



For immediate release  
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## Proposed Federal Rule Will Clarify and Restore Protections to Nation's Creeks and Wetlands and Protect the Chesapeake

Today, a new federal rule was proposed which will protect and restore streams and wetlands from pollution throughout the US, including those in the Chesapeake region. The rule will help to protect the drinking water for millions of Americans, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce the risk of flooding.

"With this rule, everyone—including those wishing to develop in and around these waters—will have a much clearer picture of what they can and can't do under the law," says Jill Witkowski, director of the Choose Clean Water Coalition. "With recent events in several states, it is very clear that we must do a better job of protecting our drinking water sources. This rule is a crucial piece of the puzzle."

The Chesapeake Bay is an economic engine for our region, with an estimated value of \$1 trillion based on such economic industries as fishing, hunting, boating, commercial shipping, and tourism. Its 64,000 square-mile watershed includes 111,000 miles of creeks, streams, and rivers, nine major tributaries, and 1.7 million acres of wetlands. Recognizing their importance to the region, the newly proposed Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement recommends creating or re-creating 85,000 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, and enhancing the function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands.

To safeguard these assets, Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972. But, due to conflicting Supreme Court decisions during the past decade, there has been confusion over which streams and wetlands are covered, undermining efforts to protect streams which feed into the public drinking water systems of more than 117 million Americans. In the Bay watershed alone, more than 11 million residents (nearly two of every three people) get their drinking water from supplies dependent on these at-risk resources.

Finalizing this rule will make clear which waters will be covered by the Act's pollution prevention and cleanup programs and protect those waters that science shows have important effects on downstream rivers, creeks and the Chesapeake Bay.

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