

July 11, 2014

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
EPA Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

As communities of faith, we recognize that water is a fundamental component of all life, and that stewardship of water is part of our call to care for God's creation. Because water is such an integral part of our physical and spiritual wellbeing, we are writing to urge the Administration to finalize the Waters of the US rule that clarifies what waterways are protected under the Clean Water Act.

We applaud the Environmental Protection Agency for its leadership in drafting new guidelines under the Clean Water Act—guidelines that will help protect waterways and human health. We also applaud the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for conducting a scientific evaluation of how wetlands and headwater streams are linked—physically, chemically, or biologically—to downstream waters as reported in “Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters.”

Since the Supreme Court's *SWANCC* decision in 2001 and its *Rapanos* decision in 2006, more than 20 million acres of wetlands and tens of thousands of miles of streams have been at risk of losing protections under the Clean Water Act. The confusing nature of these decisions, coupled with weak guidance given to regulators, has allowed the pollution and destruction of seasonal wetlands and intermittent streams throughout the country, with many more at risk.

With the proposed rule, the Administration has an opportunity to rectify this growing problem by establishing criteria for protecting these at-risk waters, which provide critical environmental, economic, public health, and other benefits. With more than 117 million people in the U.S. receiving their drinking water from public systems fed in whole or in part by intermittent, headwater, and ephemeral streams, this proposed rule helps ensure safe drinking water for communities.

As communities of faith across a broad spectrum of traditions, we understand water as a symbol of preservation, cleansing, and renewal. Water is a gift from God. We urge you

to act swiftly to finalize the Waters of the US rule so that we can protect this gift for the health and wellbeing of our people and all creation.

Sincerely,

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Creation Justice Ministries
Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ
The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society