



August 16, 2017

Scott Pruitt, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Administrator – Mail Code 1101A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

RE: Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2017-0203

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

I am writing on behalf of New Jersey's Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership (LRWP) regarding the proposed repeal of the Clean Water Rule. The LRWP urges you not to repeal this rule, but rather to allow the courts to do their jobs and review the 2015 rulemaking.

One of the first things most 3rd or 4th graders learn in earth science is that water runs downhill. By 6th or 7th grade kids can make the connection between pollution of waters uphill and contamination of larger waterways in lower lying areas as the polluted water flows downhill. This rationale ought to be enough to include small river tributaries, headwaters and wetlands under the federal Clean Water Act to ensure protections for the waters of the United States.

The proposed repeal of the Clean Water Rule demonstrates a lack of understanding of hydrologic flows, and how limiting protections for our most vulnerable lands would significantly weaken protections for clean water. The repeal would be preferential to development interests at the expense of landscape features that provide significant ecosystem services e.g. drinking water, flood control/stormwater absorption, carbon storage, water and air pollution removal, local climate regulation, wildlife habitat, viewsheds and recreation. Furthermore, any repeal of the Clean Water Rule raises significant Environmental Justice concerns, especially for our urban communities, and likewise will compromise the ability of future generations to benefit from the ecosystem services of these valuable lands.

The Lower Raritan Watershed is one of New Jersey's, and the nation's, most urban watersheds. Our watershed drains to the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary and out to the Atlantic Ocean. Since 1990 our Lower Raritan Watershed has lost 3,461 acres of forested wetlands, 2,891 acres of emergent wetlands, 1,086 acres of agricultural wetlands, and 593 acres of disturbed wetlands. Negative effects of wetlands loss in the LRW include an intensification of flooding of our communities, and pollution loading in area streams and our Raritan River. Repealing the Clean Water Rule is not only a retrenchment of the basic policy commitments agreed to in 2015, but will establish barriers to the successful future conservation, enhancement and restoration of our watershed and the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary – a significant national resource. While New Jersey has comparatively strong freshwater wetlands protection measures, a reduction in protections in neighboring New York and Pennsylvania – states without strong protection measures – will mean that pollution in those states will roll downhill right into New Jersey's waters.

By repealing the federal Clean Water Rules we put polluter profits ahead of the needs of our communities, businesses, and environment. Repealing these rules is an assault on basic protections for clean water that puts millions at risk. We urge you to stop the repeal process and refocus on EPA's mission – to protect human health and the environment.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Fenyk". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Heather Fenyk, Ph.D., AICP/PP

President, Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership

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