

October 24, 2014

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2011-0880

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

The undersigned public health organizations write in strong support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Water Act rule. The public health community recognizes that clean water and healthy populations are inextricably linked and that polluted water can expose Americans to harmful contaminants in numerous ways. The public depends on water not only for basic survival, but for recreation, bathing, cleaning and cooking. EPA should move forward with a strong rule that will improve water quality and protect the health of America's families and children.

EPA's proposed rule seeks to clarify the protection of streams and wetlands under the Clean Water Act, including streams that provide some portion of water to drinking water systems that serve nearly 117 million people. The proposed rule would clarify which waters are protected and which are not, allowing pollution control officials to better protect water quality and public health.

The Clean Water Act was designed to keep pollution, including carcinogens, nutrient runoff, sewage and oil, out of the nation's water bodies. This summer we witnessed a dramatic example of the kind of disruption that contaminated waterways can cause, when a toxic algal event in Lake Erie shut off the main drinking water supply for 400,000 people. While many factors contribute to harmful algal blooms, Lake Erie and other drinking water sources depend on wetlands and streams that help to protect water quality by filtering out pollutants and provide clean water to the populations they serve.

Clean water is one of our greatest necessities and a cornerstone of public health. We urge EPA to move forward with a strong, science-based rule that best protects public health from water pollution.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Public Health Association
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Children's Environmental Health Network
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Trust for America's Health