

Dear Mr. (Editor),

I wish to submit the following as a Letter to the Editor in our Community Voices section. *That was the beginning of the letter to the editor (below) I fired off this morning after reading an amalgam of half-and-untruths in an article of our local small town paper. I intended my words to be polite but straight forward with prose and jargon banished. I intended a sense of community – as clearly, clean water is the responsibility of all. I intended action from those who are curious and those who care.*

So much has been said by so many in relation to the Waters of the US rule (WOTUS). For those of us who have worked for clean water for years the rule was a delight - or at least a relief- with some standard of protection proclaimed for the myriad of feeder streams and wetlands which are routinely gouged, covered and/or ignored.

Although the rule makes copious sense, it is under attack by groups who daily, fall in my esteem – lobbyists and politicians. The former seek pretty bedding for their own nests. The latter, at best, are overwhelmed and many times at the mercy of the former. At worst they seek the same as the former, working not for our benefit and the land, wildlife an waters we love and depend upon, but their own fame and winning above all.

I do not think I have ever created one of my newsletters to serve as a political salvo. However in this case, I must make an exception. As always, please do as your conscience dictates. However; feel free to forward this letter to friends and colleagues, or send, with your own thoughts added, to your local paper or legislators' office. Here are some excellent additional resources.

<http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters/ditch-myth>

<http://blog.epa.gov/epaconnect/2014/06/setting-the-record-straight-on-wous/>

<http://mediamatters.org/research/2014/07/01/myths-and-facts-about-the-epas-move-to-protect/199947>

<http://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Water/WOTUS%20Proposed%20rule%20fact%20sheet%203252014.pdf>

We each learned early in our lives that water is necessary for all living things. We learned a little about clean water in science classes and many among us learned that our livestock was healthier; indeed our communities grew stronger if we had an ample supply of healthy water.

While I do not remember the Cuyahoga River catching on fire, it was that and other major pollution calamities which led to the creation of the Clean Water Act. This Act led to a level of clean-up allowing us to remove the great majority of pollution originating from single sources. The gains were not just there for people like you, me and our children. Businesses benefited as they began to develop ever-greater efficiencies which continue to save them millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, nonpoint source pollution (ranging from oil leaks in our cars to the runoff from our pets' waste) continued. Slowly over the years it began to be addressed, in part due to the Clean Water Act but also partially because people were becoming more aware of how watersheds (an area of land where water flows to a single point) work. Still, thousands of streams were found to be unable or only partially able to support life. A stream unable to support life is rarely fit as a place for our children to play, our livestock to drink – and the cost of purification at our water plants is substantial.

As a water professional I have felt blessed to work with a wide range of individuals to enhance water quality including developers, farmers, municipal and county employees, conservationists and was delighted to participate in work groups for both the Bush and Obama administrations regarding water. One of the biggest complaints of all stakeholders over time has been consistency in government regulations.

Contrary to what a number of lobbyists or (politicians listening to them) have claimed, the Clean Water Act Rule (also known as Waters of the U.S. Rule) seeks not to create or extend new administrative powers. It does not take powers away from the state. It does not suddenly protect all our ditches or cause farm ponds to be regulated. Water-filled areas on crop fields are not covered and the proposal specifically excludes erosional features. In fact, it confirms important exemptions for farming, forestry and mining. The sky is not falling.

It came about because EPA and the Army Corps were answering calls from stakeholders like the ones mentioned above, as well as calls from Congress and the Supreme Court (even the Chief Justice) to clarify regulations because of ongoing confusion. What it *does do* is clarify protection for small streams sometimes intermittently flowing during the year but with a defined stream bed and flow which are already covered by the Clean Water Act. It covers wetlands and waters adjacent to or in the floodplains of these waterways because collectively they help filter out pollutants and protect our abundance and health of water sources. It finally gives certainty to those individuals already in the regulated community to take guesswork and frustration out of our business lives while protecting the health and abundance of water we need for everyday living.

As citizens, we each have a responsibility to find out the truth for ourselves in order to act in the best interest of our communities. In addition to this letter, you can learn more at: <http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters/definition-waters-united-states-under-clean-water-act> to read the rule for yourself and engage to insure clean, plentiful waters in our backyards and across the country.

Here's to you and our watersheds too,

Margo Farnsworth

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Give good people good information and they'll do good things.