

FACT SHEET ON
H.R. 6745, THE CLEAN WATER FOR ALL ACT
MAY 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

H.R. 6745, the “Clean Water for All Act” would block implementation of Trump’s Dirty Water Rule and would require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to start over and instead develop a new regulation to protect rivers, streams, and wetlands, that is based on the best available science, and whose implementation will not degrade water quality, contaminate drinking water, or increase local flood-related risks.

BACKGROUND: THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Clean water is a fundamental human need. Our families rely on rivers and streams to supply clean drinking water to their homes and businesses. Our farmers and brewers rely on clean water to produce food and drink. Hunters, anglers, and birders need waters and wetlands to sustain wildlife, and outdoor recreation, an \$887 billion industry that depends upon clean water to recreate.

Fifty years ago, the Cuyahoga River burned – but that fire sparked a bipartisan movement to restore and maintain our Nation’s waters – and culminated in a 10-to-1 vote to enact the 1972 Federal Water Pollution Control Act, more commonly known as the Clean Water Act. By declaring the goal of the Act “to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation’s waters,” Congress sought to respond to the water quality disasters of the 1970s and recognized the importance of protecting our rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.

Together, we, as a Nation, have made tremendous progress in improving the health and safety of our rivers, streams, and wetlands through steady implementation of the Clean Water Act. Collectively, we have doubled the number of rivers, lakes, and streams that are now safe for fishing and swimming, but we still have a way to go to ensure *all* our waters are safe – the ultimate goal of this landmark environmental law.

Today, thanks to the Clean Water Act, our Nation’s rivers are no longer dumping grounds or open sewers. This universally popular law has provided communities, large and small, urban and rural, with the tools and financial resources to protect locally-important waters, while ensuring a strong, national baseline of protection.

Yet, the Clean Water Act and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), charged by Congress to implement the Act, have been under relentless attack by the Trump administration.

This is not a rhetorical battle over the efficacy of lightbulbs, paper straws, and low-flow toilets. This is about an administration actively seeking to undermine (or eliminate) critical protections for human and environmental health for generations to come. As former Republican EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman testified:

Today, as never before, the mission of EPA is being seriously undermined by the very

people who have been entrusted with carrying that mission out. ... The Trump administration has explicitly sought to reorient the EPA towards industrial and industry-friendly interests, often with little or no acknowledgement of the agency's health and environmental missions.¹

Since taking office, the Trump administration has advanced a radical pro-polluter agenda to dismantle critical safeguards that protect the health and well-being of our families, our communities, and our economy.

If our network of smaller rivers and streams are no longer protected by the Clean Water Act, then roughly 60 percent of stream miles in the lower 48 states that do not flow year-round – estimated to be millions of stream miles – will no longer be protected. Further, the Dirty Water Rule would end protections on the approximately 50 million acres of wetlands in the continental United States that do not have a surface water connection to other covered waterways, in spite of contributing to the health of those waters.

The Dirty Water Rule flies in the face of science, economics, and the law. Streams and wetlands are critically important for ecosystem services, including filtering water that helps provide clean drinking water, and storing water that helps protect communities from flooding and drought.

At the end of the day, the Trump administration's Dirty Water Rule will mean that fewer streams, wetlands, and other waterways will be protected. It means more pollution into the streams and lakes that are sources for our drinking water, fishing, and swimming. It means the likely destruction of wetlands that serve as both irreplaceable habitat for countless birds, fish, and mammals, and protection for our homes, lives, and livelihoods from flooding, coastal storms, and the challenges faced by climate change and extreme weather.

At a time when more than three in five American voters believe the government should do more to protect our waters from pollution – not less, we should not allow the Dirty Water Rule to be implemented.

THE CLEAN WATER FOR ALL ACT

The Clean Water for All Act would block implementation of Trump's ill-conceived Dirty Water Rule. It **does not** reinstate the Clean Water Rule promulgated by the Obama administration – which was repealed by the Trump administration in December 2019 – but simply leaves in place the regulations developed under the Reagan administration that are currently in effect. Last, it requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop new regulations to ensure Clean Water protection of rivers, streams, and wetlands, based on the best available science, and whose implementation will not degrade water quality, contaminate drinking water, or increase local flood-related risks.

For additional information, contact Democratic staff of Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment at 202-225-0060 or navis.bermudez@mail.house.gov.

¹ <https://energycommerce.house.gov/sites/democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/files/documents/Testimony%20-%20Todd%20Whitman%2020190611.pdf>.