

## **Resolution in Support of Clean Water for All**

**Issue:** Protecting our sources of drinking water, critical habitat and natural flood control capacity of streams.

**Proposed policy:** NACo supports protecting America's drinking water supplies from discharge of pollutants, poisons, parasites and pathogens into headwater and seasonal streams and wetlands through the Clean Water Restoration Act, S. 787, as passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, as long as it clarifies that local streets, gutters and human made ditches (those not covered by the Clean Water Act prior to 2001) are excluded from the definition of "waters of the U.S."

**Background:** Clean and safe drinking water is vital to us all. A recent Gallup survey found Americans' top four environmental concerns relate to water quality, especially drinking water quality. The NACo Platform recognizes that the Clean Water Act "...governs water pollution from point and non-point sources by keeping toxic substances out of our nation's waterways, thus ensuring that surface waters are safe..."

Discharge of toxic substances into our surface water has a significant impact on safe drinking water. The EPA estimates that over 110 million people in 5,646 public drinking water supply systems rely on surface water protection areas that are made up of headwater and seasonal streams, and that 53-59 percent of stream miles outside of Alaska do not flow year-round and are vulnerable to destruction or direct discharge of pollution without protection under the CWA. Experts estimate that about 7 million Americans get sick every year from drinking or swimming in contaminated water. This is a problem that will likely get much worse if headwater and seasonal streams that serve as sources of drinking water lose protections from pollution.

The loss of CWA protections for headwater, intermittent, and ephemeral streams could force downstream counties to incur significant financial costs to clean up untreated industrial and municipal sewage discharges. Some 14,800 polluters or 40% of facilities with Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits discharge into headwater, intermittent, and ephemeral streams.

NACo has struggled in recent years with proposed Clean Water Act legislation. Support for the Clean Water Restoration Act, S. 787, as passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, is in compliance with the NACo Platform, as long as it is clear that local streets, gutters and human made ditches (those not covered by the Clean Water Act prior to 2001) are excluded from the definition of "waters of the U.S."

**Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impacts:** The CWRA, S 787, is intended to reduce: permitting delays, drinking water treatment costs, flood damage and related costs, and disease outbreaks. It will save lives as well as saving counties costs related to health care and litigation. It benefits all urban and rural counties that rely on clean, safe drinking water.

**Submitted by:** Commissioner Victoria A. Reinhardt, Ramsey County MN;  
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