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CLEAR SKY

Don't Unravel Clean Water Act

Because we all live downstream, the Clean Water Act must protect water at its sources

BY DAVID BROOKS // JUL 14, 2017 // [GUEST COLUMN](#), [OPINION](#)

The need for clean water is indisputable. We expect it from the taps in our homes, we rely on it to irrigate the food we grow in Montana, and we know that it is essential for the fish and wildlife that make our state's rivers, lakes, and streams the icons of the American outdoors. Only water that is clean at its source can ensure that we have clean water for these essential uses.

That's why the recent announcement of the Environmental Protection Agency's process to unravel protections of the Clean Water Act for small headwater streams is so troubling. When the Clean Water Rule (CWR) was completed in 2015 it extended the Clean Water Act's protections to nearly 50 percent of Montana's streams and rivers that had little prior safeguards against contamination. Of the roughly 1 million Americans who commented on the CWR, 87 percent were supportive. Clean Water Rule protection of the nation's streams and wetlands buffer against floods, maintain healthy habitats that minimize drought, filter pollutants from drinking and irrigation water, and provide vital spawning and rearing grounds for native and wild trout.



By executive order, President Donald Trump has set in motion a fast-paced process for the EPA to rescind this popular protection for clean water. In its place, the administration has indicated they want a new rule that will not provide anywhere near the amount of protection for the 60 percent of U.S. streams and 20 million acres of wetlands covered by the rule being rescinded today.



To counter this ill-conceived effort, we must act quickly. The EPA will soon begin a 30-day public comment

period. In the same way that the public overwhelmingly supported the CWR, we now have to oppose its undoing.

As the EPA follows the executive branch's marching orders to jeopardize the nation's sources of clean water, we have 30 days to say "no." Not in Montana and not in this country. Montana Trout Unlimited and our 4,500 members will let our state's Congressional delegates and the EPA know that we not only support clean water, we require it and demand assurance that the water we need for drinking, food production, and livestock is protected by law.

Clean water is a basic human right. It is not political. An equally basic truth is that water runs downhill. Because we all live downstream, the Clean Water Act must protect water at its sources. Similarly, protections for clean water must begin at the source of all good democracy — you.

Let our leaders know how you feel about clean water.



MTU will.

David Brooks is executive director of Montana Trout Unlimited.

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Reginald McMurdo

One of the first outrageous conditions the backers of the alt-right movement intend to force on us is a dramatic reduction in water quality for the masses. See Democract In Cains by Nancy Mac Lean.

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Reginald McMurdo

"Democracy In Chains", sorry.

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