Dear Administrator Regan and Deputy Assistant Administrator Fox:

We urge you to undo the Trump administration’s harmful rollbacks to our nation’s clean water protections. After four years of attacks on the Clean Water Act, we are counting on you to restore strong safeguards for our most important ingredient.

Beer is mostly water, a resource that our businesses care about deeply. The quality of our source water significantly affects our finished product. Compounds present in brewing water can affect pH, aroma, and taste. Trace quantities of metals can affect the metabolism of yeast and the physical properties of beer, including its color and stability. Even small chemical disruptions in our water supply could influence the quality of our brews.

For breweries that depend on surface water, unexpected changes in water quality due to pollution can affect the brewing process and our bottom line. We need reliable sources of clean water to consistently produce the great beer that is key to our success. It is thanks in part to this important natural resource that the craft brewing industry contributes about $82.9 billion to the U.S. economy each year, along with more than 580,000 jobs.¹

Under the Trump administration, the EPA took several actions that threatened our sources of clean water. It stripped nationwide protections from wetlands and streams, ignoring the

overwhelming scientific evidence that these waterways are important to downstream water quality. It weakened water pollution standards for coal-burning power plants, the largest source of toxic water pollution in the United States. And it created legal loopholes for pollution discharges that travel into waterways through groundwater. Your predecessors at the agency implemented these changes over the objections of industries like ours that need clean water in order to grow and thrive.

We strongly support President Biden’s executive order of January 20, 2021 directing agencies to review the previous administration’s actions to determine whether they are inconsistent with the goals of “listen[ing] to the science,” “protect[ing] our environment,” “ensur[ing] access to clean air and water,” and “hold[ing] polluters accountable”; and, if so, to suspend, revise, or rescind those actions.²

Two items on the fact sheet accompanying the executive order, which lists agency actions to be reviewed, are clearly inconsistent with those goals: the “Navigable Waters Protection Rule” narrowing the definition of waters protected by the Clean Water Act, and the “Steam Electric Reconsideration Rule” weakening pollution limits for coal-fired power plants.³ Craft brewers joined efforts to oppose both rules when they were proposed. They must be rescinded as soon as possible and replaced with new rules that are based on sound science.

We also urge you to add an additional action to the list: the agency’s recent guidance on applying the Supreme Court’s decision in Maui v. Hawaii Wildlife Fund to pollution discharges that travel through groundwater before reaching surface waters.⁴ Craft brewers have urged both the agency and the Supreme Court to ensure that these discharges are controlled to keep our water safe for drinking and brewing.

Clean water is central to our long-term business success. Moreover, it is vital to the health and the economy of the communities where we live and work. We stand ready to support your efforts to implement the president’s executive order and strengthen our nation’s clean water protections.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

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Brewmaster
Portland, ME

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CEO
Bellingham, WA

Elton Andres
Knight
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