

February 20, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

The Conservation and National Affairs and Legislation Committees of The Garden Club of America are writing to urge you and your Administration to move as quickly as possible on the “Waters of the U.S.” rulemaking to clarify which bodies of water are covered by the Clean Water Act. In our position paper on clean water, The Garden Club of America identified “ensuring a vital clean water act including broad jurisdictional coverage” as a key strategy to reduce water pollution. The Garden Club of America position paper may be found on our website: <http://gcamerica.org/images/FCKUploads/file/Publications/Position%20Paper%20Clean%20Water%20Jan2013.pdf>.

The need for broad jurisdictional coverage arose after Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006 undermined key provisions of the Clean Water Act, whose purpose was to guarantee that all of our nation’s waters would be covered by a suite of pollution-control programs. The Supreme Court decisions created uncertainty about what types of waters the law protects, especially those that lack permanent flow or are geographically isolated from others, including headwaters. Subsequent agency “guidance” further limited the ability of pollution control officials to protect the headwater and the irregularly flowing creeks, brooks, and streams that make up more than half the river miles in the continental United States. Without clear rules protecting critical waterways, it is difficult to keep our water clean and ensure a reliable supply for drinking, swimming, and gardening. Along with hundreds of thousands of concerned citizens, sportsmen, public health professionals, elected officials, and farmers, we urge your Administration to ensure the rulemaking process continues to move forward.

This rule will help protect more than 117 million Americans whose drinking water comes in whole or part from waterbodies that currently lack adequate protection. This is the water we rely on to irrigate our gardens and lawns, the water our children play in, and the water our communities depend on for economic stability and growth. These are the wetlands upstream of our communities, and they play critical roles in filtering polluted water, reducing the risk of flooding, and providing important wildlife habitat.

But we also realize that restoring and protecting our environment begins with knowledge – the knowledge necessary to understand the problem and the knowledge needed to address it. That’s why we were also heartened to see EPA’s commitment to science as part of this process. Independent, academic or state-sponsored scientific research is the basis for sound public policy. EPA’s review of more than 1,000 peer-reviewed articles, resulting in its draft scientific report, *Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters*, is a critical part of this process. Determining how different bodies of water are connected (or not connected) to each other via physical, chemical, or biological linkages is best left to the judgment of scientists.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Marshall, Chair, National Affairs and Legislation Committee



Jennifer Fain, Chair, Conservation Committee



Enclosure: The Garden Club of America Position Paper on Clean Water

cc.: Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator