959,301	20
MO	66	2,549,622	46
MS	58	289,740	10
MT	63	341,821	38
NC	56	4,297,102	53
ND	84	290,800	45
NE	77	525,566	31
NH	55	474,976	38
NJ	48	2,882,025	34
NM	88	211,146	12
NY	55	10,220,056	54
OH	60	3,471,892	31
OK	74	2,420,695	70
OR	53	1,581,537	46
PA	59	7,979,560	65
RI	54	551,162	53
SC	53	1,470,158	37
SD	86	341,211	45
TN	60	2,963,333	52
TX	75	7,284,836	35
UT	79	2,003,441	90
VA	57	3,317,038	47
VT	56	253,213	42
WA	54	1,701,824	29
WI	53	199,457	4
WV	60	881,596	49
WY	66	177,861	36
National	59	111,604,794	37

1 EPA citation for Data Source: National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) from Reach Address Database (RAD) v2.0 at 1:100,000 scale. Percentages are calculated relative to total stream length using total kilometers of linear streams in watersheds that are totally or partially contained within each state boundary. Watersheds are at the 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) level.

2 Streams potentially at risk from the EPA's policy directive include start reaches and intermittent/ephemeral streams. The EPA data included the percentage of streams in each state that are start reaches and the percentage of streams that are intermittent/ephemeral streams. We used the higher of those two numbers to illustrate the percentage of streams potentially at risk because of the EPA's policy directive.

3 EPA citation for Data Sources: NHD (1:100,000 scale), Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS); Preliminary Analysis. Source water protection areas (SWPAs) (based on SDWIS 4th Quarter 2003 data) for this estimate encompass the drainage area of up to 15 miles upstream from a drinking water intake, and any SWPA that contains at least one start reach or intermittent/ephemeral stream is included in the count. Only SWPAs of intakes located on the NHD are included in this analysis (EPA has located over 85% of intakes on the NHD).

* Does not include data on tribal lands

EPA GENERAL CAVEATS: NHD data generally do not capture streams under one mile in length. Intermittent and ephemeral streams are grouped together in the NHD. Washes in the arid western U.S. are not consistently demarcated. A start reach is a stream segment in the NHD that has no other streams flowing into it.