

July 11, 2014

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

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

Dear Administrator McCarthy and Assistant Secretary Darcy:

As conservation organizations representing tens of thousands of North Carolina sportsmen and women we are writing to convey our support for the “Definition of ‘Waters of the United States’ Under the Clean Water Act” rule recently proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers.

Historically, the Clean Water Act has been a vital tool for maintaining or restoring the water quality of the streams and wetlands where hunters and anglers spend their time pursuing fish and game. Despite this, the Clean Water Act has been weakened by two Supreme Court Decisions and subsequent agency guidance. We commend the proposed rule for the clear protections it restores to intermittent and ephemeral streams, and ask that the final rule offer similar clarity for wetlands that hold waterfowl.

Intermittent and ephemeral streams may only flow during parts of the year, but they are incredibly important for our state’s watersheds. They provide important spawning and juvenile rearing habitat, and whether or not they contain fish, they are the foundations that support water quality in larger downstream rivers. There is sufficient scientific evidence that these waters as defined by the agencies have important biological, hydrological, and chemical connections to these downstream waters.

Wetlands, even so-called isolated ones that are not adjacent to streams, are important for North Carolina’s waterfowl hunters. Outside of the state, they are the factories that produce the ducks we hunt, and in-state, they are the habitat used by breeding, migrating, and resident ducks. Many of these wetlands also provide important habitat for a diversity of wildlife as well as providing important flood storage and other benefits to downstream waters. We applaud the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers for seeking feedback on the scientific connections between these non-adjacent wetlands and downstream waters, and how best to address protections for these wetlands in the final rule. We ask that the final rule recognize the importance to these wetlands to waterfowl, as well as their importance to the health of downstream waters.

In addition to wisely asking for input on questions such as the best way to clarify protections for non-adjacent wetlands, the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers have not proposed any changes to the Clean Water Act's longstanding exemptions for normal farming and forestry activities. As much of a tradition as hunting and fishing is in North Carolina, so are farming and forestry.

North Carolinians depend on their 242,500 miles of rivers and streams for clean and abundant drinking water, diverse and abundant fish and wildlife habitat, and local fishing, hunting, bird-watching, and boating recreation that support a strong outdoor recreation economy. Wildlife recreation related activities lead to \$3.3 billion spent per year in NC alone. These expenditures support more than 95,000 jobs in the state.

By standing up for these small streams and wetlands, the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers are protecting some of our state's most important fish and waterfowl habitat.

We applaud the agencies for their efforts to protect these waters and look forward to working with them to finalize and implement the waters of the U.S. rule. From mountain trout anglers, to piedmont bass enthusiasts and duck hunters in eastern NC, this is a critical step towards protecting our sporting heritage and our outdoor future.

Sincerely,

Albemarle Area QUWF Chapter
Albemarle Conservation & Wildlife Chapter
Blue Ridge Chapter of NCTU
Cape Fear River Branch of QDMA
Carolina Fly Fishing Club
Cataloochee Chapter of NCTU
Charlotte Reconnecting Ourselves With Nature
Coastal Conservation Association of North Carolina
Concord Wildlife Alliance
Davie County QUWF Chapter
Dogwood Anglers Chapter of NCTU
Fayetteville Increasing Sustainable Habitat
Friends of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
Foothills Chapter of NCTU
Gaston County Piedmont Area Wildlife Stewards
Greater Raleigh Outdoors and Wildlife
Habitat and Wildlife Keepers
Headwaters LTD
Johnston County QUWF Chapter
Johnson County Wildlife Association
Land Trust of the Little Tennessee
Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society

Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists
Land O' Sky Chapter of NCTU
Lincolnton Sportsman Club
Mountain Island Lake Wildlife Stewards
Mountain Wild!
Nat Greene Chapter of NCTU
North Carolina BASS Federation Nation
North Carolina Bowhunters Association
North Carolina Camouflage Coalition
North Carolina Chapter of American Fisheries Society
North Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society
North Carolina Falconers Guild
North Carolina Handicapped Sportsmen, Inc
North Carolina National Wild Turkey Federation
North Carolina State University Student Fisheries Society
North Carolina Trout Unlimited, State Council
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
Northwestern Carolinas Chapter of NCTU
Old North State QUWF Chapter
Pisgah Chapter of NCTU
Protecting, Advocating, and Conserving Together in the High Country
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation, Inc.
Quail Point QUWF Chapter
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky River Chapter of NCTU
Rowan County Wildlife Association
Sandhills Rod and Gun Club
South Wake Conservationists
Smoky Mountain Sportsman's Association
Stone Mountain Chapter of NCTU
Table Rock Chapter of NCTU
Triangle Fly Fishers Chapter of NCTU
Tuckasee Chapter of NCTU
Unaka Chapter of NCTU
Watery Swamp Hunt Club
Wild South
Yadkin Valley QUWF Chapter