County Leaders' 2010-2012 Letters Supporting the Administration's Actions to Restore Clean Water Protections for the Nation's Waters

From December 2010 through early 2012, scores of county leaders from across the country have called upon the Obama Administration to restore longstanding Clean Water Act protections for America's wetlands, lakes, and streams.

Below are the core messages county leaders sent the Adminstration in their 2010-2011 letters to the Council on Environmental Quality, their July 2011 guidance comments to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps of Engineers, and their Winter 2012 letters to President Obama. The leaders' call for clean water protections is followed by the names of the 114 county commissioners supporting the clean water guidance and rulemaking in one or more of these letters:

As county officials, we are on the front lines in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens. We see first-hand the importance of protecting clean water and healthy watersheds to ensure clean and safe drinking water supplies and outdoor recreation, and to protect bridges, roads, hospitals, treatment plants, and other critical infrastructure.

We understand the central role the 1972 Clean Water Act has played in maintaining and restoring clean water and healthy watersheds. We also understand that essential to the Act's success is the fact that, for nearly 30 years, virtually all natural surface waters were recognized as "waters of the United States" and protected from pollution and destruction.

We now understand that the effectiveness of the Act is threatened by Supreme Court decisions in 2001 (SWANCC v. Army Corps of Engineers) and 2006 (Rapanos v. United States) and subsequent agency guidance that have removed or jeopardized Clean Water Act protections for over 20 million wetland acres and an estimated 59% of the stream miles on which our communities depend. In addition, these decisions and agency actions have added uncertainty, cost, and delay to the Clean Water Act permitting process, and otherwise undermined the ability of the federal government and the states to protect intermittent streams and so-called isolated wetlands, placing many wetlands and streams at risk of pollution and destruction. For these reasons, we support restoring the protections of the Clean Water Act to their status prior to the SWANCC decision. Given the failure of Congress to do so, we urge the Administration to initiate a rulemaking process to address this issue.

Counties across the nation are facing increased flooding, surface water pollution, toxic blue-green algae outbreaks, and other problems caused by the lack of Clean Water Act enforcement. Clean and safe drinking water supplies are a particular concern for us.

We write to urge you to act quickly to clarify and restore critical Clean Water Act protections to America's waterways by finalizing guidelines developed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers and conducting a rulemaking in 2012 to secure these protections for the long-term.

Sincerely,

Angenie McCleary

Blaine County, Idaho Chairman of the Board

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Island County, Washington District 2

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