



Wayne Stenehjem  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
**OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL**

STATE CAPITOL  
600 E BOULEVARD AVE DEPT 125  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0040  
(701) 328-2210 FAX (701) 328-2226  
www.ag.nd.gov

**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
500 NORTH 9<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
BISMARCK, ND 58501-4509  
(701) 328-3640 FAX (701) 328-4300

July 28, 2015

John C. Cruden  
Assistant Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Environment and Natural Resources Division  
Law and Policy Section  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Cruden:

At your earliest convenience, please forward the enclosed correspondence to your clients.

Please contact me or AAG Jennifer Verleger at [REDACTED] if you have any questions relating to this matter.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret I. Olson".

Margaret I. Olson  
Assistant Attorney General

jjt  
Enclosure  
e:\dixie\thiel\forms\natres.ltr.docx

July 28, 2015

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

The Honorable Jo Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil  
Works)  
Department of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Administrator McCarthy and Assistant Secretary Darcy:

On May 27, 2015, you signed a final regulation entitled “Clean Water Rule: Definition of Waters of the United States” on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (“ACOE”). 80 Fed. Reg. 37054-37127 (June 29, 2015) (“WOTUS Rule”). The WOTUS Rule, which is set to go into effect on August 28, 2015, provides sweeping changes for the determination of WOTUS jurisdiction impacting water quality regulation activities conducted by the EPA, ACOE and the states. For the reasons we outline below, we write to ask that you extend the effective date of the Rule by at least nine months to allow for appropriate judicial review.

As you know, the WOTUS Rule was immediately challenged by the States of North Dakota, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, Wyoming, and the New Mexico Environment Department and New Mexico State Engineer in the United States District Court for North Dakota, *North Dakota v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*, Case No. 15-59 (filed June 29, 2015); by the States of Ohio, Michigan, and Tennessee in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, *Ohio, et al. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, et al.*, Case No. 2:15-cv-02467 (filed June 29, 2015); by the States of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, *State of Texas, et al. v. United States Environmental Protection Agency, et al.*, Case No. 3:15-cv-00162 (filed June 29, 2015); by the States of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, South Carolina, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, *Georgia v. McCarthy*, Case No. 2-15-79 (filed June 30, 2015); and by the State of Oklahoma in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma, *Oklahoma v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*, Case No. 15-CV-381-CVE-FHM (filed July 8, 2015) (amended complaint filed July 10, 2015).

Although the states promptly filed their actions challenging the WOTUS Rule, it will necessarily take some time for the courts to resolve the merits of these various cases with their different claims. The agencies must first lodge and serve the administrative record. The parties then will have some time from the lodging of the administrative record to complete briefing on the merits of their challenges. Once briefing has been

completed, the courts considering the various states' challenges will likely schedule hearings and oral argument on the pending challenges. Even under a fairly aggressive schedule, the pending challenges will likely not be fully briefed and argued for at least 9 months.

Under the schedule set by the EPA and ACOE explained in the attached memorandum from EPA headquarters, the WOTUS Rule will become effective well before courts have the opportunity to resolve the merits of the significant pending challenges to this Rule. Absent a court granting preliminary injunctive relief, this schedule will cause immediate harm to the states because their delegated authority under the Clean Water Act, own regulatory programs governing state waters, and local industries will be affected by increased permitting and compliance requirements under the EPA's and ACOE's sweeping new asserted jurisdiction.

The Clean Water Act establishes a system of cooperative federalism that recognizes states have the "primary responsibilities and rights" to "prevent, reduce, and eliminate pollution, to plan the development and use . . . of land and water resources" and to "consult with the administrator in the exercise of his authority under this chapter." 33 U.S.C § 1251(b). Under the Clean Water Act, North Dakota and other states have delegated authority to promulgate water quality standards, designate impaired waters, issue total maximum daily loads, and administer permitting programs reliant upon the WOTUS Rule's jurisdictional definitions.

As the agencies admit in the Economic Analysis of EPA-Army Clean Water Rule (May 20, 2015), the WOTUS Rule will increase EPA and ACOE jurisdiction over existing practice. This directly harms states in their capacity as partners and regulators in implementing programs for which the states have delegated authority. For example, as acknowledged by the EPA in its economic analysis, the regulation will result in an increased volume of permit applications, each of which will be of increased scope and complexity under the new rule. This administrative burden will require significant commitment of additional state resources. States will also need to reassess their designations of water quality standards for waters now brought under WOTUS jurisdiction, and will need to issue more water quality certifications for federally-issued permits under the Clean Water Act 404 program.

The increase in EPA's and ACOE's jurisdiction comes at the direct expense of states—which previously had exclusive jurisdiction over state waters. Such action exceeds the statutory authority of Congress in enacting the Clean Water Act under the Commerce Clause and infringes upon the states' rights under the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution. Since 2000, the Supreme Court has twice restricted the EPA and ACOE's claim of jurisdiction when, as here, it exceeded the outer bounds of the Constitution.

Administrator McCarthy and Assistant Secretary Darcy  
July 28, 2015  
Page 3

*Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715 (2006); *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) v. Army Corps of Engineers*, 531 U.S. 159 (2001).

In addition to injuring the states in their sovereign capacity, states will be harmed by the increased burdens placed on them as they develop and build infrastructure projects important to the well-being of their citizens. The current August 28, 2015 effective date will place a significant hardship on North Dakota and others that have immediately pending and proposed projects to develop state infrastructure by increasing the cost and complexity of obtaining the necessary permits.

Further, the new regulation will also have a significant impact on agricultural, homebuilding, oil and gas, and mining operators as they try to navigate between established state regulatory programs and the EPA's and ACOE's new burdensome and conflicting federal requirements. This uncertainty especially threatens those states that rely on revenues from industrial development to fund a wide variety of state programs for the benefit of their respective citizens.

Contrary to the history of partnership between states and the federal government and in disregard of the sovereign interests implicated and immediate harm to states caused by the rule, EPA and the ACOE assert that the final rule "*does not have federalism implications.*" 80 Fed. Reg. 37102 (emphasis added). The agencies declined to conduct a federalism analysis, despite numerous requests by states and others, failing to give consideration to these issues before issuing the final rule. The agencies were required to consult with the states during the development of the proposed and final rule pursuant to both the Clean Water Act and Executive Order, and we remain concerned that EPA and the ACOE fail to recognize the importance of cooperative federalism. The attached memorandum indicates that EPA and the ACOE continue to proceed without acknowledging the impact of the WOTUS Rule on state sovereignty.

Given the gravity of the Constitutional issues implicated by the states' claims and to avoid these hardships, the courts should be granted an opportunity to resolve the pending challenges to the agencies' new WOTUS Rule. We ask that you immediately act to extend the effective date of the WOTUS Rule by at least 9 months. A federal regulation of this scope and significance demands a thorough judicial review before imposing costly and disruptive burdens on the states and their citizens.

Please contact the North Dakota Attorney General's Office, Assistant Attorney General Maggie Olson at (701) 328-3640 if you have any questions or wish to discuss this letter.

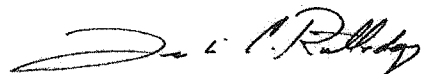
Sincerely yours,



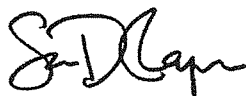
Wayne Stenehjem  
North Dakota Attorney General



Mark Brnovich  
Arizona Attorney General



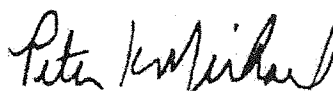
Leslie Rutledge  
Arkansas Attorney General



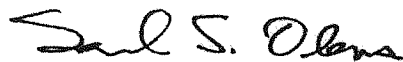
Sean Reyes  
Utah Attorney General



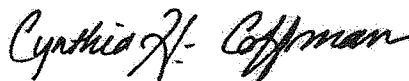
Marty J. Jackley  
South Dakota Attorney General



Peter K. Michael  
Wyoming Attorney General



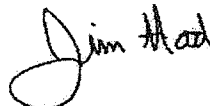
Samuel Olens  
Georgia Attorney General



Cynthia H. Coffman  
Colorado Attorney General



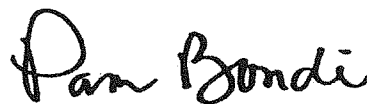
James D "Buddy" Caldwell  
Louisiana Attorney General



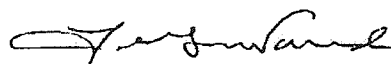
Jim Hood  
Mississippi Attorney General



Patrick Morrisey  
West Virginia Attorney General



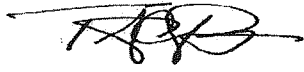
Pam Bondi  
Florida Attorney General



Lawrence Wasden  
Idaho Attorney General



Gregory F. Zoeller  
Indiana Attorney General



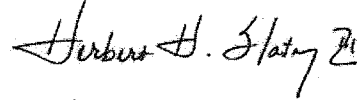
Tim Fox  
Montana Attorney General



Chris Koster  
Missouri Attorney General



Ken Paxton  
Texas Attorney General




Herbert H. Slatery III  
Tennessee Attorney General



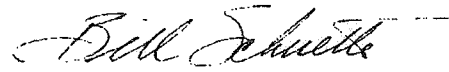
Brad D. Schimel  
Wisconsin Attorney General



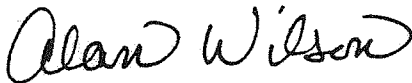
Jack Conway  
Kentucky Attorney General



Mike DeWine  
Ohio Attorney General



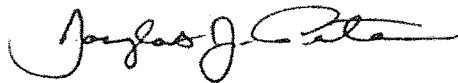
Bill Schuette  
Michigan Attorney General



Alan Wilson  
South Carolina Attorney General




Craig Richards  
Alaska Attorney General



Douglas J. Peterson  
Nebraska Attorney General



Derek Schmidt  
Kansas Attorney General



Luther Strange  
Alabama Attorney General



Adam Laxalt  
Nevada Attorney General




Scott Pruitt  
Oklahoma Attorney General



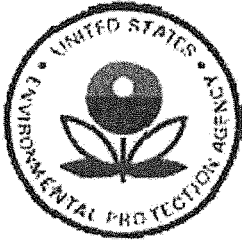
Donald van der Vaart, Secretary  
North Carolina Department of Environment  
and Natural Resources



Ryan Flynn, Secretary  
New Mexico Environment Department



Tom Blaine, P.E.  
New Mexico State Engineer



MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR WATER  
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS (REGIONS I – X)  
CHIEF OF ENGINEERS  
DIVISION AND DISTRICT ENGINEERS

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Clean Water Rule

Our final Clean Water Rule was published in the *Federal Register* on June 29, 2015, and will become effective on August 28, 2015. We thank each of you for your hard work and coordination to complete this rulemaking. As we move into the implementation phase, we must continue this joint effort and ensure that the process of identifying waters that are and are not protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA) is consistent, predictable, and effective. It is imperative that implementation of the Rule continues to reflect our goal to improve transparency, increase public participation, and promote public health and environmental protection for all of us who depend on reliable and abundant sources of clean water. This goal will be particularly important as we work with our state, tribal, and local partners to apply the Rule.

We are enthusiastic about the opportunities provided by the Rule to improve the process of identifying waters covered under the CWA, and making jurisdictional determinations and permit decisions effectively and efficiently. To meet these goals, it is essential that field staff charged with implementation of the Rule have the tools and resources they need. The next 60 days are particularly important as we work to be fully prepared to apply the Rule when it becomes effective.


There are several key areas on which we must focus immediately:

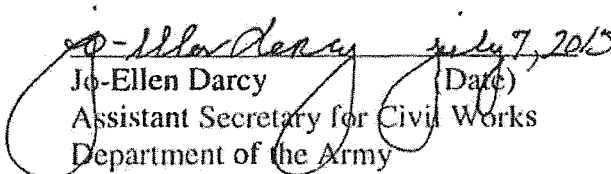
1. **Responding to Information Needs:** The Rule and its preamble provide clear and comprehensive direction regarding the process for conducting jurisdictional determinations. Because of the specificity of the Rule, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) headquarters shall jointly prepare a comprehensive Questions and Answers document, based on discussions with field staff, negating the need for any new manual or guidance document. As with any new procedures, field staff and the



the end of calendar year 2015, the workgroup shall develop a suite of options for our consideration.

As public servants, we have a profound obligation to implement the Rule in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Nothing less is acceptable. The move from old to new procedures must be as seamless and effective for the public as we can make it. We will be relying heavily on the experience and judgment of our senior leadership team as we transition to the new Rule. Your personal attention is needed if we are to succeed in this all-important phase. We look forward to working with each of you in addressing the key issues and in achieving the goals and strategic targets outlined above.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gina McCarthy (Date)  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jo-Ellen Darcy (Date)  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works  
Department of the Army



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
CIVIL WORKS  
108 ARMY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON DC 20316-0108

OCT -9 2013

*ebf -*  
MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF ENGINEERS

SUBJECT: "Waters of the United States" - Rulemaking Initiative

1. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reached a significant milestone on Tuesday, 17 September 2013, when the long-awaited preamble and rule text was released to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for interagency review. We would not have reached this point had it not been for the hard work and prolonged dedication of the Corps team. For this I am indeed thankful.
2. The proposed rule will bring added definitional clarity to the phrase "waters of the United States" as used in the Clean Water Act. On many occasions I have expressed strong support for moving forward with this rulemaking initiative because it affords EPA and the Corps the best opportunity to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of the Section 402 and Section 404 regulatory programs. As you are undoubtedly aware, the preamble and rule text will be supported by an EPA-published science report. This report, entitled "*Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence*" (September 2013), was just released for public comment consistent with EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB) procedures. This process will culminate in an SAB report to the Administrator of EPA in 2014 (mid-summer timeframe). Release of the preamble and rule text for public review and comment is expected to occur shortly thereafter.
3. This rulemaking initiative has been in development for years. Over the next several months we will be actively engaged in the interagency review process. Additionally, there will be further opportunity for us to participate in and influence the development of the science report supporting the rule. At this now crucial point in time, it is absolutely imperative that the Corps and EPA speak to the maximum extent possible with a singular public voice. This is especially true when making comments that will become part of the administrative record, when addressing the public or when responding to media and congressional queries. Because the need to speak with one public voice from this point forward is so essential, all communications with EPA and OMB during the interagency review of the preamble and rule text, as well as any comments, including those posted to the public docket, on or regarding the EPA-published science report, shall be reviewed by me or the Principal Deputy. I ensure that our respective offices will be properly represented at the upcoming SAB meeting.

*Jo Ellen Darcy*  
Jo Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary of the Army  
(Civil Works)

*Knowing I have your support is always appreciated.*

## Schmauder, Craig R SES (US)

---

**From:** Darcy, Jo-Ellen HON (US)  
**Sent:** Friday, April 03, 2015 5:13 PM  
**To:** Bostick, Thomas P LTG USARMY HQDA OCE (US); john peabody; Steven Stockton  
**Cc:** David R SES HQ02 Cooper; Jennifer A HQ02 Moyer; Jennifer Greer; Schmauder, Craig R SES (US); Smith, Charles R CIV (US); Lee, Let M CIV (US); Kelley, Moira L CIV (US);  
Ian Wood@USArmy Corps of Engineers  
**Subject:** Clean Water Act rule  
**Categories:** Important

>  
> LTG Bostick and the Corps Team,  
>  
> We have reached yet another milestone in our journey towards  
> publishing a revised rule intended to bring additional clarity to the  
> phrase "waters of the United States," as used in the Clean Water Act.  
> After recent consultation with the EPA Administrator and other senior  
> Administration officials, EPA is transmitting the draft final rule and preamble to OMB this evening.  
> The interagency review process will start now. As I said in my 3  
> October  
> 2013 memo to you Chief, "[w]e would not have reached this point had it  
> not been for the hard work and dedication of the Corps team." This is  
> absolutely true again today. I anticipate the interagency review  
> process will be thorough and dynamic, as this rule is important to the  
> President and the entire Administration. It remains critical, now more  
> than ever, for the Army, the Corps, and EPA to speak with one voice regarding the rule.  
> Likewise, it is essential for everyone involved to honor the  
> confidential and pre-decisional nature of the documents throughout the  
> entire interagency review process. All communications with EPA, OMB,  
> Congress, and the media during the interagency review process must  
> come from my office. I will however continue to reach out to the Corps  
> team for technical, legal, and policy input. Please accept my sincere  
> and heartfelt appreciation for your professionalism and expertise that  
> have allowed us to reach this significant milestone. I can't thank you enough.  
>  
> Jo-Ellen  
>  
>  
> Respectfully,  
>  
> Craig R. Schmauder, SES  
> Deputy General Counsel  
> Installations, Environment & Civil Works  
>  
> NOTICE: This message may contain information protected by the  
> attorney-client, attorney work-product, deliberative-process, or other  
> privilege. Do not disseminate without the approval of the Office of  
> the General Counsel, Department of the Army. If you have received this  
> message in error, please notify the sender immediately by email or

**Laity, Jim**

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 12, 2013 7:19 PM  
**To:** Peck, Gregory; Schmauder, Craig R SES (US) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** WOTUS  
**Attachments:** Corps OHWM Presentation (Mar 2013)\_48649661\_1-c.pdf

Let's talk tomorrow (Friday) to see where we are and next steps. Let me know a time that works for both of you.

A few more stray concerns for you to think about, these should not be show stoppers.

- 1) I understand that the Connectivity Report already went through one round of independent peer review and revision before being submitted to the SAB. I think it is important that we make the results of this peer review available to the public as part of the administrative record for the NPRM when it is published to counter the charge, currently circulating, including in several Congressional letters we have received, that we are letting the rule get ahead of the science, and should not propose the rule until the SAB review is complete. If we can show that the Report already went through a round of peer review (which was hopefully favorable) and was already revised once to address peer review comments, this will help a lot to address this concern. Please let me know asap if you see any problem with doing this. Also, can I see a copy of the first peer review report asap?
- 2) Based on the leaked draft, a lot of stakeholders are complaining that the rules reads like substantive decisions have already been made, and includes no "alternatives" as required by EO 12866. This is a fair concern. I think we can address by adding targeted requests for comment (and perhaps offer alternatives) in each section of the rule. For example, in the adjacency discussion, we could propose the 100 year floodplain, but specifically request comment on other intervals. We could also request comment on whether the definition should specify only the riparian zone, only the floodplain, or both (as proposed). This is only an example. As you revise the rule, please think about other margins where you can reasonably request comment on specific alternatives.
- 3) The issues of "breaks" in tributaries not severing jurisdiction is causing a lot of heartburn and uncertainty. Can we be more specific about the circumstances where this applies. For example, a manmade break that conveys water from the upper to the lower part of a natural tributary through a pipe, culvert or similar structure should not sever jurisdiction. Perhaps this is enough, or if there are other specific situations, let's identify them explicitly.
- 4) Concern has been raised about uncertainty in the delineation of the OHWM, including a Corps powerpoint on this topic being provided (attached). It would be great if we can provide more clarity here.

Let's talk tomorrow. Jim

**Laity, Jim**

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2013 3:39 PM  
**To:** Mancini, Dominic J.  
**Subject:** FW: OIRA comments  
**Attachments:** Waters of the US comments.docx

FYI, Here are the WOTUS comments I sent Friday. No response yet

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Friday, December 06, 2013 6:44 PM  
**To:** 'Peck, Gregory'; Schmauder, Craig R SES (US) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** OIRA comments

## Interagency Working Comments on Draft Language under EO12866 and 13563 Interagency Review. Subject to Further Policy Review.

### WOTUS NPRM: Suggested Revisions

The draft proposed rule as submitted takes a huge step forward in resolving regulatory uncertainty relative to the status quo. The agencies are to be commended for their progress to date in this respect. However, there would be substantial benefit to all stakeholders in clarifying further which waters are jurisdictional and which are not. With this consideration in mind, OIRA staff offer the following suggestions.

Isolated Waters: The proposed rule would continue to require a case-by-case demonstration of a significant nexus to navigable or interstate waters to assert jurisdiction over isolated waters. Unlike either the 2008 or 2011 guidance, the proposed rule would also allow some grouping of isolated waters for determining significance, and offers general criteria for such grouping. However, there would still be substantial regulatory uncertainty regarding which isolated waters are jurisdictional and which are not.

OIRA staff recommends that the agencies identify specific categories of isolated waters, based on the science outlined in the Connectivity Report, that are categorically jurisdictional, and then state in regulatory text that the remaining isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters are not jurisdictional. The goal would be to eliminate case-by-case determinations from the rule. Based on our reading of the report, Prairie Potholes and Carolina Bays are two categories for which strong scientific evidence exists of a categorical significant nexus to navigable and interstate waters. We would be open to discussing with agency staff additional categories that should also be deemed categorically jurisdictional, based on the peer-reviewed science summarized in the Connectivity Report. We would also support a robust request for comment in the preamble on 1) whether it is appropriate to completely eliminate case-by-case determinations as proposed, and 2) whether there are other well-defined categories of isolated waters that should also be deemed categorically jurisdictional.

Ditches: The proposed rule categorically excludes manmade ditches that are excavated wholly in uplands, provided they only have ephemeral flow. In practice, however, it is often difficult to distinguish between ephemeral and intermittent flow in manmade ditches excavated wholly in uplands. The resulting uncertainty is a source of significant concern to some stakeholder, particularly state and local transportation departments that must construct and maintain roadside drainage ditches.

OIRA staff recommends that the draft rule exclude ditches excavated wholly in uplands provided they have only ephemeral or intermittent flow. This would address substantial stakeholder concerns and increase clarity and ease of implementation. We believe it would have minimal adverse impacts on protection of high-value aquatic resources.

Definition of Adjacency: The rule proposes a revised definition of adjacency that is more precise and science-based than the existing regulatory definition. However, the proposed definition retains significant ambiguity, which will make it difficult for field staff to implement and possibly invite legal challenge. In particular, the term adjacent now includes waters with a surface or shallow sub-surface connection to a jurisdictional water, and waters that are in the riparian zone or floodplain of a

## Interagency Working Comments on Draft Language under EO12866 and 13563 Interagency Review. Subject to Further Policy Review.

jurisdictional water. However, the draft rule does not specify what frequency of flood would be used to determine the floodplain.

OIRA staff recommends that a particular flood frequency be identified in the rule text to determine the floodplain. A primary consideration in choosing the appropriate frequency should be the existence of comprehensive maps delineating floodplains for the frequency chosen. In addition, this provision could serve as a workable proxy for delimiting waters that serve an important floodwater retention function during more frequent precipitation events, and thus demonstrate a significant nexus to downstream navigable and interstate waters. Based on both of these considerations, we recommend that the rule specify the 100-year floodplain, but we are open to suggestion of an alternate interval if it better reflects these considerations.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Compliance: The preamble states that the proposed rule will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities (SISNOE) because it does not “directly” regulate any small entity (or anybody else). Rather it simply clarifies the extent of Clean Water Act jurisdiction. SBA does not agree. They believe the rule expands jurisdiction relative to the status quo and that small entities discharging into newly jurisdictional waters will experience a “direct” regulatory impact that at least requires substantive analysis under the RFA to determine if it is significant.

OIRA staff notes that EPA has already convened a “SBREFA-like” outreach meeting to small entity representatives to solicit input on ways to minimize adverse impacts to small entities as well as on the other rule-related questions identified in the Regulatory Flexibility Act. We recommend that EPA provide a draft report of this outreach effort, including recommendations to the Administrator, to OIRA and SBA for comment as part of the interagency review process. The goal would be to produce a consensus version of the report to be included in the administrative record for the proposed rule. The proposed rule would also make clear that this is a “voluntary” outreach effort on the part of EPA which is not judicially reviewable under SBREFA, and would be accompanied by a formal certification of no SISNOE.

Permitting Exemptions: The proposed rule emphasizes in the preamble that existing activity-specific permitting exemptions will remain unchanged by the rule. In practice, these exemptions address many of the concerns raised by various regulated entities by providing that certain activities (eg, return flows from irrigated agriculture and routine maintenance of roadside drainage ditches) do not require a CWA permit, even if the water in question is jurisdictional. However, USDA has suggested that EPA craft a broader exemption for “normal farming, silvicultural, and ranching activities” and include it as part of this rule.

OIRA staff recommends that the agencies work with USDA and OIRA to craft a parallel proposed rule or guidance document that clarifies the application of the existing permitting exemption for normal farming, silvicultural, and ranching activities. This parallel document would be released concurrently with the proposed rule. OIRA staff stand ready to facilitate expedited review of such a rule or guidance document. We are willing to consider waiving formal interagency review if warranted.

**Laity, Jim**

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2013 3:39 PM  
**To:** Mancini, Dominic J.  
**Subject:** FW: OIRA comments  
**Attachments:** Waters of the US comments.docx

FYI, Here are the WOTUS comments I sent Friday. No response yet

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Friday, December 06, 2013 6:44 PM  
**To:** 'Peck, Gregory'; Schmauder, Craig R SES (US) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** OIRA comments



## Interagency Working Comments on Draft Language under EO12866 and 13563 Interagency Review. Subject to Further Policy Review.

### **WOTUS NPRM: Suggested Revisions**

The draft proposed rule as submitted takes a huge step forward in resolving regulatory uncertainty relative to the status quo. The agencies are to be commended for their progress to date in this respect. However, there would be substantial benefit to all stakeholders in clarifying further which waters are jurisdictional and which are not. With this consideration in mind, OIRA staff offer the following suggestions.

*Isolated Waters:* The proposed rule would continue to require a case-by-case demonstration of a significant nexus to navigable or interstate waters to assert jurisdiction over isolated waters. Unlike either the 2008 or 2011 guidance, the proposed rule would also allow some grouping of isolated waters for determining significance, and offers general criteria for such grouping. However, there would still be substantial regulatory uncertainty regarding which isolated waters are jurisdictional and which are not.

OIRA staff recommends that the agencies identify specific categories of isolated waters, based on the science outlined in the Connectivity Report, that are categorically jurisdictional, and then state in regulatory text that the remaining isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters are not jurisdictional. The goal would be to eliminate case-by-case determinations from the rule. Based on our reading of the report, Prairie Potholes and Carolina Bays are two categories for which strong scientific evidence exists of a categorical significant nexus to navigable and interstate waters. We would be open to discussing with agency staff additional categories that should also be deemed categorically jurisdictional, based on the peer-reviewed science summarized in the Connectivity Report. We would also support a robust request for comment in the preamble on 1) whether it is appropriate to completely eliminate case-by-case determinations as proposed, and 2) whether there are other well-defined categories of isolated waters that should also be deemed categorically jurisdictional.

*Ditches:* The proposed rule categorically excludes manmade ditches that are excavated wholly in uplands, provided they only have ephemeral flow. In practice, however, it is often difficult to distinguish between ephemeral and intermittent flow in manmade ditches excavated wholly in uplands. The resulting uncertainty is a source of significant concern to some stakeholder, particularly state and local transportation departments that must construct and maintain roadside drainage ditches.

OIRA staff recommends that the draft rule exclude ditches excavated wholly in uplands provided they have only ephemeral or intermittent flow. This would address substantial stakeholder concerns and increase clarity and ease of implementation. We believe it would have minimal adverse impacts on protection of high-value aquatic resources.

*Definition of Adjacency:* The rule proposes a revised definition of adjacency that is more precise and science-based than the existing regulatory definition. However, the proposed definition retains significant ambiguity, which will make it difficult for field staff to implement and possibly invite legal challenge. In particular, the term adjacent now includes waters with a surface or shallow sub-surface connection to a jurisdictional water, and waters that are in the riparian zone or floodplain of a

## Interagency Working Comments on Draft Language under EO12866 and 13563 Interagency Review. Subject to Further Policy Review.

jurisdictional water. However, the draft rule does not specify what frequency of flood would be used to determine the floodplain.

OIRA staff recommends that a particular flood frequency be identified in the rule text to determine the floodplain. A primary consideration in choosing the appropriate frequency should be the existence of comprehensive maps delineating floodplains for the frequency chosen. In addition, this provision could serve as a workable proxy for delimiting waters that serve an important floodwater retention function during more frequent precipitation events, and thus demonstrate a significant nexus to downstream navigable and interstate waters. Based on both of these considerations, we recommend that the rule specify the 100-year floodplain, but we are open to suggestion of an alternate interval if it better reflects these considerations.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Compliance: The preamble states that the proposed rule will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities (SISNOE) because it does not “directly” regulate any small entity (or anybody else). Rather it simply clarifies the extent of Clean Water Act jurisdiction. SBA does not agree. They believe the rule expands jurisdiction relative to the status quo and that small entities discharging into newly jurisdictional waters will experience a “direct” regulatory impact that at least requires substantive analysis under the RFA to determine if it is significant.

OIRA staff notes that EPA has already convened a “SBREFA-like” outreach meeting to small entity representatives to solicit input on ways to minimize adverse impacts to small entities as well as on the other rule-related questions identified in the Regulatory Flexibility Act. We recommend that EPA provide a draft report of this outreach effort, including recommendations to the Administrator, to OIRA and SBA for comment as part of the interagency review process. The goal would be to produce a consensus version of the report to be included in the administrative record for the proposed rule. The proposed rule would also make clear that this is a “voluntary” outreach effort on the part of EPA which is not judicially reviewable under SBREFA, and would be accompanied by a formal certification of no SISNOE.

Permitting Exemptions: The proposed rule emphasizes in the preamble that existing activity-specific permitting exemptions will remain unchanged by the rule. In practice, these exemptions address many of the concerns raised by various regulated entities by providing that certain activities (eg, return flows from irrigated agriculture and routine maintenance of roadside drainage ditches) do not require a CWA permit, even if the water in question is jurisdictional. However, USDA has suggested that EPA craft a broader exemption for “normal farming, silvicultural, and ranching activities” and include it as part of this rule.

OIRA staff recommends that the agencies work with USDA and OIRA to craft a parallel proposed rule or guidance document that clarifies the application of the existing permitting exemption for normal farming, silvicultural, and ranching activities. This parallel document would be released concurrently with the proposed rule. OIRA staff stand ready to facilitate expedited review of such a rule or guidance document. We are willing to consider waiving formal interagency review if warranted.

**Laity, Jim**

---

**From:** Laity, Jim  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 12, 2013 7:19 PM  
**To:** Peck, Gregory; Schmauder, Craig R SES (US) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** WOTUS  
**Attachments:** Corps OHWM Presentation (Mar 2013)\_48649661\_1-c.pdf

Let's talk tomorrow (Friday) to see where we are and next steps. Let me know a time that works for both of you.

A few more stray concerns for you to think about, these should not be show stoppers.

- 1) I understand that the Connectivity Report already went through one round of independent peer review and revision before being submitted to the SAB. I think it is important that we make the results of this peer review available to the public as part of the administrative record for the NPRM when it is published to counter the charge, currently circulating, including in several Congressional letters we have received, that we are letting the rule get ahead of the science, and should not propose the rule until the SAB review is complete. If we can show that the Report already went through a round of peer review (which was hopefully favorable) and was already revised once to address peer review comments, this will help a lot to address this concern. Please let me know asap if you see any problem with doing this. Also, can I see a copy of the first peer review report asap?
- 2) Based on the leaked draft, a lot of stakeholders are complaining that the rules reads like substantive decisions have already been made, and includes no "alternatives" as required by EO 12866. This is a fair concern. I think we can address by adding targeted requests for comment (and perhaps offer alternatives) in each section of the rule. For example, in the adjacency discussion, we could propose the 100 year floodplain, but specifically request comment on other intervals. We could also request comment on whether the definition should specify only the riparian zone, only the floodplain, or both (as proposed). This is only an example. As you revise the rule, please think about other margins where you can reasonably request comment on specific alternatives.
- 3) The issues of "breaks" in tributaries not severing jurisdiction is causing a lot of heartburn and uncertainty. Can we be more specific about the circumstances where this applies. For example, a manmade break that conveys water from the upper to the lower part of a natural tributary through a pipe, culvert or similar structure should not sever jurisdiction. Perhaps this is enough, or if there are other specific situations, let's identify them explicitly.
- 4) Concern has been raised about uncertainty in the delineation of the OHWM, including a Corps powerpoint on this topic being provided (attached). It would be great if we can provide more clarity here.

Let's talk tomorrow. Jim

## Draft Guidance on Identifying Waters Protected by the Clean Water Act

This draft guidance clarifies how the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)\*<sup>i</sup> and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps)<sup>ii</sup> will identify waters protected by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972<sup>1</sup> (Clean Water Act or CWA or Act) and implement the Supreme Court's decisions concerning the extent of waters covered by the Act (*Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (SWANCC)*<sup>2</sup> and *Rapanos v. United States (Rapanos)*<sup>3</sup>). This document clarifies how the EPA and the Corps understand existing requirements of the CWA and the agencies' implementing regulations in light of *SWANCC* and *Rapanos* and provides guidance to agency field staff in making determinations about whether waters are protected by the CWA.

This draft guidance document is intended to describe for agency field staff the agencies' current understandings; it is not a rule, and hence it is not binding and lacks the force of law. Once finalized, this guidance will supersede existing guidance to field staff issued in 2003 and 2008 on the scope of "waters of the United States" (also "waters of the U.S.") subject to CWA programs.<sup>iii</sup> Although guidance does not have the force of law, it is frequently used by Federal agencies to explain and clarify their understandings of existing requirements. In this case, the agencies believe that field staff across the country will benefit from new guidance that is informed by lessons learned since 2008 and that reflects the agencies' understandings with respect to CWA jurisdiction, consistent with Supreme Court decisions and existing agency regulations. Each jurisdictional determination, however, will be made on a case-by-case basis considering the facts and circumstances of the case and consistent with applicable statutes, regulations, and case law.

After receiving and taking account of public comments on this document, EPA and the Corps expect to finalize it and to undertake rulemaking consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act. This process is expected to start with a proposed rule, to clarify further via regulation the extent of Clean Water Act jurisdiction, consistent with the Court's decisions. EPA and the Corps decided to begin this process with draft, nonbinding guidance in order to clarify their existing understandings while also considering and receiving the benefit of public comments.

Congress enacted the Clean Water Act "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters," and this guidance will help the agencies implement specific provisions of the Act to achieve this objective.<sup>4</sup> The CWA has a number of programs designed to protect and restore the Nation's waters. Together, these programs provide effective protection from pollution for waterbodies across the country, including waters that

---

\* To increase clarity of this document, endnotes that primarily provide citations will be indicated with Arabic numerals, and footnotes that provide additional substantive information will be indicated with Roman numerals.

<sup>i</sup> EPA Regions will use this guidance to oversee and implement programs under the Clean Water Act, including those under sections 303, 311, 401, 402 and 404, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1313, 1321, 1341, 1342 and 1344. (See endnote 1 for an explanation of the relevant history of the Clean Water Act.)

<sup>ii</sup> Corps Districts will utilize this guidance to implement Clean Water Act section 404, 33 U.S.C. § 1344.

<sup>iii</sup> Specifically, this memorandum supersedes the "Joint Memorandum" providing clarifying guidance on *SWANCC*, dated January 15, 2003 (68 Fed. Reg. 1991, 1995), and "Clean Water Act Jurisdiction Following the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in *Rapanos v. United States & Carabell v. United States*," dated December 2, 2008.

supply drinking water, filter pollutants, provide water for irrigation, and support hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation, and tourism.

The Clean Water Act, however, applies only to waters that are “waters of the United States.” This draft guidance clarifies how EPA and the Corps will identify waters to be protected under the Act consistent with the statute, regulations, Supreme Court caselaw, relevant science related to aquatic ecosystems, and the agencies' field experience. As noted above, this guidance, once finalized, will supersede previously issued guidance on the scope of “waters of the United States” (also “waters of the U.S.”) subject to CWA programs. However, it is not the agencies' intention that previously issued jurisdictional determinations be re-opened as a result of this guidance.

The U.S. Supreme Court has addressed the scope of waters of the United States protected by the CWA in three cases. In *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes, Inc.* (474 U.S. 121 (1985)), the Supreme Court held that wetlands adjacent to a traditional navigable water were properly considered to be “waters of the United States.” In *SWANCC*, the Court addressed the question of CWA jurisdiction over isolated, non-navigable, intrastate ponds, and concluded that CWA jurisdiction could not be based solely on the presence of migratory birds. In *Rapanos*, the Court addressed CWA protections for wetlands adjacent to non-navigable tributaries, and issued five opinions with no single opinion commanding a majority of the Court. The plurality opinion, authored by Justice Scalia, stated that “waters of the United States” extended beyond traditional navigable waters to include “relatively permanent, standing or flowing bodies of water.” *Id.* at 739. The plurality went on to clarify that relatively permanent waters “do not necessarily exclude” streams, rivers, or lakes that might dry up in extraordinary circumstances, such as drought, and seasonal rivers, which contain continuous flow during some months of the year but no flow during dry months. The plurality opinion also asserted that only wetlands with a “continuous surface connection” to other jurisdictional waters are considered “adjacent” and protected by the CWA. *Id.* at 742.

Justice Kennedy's concurring opinion took a different approach from Justice Scalia's. Justice Kennedy concluded that “waters of the United States” included wetlands that had a significant nexus to traditional navigable waters, “if the wetlands, either alone or in combination with similarly situated lands in the region, significantly affect the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of other covered waters more readily understood as ‘navigable’” (*id.* at 780). The four justices who signed on to Justice Stevens' opinion would have upheld jurisdiction under the agencies' existing regulations and stated that they would uphold jurisdiction under either the plurality or Justice Kennedy's opinion (*id.* at 810).

The agencies continue to believe, as expressed in previous guidance, that it is most consistent with the *Rapanos* decision to assert jurisdiction over waters that satisfy either the plurality or the Justice Kennedy standard, since a majority of justices would support jurisdiction under either standard. However, after careful review of these opinions, the agencies concluded that previous guidance did not make full use of the authority provided by the CWA to include waters within the scope of the Act, as interpreted by the Court. This draft guidance provides a more complete discussion of the agencies' interpretation, including of how waters with a “significant nexus” to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters are protected by the CWA.

In addition, this guidance explains the legal basis for coverage of waters by the CWA in cases that were not addressed by the previous guidance (for example, interstate waters).

The agencies expect, based on relevant science and recent field experience, that under the understandings stated in this draft guidance, the extent of waters over which the agencies assert jurisdiction under the CWA will increase compared to the extent of waters over which jurisdiction has been asserted under existing guidance, though certainly not to the full extent that it was typically asserted prior to the Supreme Court decisions in *SWANCC* and *Rapanos*. However, each jurisdictional determination will be made on a case-by-case basis considering the facts and circumstances of the case and consistent with applicable statutes, regulations, and case law.

The agencies understand that decisions concerning whether or not a waterbody is subject to the CWA have consequences for State, tribal, and local governments and for private parties. Consistent with Executive Order 13563, and in particular its emphasis on predictability and certainty, key goals of this draft guidance are to increase clarity and to reduce costs and delays in obtaining CWA permits by reducing the complexity of Corps of Engineers and EPA decisions concerning waters protected by the CWA, thus improving the predictability of the process of identifying waters protected by the Act, and increasing consistency of decisions across the country.

There is only one CWA definition of “waters of the United States.” Thus, this draft guidance, like the earlier guidance it replaces, necessarily will apply to decisions concerning whether a waterbody is subject to any of the programs authorized under the CWA. Although *SWANCC* and *Rapanos* specifically involved section 404 of the CWA and discharges of dredged or fill material, the term “waters of the United States” must be interpreted consistently for all CWA provisions that use the term. These provisions include the section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program, the section 311 oil spill program,<sup>5</sup> the water quality standards and total maximum daily load programs under section 303, and the section 401 State water quality certification process. However, while there is only one CWA definition of “waters of the United States,” there may be other statutory factors that define the reach of a particular CWA program or provision.<sup>6</sup>

This draft guidance does not address the regulatory exclusions from coverage under the CWA for waste treatment systems and prior converted croplands, or practices for identifying waste treatment systems or prior converted croplands.<sup>7</sup> It does not affect any of the exemptions from CWA section 404 permitting requirements provided by CWA section 404(f), including those for normal agriculture, forestry and ranching practices.<sup>8</sup> This guidance also does not address the statutory and regulatory exemptions from NPDES permitting requirements for agricultural stormwater discharges and return flows from irrigated agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

The CWA provisions and supporting regulations described in this document contain legally binding requirements. The agencies emphasize that this guidance does not substitute for those provisions or regulations and is not itself a regulation. It does not impose legally binding requirements on EPA, the Corps, or the regulated community, and may not apply to a particular situation depending on the circumstances. Any decisions regarding a particular water will be

based on the applicable statutes, regulations, and case law. Therefore, interested persons are free to raise questions regarding particular situations, and EPA and/or the Corps will consider whether or not the recommendations or interpretations of this guidance are appropriate in that situation based on the statutes, regulations, and case law. The use of language such as "recommend," "may," "should" and "can" is intended to describe agency policies and recommendations, while the use of mandatory terminology such as "must" and "required" is intended to describe the agencies' interpretations of controlling requirements under the terms of the CWA, its implementing regulations, and relevant case law.

This draft guidance is divided into eight sections:

- The first two sections address the fundamental classes of waters subject to Clean Water Act jurisdiction: traditional navigable waters (Section 1) and interstate waters (Section 2).
- The next section provides general guidance relating to the “significant nexus” standard described by Justice Kennedy in the *Rapanos* decision (Section 3).
- The next three sections provide guidance on determining whether various types of waters are subject to CWA jurisdiction, including:
  - Tributaries (Section 4);
  - Adjacent wetlands (Section 5); and
  - Other waters (Section 6).
- The next section provides examples of waters that are generally not waters of the United States under the CWA (Section 7).
- The final section provides guidance on the documentation necessary to support decisions concerning whether waters are protected by the CWA (Section 8).

Additional scientific and legal information concerning these topics is provided in an appendix at the end of this document.

## Summary of Key Points

Based on the agencies' interpretation of the statute, implementing regulations and relevant caselaw, the following waters are protected by the Clean Water Act:

- Traditional navigable waters;
- Interstate waters;
- Wetlands adjacent to either traditional navigable waters or interstate waters;
- Non-navigable tributaries to traditional navigable waters that are relatively permanent, meaning they contain water at least seasonally; and
- Wetlands that directly abut relatively permanent waters.

In addition, the following waters are protected by the Clean Water Act if a fact-specific analysis determines they have a "significant nexus" to a traditional navigable water or interstate water:

- Tributaries to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters;
- Wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional tributaries to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters; and
- Waters that fall under the "other waters" category of the regulations. The guidance divides these waters into two categories, those that are physically proximate to other jurisdictional waters and those that are not, and discusses how each category should be evaluated.

The following aquatic areas are generally not protected by the Clean Water Act:

- Wet areas that are not tributaries or open waters and do not meet the agencies' regulatory definition of "wetlands";
- Waters excluded from coverage under the CWA by existing regulations;
- Waters that lack a "significant nexus" where one is required for a water to be protected by the CWA;
- Artificially irrigated areas that would revert to upland should irrigation cease;
- Artificial lakes or ponds created by excavating and/or diking dry land and used exclusively for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, or rice growing;
- Artificial reflecting pools or swimming pools created by excavating and/or diking dry land;
- Small ornamental waters created by excavating and/or diking dry land for primarily aesthetic reasons;
- Water-filled depressions created incidental to construction activity;
- Groundwater drained through subsurface drainage systems and
- Erosional features (gullies and rills), and swales and ditches that are not tributaries or wetlands.



## Section 1: Traditional Navigable Waters

EPA and the Corps will continue to assert CWA jurisdiction over “[a]ll waters which are currently used, or were used in the past, or may be susceptible to use in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.”<sup>10</sup> These waters are referred to in this guidance as “traditional navigable waters.” The traditional navigable waters include all of the “navigable waters of the United States,” as defined in 33 C.F.R. part 329 and by numerous decisions of the federal courts, plus all other waters that are navigable-in-fact (for example, the Great Salt Lake, Utah, and Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota). Thus, the traditional navigable waters include, but are not limited to, the “navigable waters of the United States” within the meaning of section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (also known as “Section 10 waters”).<sup>11</sup>

For purposes of CWA jurisdiction and this guidance, waters will be considered traditional navigable waters if:

- They are subject to section 9 or 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act; or
- A federal court has determined that the water body is navigable-in-fact under federal law; or
- They are waters currently being used for commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation (for example, boat rentals, guided fishing trips, or water ski tournaments); or
- They have historically been used for commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation; or
- They are susceptible to being used in the future for commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation. Susceptibility for future use may be determined by examining a number of factors, including the physical characteristics and capacity of the water to be used in commercial navigation, including commercial recreational navigation (for example, size, depth, and flow velocity<sup>iv</sup>), and the likelihood of future commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation. A likelihood of future commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation, can be demonstrated by current boating or canoe trips for recreation or other purposes. A determination that a water is susceptible to future commercial navigation, including commercial waterborne recreation, should be supported by evidence.<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>iv</sup> While a traditional navigable water need not be capable of supporting navigation at all times, the frequency, volume, and duration of flow are relevant considerations for determining if a waterbody has the physical characteristics suitable for navigation.

<sup>v</sup> A trip taken solely for the purpose of demonstrating a waterbody can be navigated would be sufficient. *See, e.g., FPL Energy Marine Hydro L.L.C. v. FERC*, 287 F.3d 1151, 1157 (D.C. Cir. 2002).

## Section 2: Interstate Waters

EPA and the Corps will assert jurisdiction over all interstate waters, consistent with the agencies' current regulations defining "waters of the United States" to include "interstate waters including interstate wetlands."<sup>12</sup> Interstate waters, defined by the federal water pollution control statutes prior to the CWA as "all rivers, lakes, and other waters that flow across, or form a part of, State boundaries," remain jurisdictional waters under the CWA, even if such waters are not traditional navigable waters as described in Section 1 above.<sup>13</sup> For purposes of this guidance, lakes, ponds, and similar lentic (or still) water features crossing state boundaries are jurisdictional as interstate waters in their entirety. For streams and rivers, including impoundments, field staff should determine the upstream and downstream extent of the stream or river crossing a state boundary that should be considered the "interstate water." One method of determining the extent of a riverine "interstate water" is the use of stream order. Thus, for rivers and streams the "interstate water" would extend upstream and downstream of such boundary for the entire length that the water is of the same stream order.<sup>14</sup>

The agencies will analyze tributaries to interstate waters<sup>15</sup> consistent with the treatment of tributaries to traditional navigable waters under Justice Kennedy's standard discussed in Section 4 below. Similarly, the agencies will analyze wetlands adjacent to interstate waters (except wetlands that are adjacent to interstate wetlands)<sup>16</sup> consistent with the treatment of adjacent wetlands under Justice Kennedy's standard discussed in Section 5 below. Finally, EPA and the Corps will analyze other waters relative to an interstate water consistent with Section 6 below.

## Section 3: Significant Nexus Analysis

The agencies will assert jurisdiction over waters with a significant nexus to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters in accordance with *SWANCC* and *Rapanos*. Justice Kennedy stated:

"In *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook Cty. v. Army Corps of Engineers*, 531 U.S. 159 (2001) (*SWANCC*), the Court held, under the circumstances presented there, that to constitute 'navigable waters' under the Act, a water or wetland must possess a 'significant nexus' to waters that are or were navigable in fact or that could reasonably be so made."<sup>17</sup>

Waters have the requisite significant nexus if they, either alone or in combination with similarly situated waters in the region, significantly affect the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of traditional navigable waters or interstate waters.<sup>vi</sup> There is one significant nexus standard for waters of the United States, and this section provides general guidance for determining the presence or absence of a significant nexus. Sections 4, 5 and 6 provide more

---

<sup>vi</sup> In discussing the significant nexus standard, Justice Kennedy stated: "The required nexus must be assessed in terms of the statute's goals and purposes. Congress enacted the [CWA] to 'restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters' . . ." 547 U.S. at 779. Consistent with Justice Kennedy's instruction, EPA and the Corps will apply the significant nexus standard in a manner that restores and maintains any of these three attributes of traditional navigable waters and interstate waters.

specific guidance to field staff for applying the significant nexus standard when determining jurisdiction over:

- tributaries,
- adjacent wetlands, and
- other waters.

To evaluate the presence or absence of a significant nexus, the agencies intend to, as a general matter, consider:

- (1) Waters to be “similarly situated” with waters of the same resource type, specifically (a) tributaries; (b) adjacent wetlands; or (c) other waters that are in close physical proximity to traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, or their jurisdictional tributaries (“proximate other waters”);<sup>vii</sup>
- (2) Waters to be “in the region” if they fall within the same watershed. For the purposes of this analysis, the watershed is defined by the area draining into the traditional navigable water or interstate water; and
- (3) Waters to have a significant nexus if they alone or in combination with other similarly situated waters in the same watershed have an effect on the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of traditional navigable waters or interstate waters that is more than “speculative or insubstantial.”

Therefore, field staff should first determine whether the water to be evaluated is a tributary, adjacent wetland, or proximate other water under the regulations - waters in the same category should be considered the similarly situated waters.

Next, field staff should determine the watershed, as defined by the area<sup>18</sup> draining into the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water, and should identify the “similarly situated” waters in that watershed. The logical and scientifically valid “region” for determining whether similarly situated waters have a significant nexus is the watershed that drains to the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water through a single point of entry. There may be circumstances in which field staff, for efficiency purposes, elect to begin the case-by-case significant nexus analysis utilizing a smaller watershed (for example, in some circumstances, the Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-10 “watershed” as identified by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which are typically between 40,000-250,000 acres in size).<sup>19</sup> Field staff should not, however, utilize an area larger than the watershed that drains to the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water through a single point of entry. When a smaller watershed provides sufficient science-based justification to establish jurisdiction, field staff need not unnecessarily expend administrative time and resources analyzing the entire single point of entry watershed. However, field staff should not use a watershed smaller than the single point of entry watershed as the basis for a finding of no jurisdiction.

---

<sup>vii</sup> For other waters that are not in close physical proximity to traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, or their jurisdictional tributaries, the agencies will apply the significant nexus standard to each of these waters individually, except in cases where there is a compelling scientific basis for treating a group of such waters as similarly situated waters in the same region (see Section 6).

Finally, field staff should determine whether the water they are evaluating, in combination with other similarly situated waters in the watershed, has a significant nexus to the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water. Functions of waters that might demonstrate a significant nexus include sediment trapping, nutrient recycling, pollutant trapping and filtering, retention or attenuation of flood waters, runoff storage, and provision of aquatic habitat. A hydrologic connection is not necessary to establish a significant nexus, because in some cases the lack of a hydrologic connection would be a sign of the water's function in relationship to the traditional navigable water or interstate water, such as retention of flood waters or pollutants that would otherwise flow downstream to the traditional navigable water or interstate water.

Within a single point of entry watershed, over a period of time there will probably be multiple jurisdictional determinations. While field staff will have to make case-specific determinations, they may use information used in previous determinations, and the agencies would generally expect that if a significant nexus has been established for one water in the watershed, then other similarly situated waters in the watershed would also be found to have a significant nexus, because under Justice Kennedy's test, similarly situated waters in the region should be evaluated together. However, the documentation for each case should be complete enough to support the specific jurisdictional determination without cross-references to other files, including an explanation of which waters were considered together as similarly situated and in the same region.

Among the most important tasks for field staff is demonstrating that a significant nexus exists between the "similarly situated" waters that are the subject of a case-specific jurisdictional determination and the relevant traditional navigable water or interstate water. Justice Kennedy provides guidance about the nature of the nexus when he concludes that waters are not jurisdictional when their effects on the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of downstream traditional navigable waters are speculative or insubstantial. In the context used by Justice Kennedy, a "significant nexus" includes having a predictable or observable chemical, physical, or biological functional relationship between the similarly situated waters and the traditional navigable water or interstate water. EPA and the Corps should further demonstrate that the similarly situated waters significantly affect the traditional navigable water or interstate water.

Thus, field staff should look for indicators of hydrology, effects on water quality, and physical, chemical, and biological (including ecological) connections or functions when assessing whether a water, alone or in combination with similarly situated waters, has a more than speculative or insubstantial effect on the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters. Examples of ways in which hydrology can significantly affect downstream waters include, but are not limited to, transport of water and materials and compounds carried by the water (e.g., suspended materials, dissolved compounds), water retention, as a medium for the movement of aquatic organisms such as fish and invertebrates, and water discharge (e.g., release of retained water to other waters). Effects on the chemical integrity of downstream waters may include the extent to which the waters have the capacity to carry pollutants (for example, petroleum wastes, toxic wastes, and sediment) or flood waters downstream to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters; the extent to which

the waters reduce the amount of pollutants or flood waters that would otherwise enter traditional navigable waters or interstate waters; and the extent to which the waters perform physical functions related to the maintenance of downstream water quality such as sediment trapping.

Biological functions performed by the waters that may affect downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters include the capacity to transfer nutrients and organic carbon to downstream food webs (for example, macroinvertebrates present in headwater streams convert carbon in leaf litter, making it available to species downstream), and the maintenance of habitat that provides spawning areas for species in downstream waters.

Analysis of the above indicators, whether documented for an individual water or based on scientific literature describing functions applicable to the waters in question, along with an analysis of how the described functions affect a traditional navigable water or interstate water will allow field staff to evaluate whether the water alone or in combination with similarly situated waters in the watershed is likely to have a more than speculative or insubstantial effect on the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of a traditional navigable water or interstate water. It is not appropriate to determine significant nexus based solely on any specific threshold of distance (for example, between a tributary and the traditional navigable water). Watershed ecosystems, and their interrelationships, are constructed of component parts that have relevance when considered collectively. Failure to protect the components can undermine the ecosystem in its entirety. Therefore, the agencies have an obligation to evaluate waters in terms of how they interrelate and function as ecosystems rather than as individual units, especially in the context of complex ecosystems where their integrity may be compromised by environmental harms that individually may not be measurably large but collectively are significant.

It is important to clarify that agency field staff, in conducting a significant nexus analysis, are not required to identify or evaluate every similarly situated water located within a particular watershed being assessed. Staff should evaluate as many waters of the same type as is necessary to support and document the presence or absence of a significant nexus for that type of water (e.g., adjacent wetland, tributary or proximate other water). Staff should be confident that their significant nexus determination based on evaluation of a representative subset of adjacent wetlands, tributaries, or proximate other waters in a particular watershed would be fully consistent with a determination based on an evaluation of all waters of the same type in the watershed. Field staff should look at the best available information to identify the similarly situated waters in the point of entry watershed and their effects on downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters. In many circumstances, a reliable affirmative jurisdictional determination may be based on consideration of a subset of similarly situated waters, since including additional waters in the analysis would only establish a more significant nexus to the traditional navigable water or interstate water. In general, field staff are not expected to develop new information on similarly situated waters (e.g., the identification or delineation of as yet unmapped wetlands or tributaries). In many cases, scientifically credible (e.g., peer reviewed) literature on the functions and effects of similarly situated waters generally will be sufficient, along with site-specific information for the water for which a determination is being conducted, to support a significant nexus jurisdictional determination. This information should be incorporated into a site-specific explanation of how the waterbody and similarly situated waters in the region significantly affect the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of a traditional navigable or interstate water.

## Section 4: Tributaries

EPA and the Corps will assert jurisdiction over tributaries under either the plurality standard or the Kennedy standard, as described below.

For purposes of this guidance, a water may be a tributary if it contributes flow to a traditional navigable water or interstate water, either directly or indirectly by means of other tributaries. A tributary can be a natural, man-altered, or man-made water body. Examples include rivers and streams, as well as lakes and certain wetlands that are part of the tributary system and flow directly or indirectly into traditional navigable waters or interstate waters. A tributary is physically characterized by the presence of a channel with defined bed and bank. The bed of a stream is the bottom of the channel. The lateral constraints (channel margins) are the stream banks. Channels are formed, maintained, and altered by the water and sediment they carry, and the forms they take can vary greatly.

A means of identifying the lateral limits of a tributary, including where there are no contiguous wetlands, is the existence of an ordinary high water mark (OHWM). Corps regulations define OHWM as “that line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas.”<sup>20</sup> In many tributaries, the bed is that part of the channel below the OHWM, and the banks often extend above the OHWM. Channel characteristics depend on variables such as hydrology, lithology, climate, physiography, and gradient,<sup>21</sup> among others. A tributary continues as far as a channel (i.e., bed and bank) is present. A natural or manmade break (e.g., rock outcrop, underground flow, dam, weir, diversion, or similar break) in the presence of a bed and bank or ordinary high water mark does not establish the upstream limit of a tributary in cases where a bed and bank and an ordinary high water mark can be identified upstream and downstream of the break. Tributaries that have been channelized by being lined with concrete are still considered tributaries for the purposes of this guidance.

Certain types of erosional features, such as gullies and rills, are not tributaries for purposes of this guidance. Gullies<sup>22</sup> are relatively deep channels that are ordinarily formed on valley sides and floors where no well-defined channel previously existed. They are commonly found in areas with low-density vegetative cover or with soils that are highly erodible. Rills<sup>23</sup> are formed by overland water flows eroding the soil surface during rain storms. Erosional features that are not tributaries for the purposes of this guidance can also be found in environments where compacted soil and sparse vegetation have increased overland flow significantly. The two main processes that result in the formation of gullies and similar erosional features are downcutting and headcutting, which are forms of longitudinal (incising) erosion. These actions ordinarily result in erosional cuts that are often deeper than they are wide, with very steep banks, often small beds, and typically only carry water during precipitation events. The principal erosional processes that modify streams are also downcutting and headcutting. In streams, however, lateral erosion is also very important. The result is that streams, except on steep slopes or where soils are highly erodible, are characterized by the presence of more defined

bed and banks as compared to typical erosional features that are more deeply incised. Field staff should consider these factors as they distinguish streams and other tributaries that may be subject to Clean Water Act jurisdiction from other types of erosional features.

Non-tidal ditches (including roadside and agricultural ditches) are also not tributaries except where they have a bed, bank, and ordinary high water mark; connect directly or indirectly to a traditional navigable or interstate water; and have one of the following five characteristics:

- natural streams that have been altered (e.g., channelized, straightened or relocated);
- ditches that have been excavated in waters of the U.S., including wetlands;
- ditches that have relatively permanent flowing or standing water;
- ditches that connect two or more jurisdictional waters of the U.S.; or
- ditches that drain natural water bodies (including wetlands) into the tributary system of a traditional navigable or interstate water.

If a ditch is considered a tributary, it will be evaluated in the same manner as other tributaries (i.e., plurality standard or Kennedy standard, as appropriate). Note that tidal ditches are by definition waters of the U.S.

Natural and man-made swales are also not tributaries for purposes of this guidance. In certain circumstances, however, ditches or swales include areas that meet the regulatory definition of “wetlands.” Wetland ditches and swales will be evaluated as wetlands under the plurality or Kennedy standard, not as tributaries (unless the ditch itself is considered a tributary for one of the reasons stated above). Ditches and swales are considered wetlands when they meet the applicable criteria in the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual or the appropriate regional supplement to that Wetland Delineation Manual.

Even when not jurisdictional waters, these geographic features (e.g., swales, ditches) may still contribute to a surface hydrologic connection between an adjacent wetland and a traditional navigable water or interstate water. In addition, these geographic features may function as “point sources” (i.e., “discernible, confined and discrete conveyance[s]” under CWA section 502(14)), such that discharges of pollutants to waters through these features could be subject to other CWA regulations (e.g., CWA section 402).

### Tributaries Covered under the *Rapanos* Plurality Standard

EPA and the Corps will assert jurisdiction over “relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water” connected to traditional navigable waters.<sup>viii</sup> Under the plurality standard, relatively permanent waters are jurisdictional without making a significant nexus finding.

---

<sup>viii</sup> 547 U.S. at 739. The agencies will not assert jurisdiction over such waters under the plurality standard within the Eleventh Circuit, *i.e.*, waters in the states of Florida, Georgia and Alabama. See *United States v. Robison*, 505 F.3d 1208 (11th Cir.); *reh’g en banc denied*, 521 F.3d 1319 (11th Cir. 2007), *cert. denied*, 129 S. Ct. 627, 630 (2008). Instead the agencies will use the Kennedy standard only.

Under the plurality standard, a non-navigable tributary is jurisdictional when it satisfies the following characteristics:

- (1) The tributary is connected, directly or indirectly through other tributaries, to a downstream traditional navigable water, and
- (2) Flow in the tributary, except for drought years, is at least seasonal.

A central issue to the plurality standard is what constitutes “seasonal flow.” In this context, a water is “seasonal” when it has predictable flow during wet seasons in most years. The time period constituting “seasonal” will vary across the country. Rather than having distinct, rigid boundaries, stream reaches classified as perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral may more accurately be described as dynamic zones within stream networks. The length or extent of these zones may be highly variable and is dictated by multiple factors such as annual precipitation, evapotranspiration, and land- and water-use practices.<sup>24</sup> Thus, determination of whether a water meets the plurality standard for relatively permanent should involve determination of the length and timing of seasonal flows in the ecoregion in question.

Tributaries that are not relatively permanent will be evaluated under the Kennedy standard.

#### Tributaries Covered under the *Rapanos* Kennedy Standard

EPA and Corps regulations define “waters of the United States” to include tributaries to traditional navigable waters and to interstate waters.<sup>25</sup> Consistent with the agencies’ interpretation of the CWA, these regulations and the relevant case law, EPA and the Corps expect to assert jurisdiction over all tributaries to traditional navigable waters or interstate waters, provided that the tributary, alone or in combination with other similarly situated tributaries in the watershed, significantly affects the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of traditional navigable waters or interstate waters.

Thus, a tributary is jurisdictional where:

- (1) It is a tributary as defined for purposes of this guidance to a traditional navigable water or an interstate water; and
- (2) The tributary, alone or in combination with other tributaries in the watershed, has a significant nexus with the traditional navigable water or interstate water.

When performing a significant nexus analysis for a tributary, the first step is to determine whether that tributary has a bed and bank and an ordinary high water mark. If the tributary possesses those characteristics, the next step is to determine whether the tributary drains, or is part of a network of tributaries that drain, into a downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water. If it can be demonstrated that the tributary has a bed and bank, and an OHWM, and is part of a tributary system to a traditional navigable water or an interstate water, and, therefore, can transport pollutants, flood waters or other materials to a traditional navigable water or interstate water, then the agencies would generally expect that the tributary, along with the



other tributaries in the watershed (the "similarly situated" waters), can be demonstrated to have a significant nexus with the downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water. This expectation is based on the significant harm that pollutants can have on the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of the downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water.<sup>26</sup> The presence of a bed and bank and an OHWM are physical indicators of flow and it is likely that flows through all of the tributaries collectively in a watershed with the above characteristics are sufficient to transport pollutants, or other materials downstream to the traditional navigable water or interstate water in amounts that would significantly affect its chemical, physical or biological integrity.

When considering whether the tributary being evaluated eventually flows to an interstate water or traditional navigable water, field staff should trace the tributary connection using resources such as direct observation or U.S. Geological Survey maps, aerial photography or other reliable remote sensing information, soil survey data or other appropriate information.

Although the agencies generally expect that tributaries will be found to have a significant nexus with downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters, as explained above, it is still important that field staff document such a significant nexus through a site-specific analysis for tributaries that are not relatively permanent. Field staff should document, using available or readily obtainable information wherever possible, the flow characteristics and functions of the tributary or tributaries, and their hydrologic relationship to the nearest downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water. Hydrologic information may include volume, duration, and frequency of flow (if such information is readily available, e.g., through publicly available reports or on-line resources), as well as physical indicators of flow. Field staff may document the flow characteristics of tributaries by using physical indicators of flow, observations of flow considered in the context of local precipitation patterns and recent precipitation events, field reports, local expert statements, and other sources of information. Ordinary high water mark determinations are made by examining recent physical evidence of flow.<sup>27</sup> It is not necessary to document actual flow data via stream gages.<sup>28</sup> Field staff should also document other functions provided by the tributary, and describe how those functions may significantly affect the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters.

Flow characteristics and functions of the tributary or tributaries and their hydrologic relationship to the nearest downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water may include topographic maps, gage data, historic records of water flow, statistical data, personal observations/records, and other relevant information. Consideration may also be given to relevant contextual factors that directly influence the hydrology of tributaries, including the size of the watershed, average annual rainfall, and average annual winter snow pack. The significant nexus evaluation should also discuss the potential for the tributaries to transport pollutants to a traditional navigable water or interstate water. Direct observation of the tributary is not necessary if other available documentation is sufficient to establish the significant nexus.

Examples of other functions provided by tributaries that may significantly affect the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters include: distributing sediment<sup>29</sup> to maintain stream and riparian habitat; nutrient cycling and removal; providing habitat for amphibians, fish, and other aquatic or semi-aquatic

species living in and near the stream that may use the downstream waters for other portions of their life stages (e.g., spawning areas for recreationally or commercially important species); improving or maintaining biological integrity in downstream waters; and transferring nutrients and organic carbon vital to support downstream food webs (e.g., macroinvertebrates present in headwater streams convert carbon in leaf litter making it available to species downstream).<sup>30</sup> Disruptions in these biological processes can significantly affect the functional capacity of the entire downstream system.<sup>31</sup> Tributaries help to maintain base flow in the larger rivers downstream, which is particularly important in times of drought. At the same time, a network of tributaries can regulate the flow of water into downstream waters, moderate low flow and high flow extremes, reduce local and downstream flooding, and prevent excess erosion caused by flooding.<sup>32</sup>

## **Section 5: Adjacent Wetlands**

The agencies will assert Clean Water Act jurisdiction over adjacent wetlands that meet either the plurality standard or the Kennedy standard under *Rapanos*.

### Wetlands Covered Under the *Rapanos* Plurality Standard

EPA and the Corps will assert jurisdiction over “wetlands with a continuous surface connection to” “relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water” connected to traditional navigable waters.<sup>ix</sup>

The plurality opinion in *Rapanos* created a standard for finding statutory jurisdiction under the CWA for wetlands, which is related to the presence of a physical connection between the wetland and the relatively permanent water to which it is adjacent. Under the plurality standard, wetlands with a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent waters are jurisdictional without the legal obligation to make a significant nexus finding.

Under the plurality standard, an adjacent wetland is jurisdictional when it satisfies the following characteristics:

- (1) The wetland is adjacent to a relatively permanent, non-navigable tributary, that is connected to a downstream traditional navigable water, and
- (2) A continuous surface connection exists between the wetland and a relatively permanent tributary where the wetland directly abuts the water (e.g., they are not separated by uplands, a berm, dike, or similar feature). A “continuous surface connection” does not require the presence of water at all times in the connection between the wetland and the jurisdictional water.

### Wetlands Covered Under the *Rapanos* Kennedy Standard

---

<sup>ix</sup> 547 U.S. at 739, 742. As noted, the agencies will not assert jurisdiction over such waters under the plurality standard within the Eleventh Circuit, *i.e.*, waters in the states of Florida, Georgia and Alabama. See *United States v. Robison*, *supra*, footnote h.

The agencies will assert Clean Water Act jurisdiction over wetlands<sup>x</sup> adjacent to traditional navigable waters or non-wetland interstate waters or to another water of the U.S. where such wetlands have a significant nexus with downstream traditional navigable or interstate waters.<sup>xi</sup> Adjacent wetlands will be considered to have a significant nexus if they, alone or in combination with similarly situated wetlands, have an effect on the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of traditional navigable waters or interstate waters that is more than “speculative or insubstantial.”<sup>33</sup> As a general matter, “similarly situated” adjacent wetlands include all adjacent wetlands located in the point-of-entry watershed. Wetlands adjacent to traditional navigable waters or non-wetland interstate waters are *per se* jurisdictional and do not require a showing of significant nexus.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, an adjacent wetland is jurisdictional where such wetland meets the definition of “adjacent” as that term is defined in the agencies’ regulations and is either:

- (1) Adjacent to a traditional navigable water or non-wetland interstate water; or
- (2) Adjacent to a tributary, lake, reservoir, or other jurisdictional water (except another wetland) and either alone or in combination with other adjacent wetlands in the watershed has a significant nexus to the nearest downstream traditional navigable or interstate water.

The regulations define “adjacent” as follows: “The term *adjacent* means bordering, contiguous, or neighboring. Wetlands separated from other waters of the United States by man-made dikes or barriers, natural river berms, beach dunes and the like are ‘adjacent wetlands.’”<sup>35</sup> Under this definition, a wetland does not need to meet all criteria to be considered adjacent. The agencies consider wetlands to be bordering, contiguous, or neighboring, and therefore “adjacent” if at least one of following three criteria is satisfied:

- (1) There is an unbroken surface or shallow sub-surface hydrologic connection between the wetland and jurisdictional waters; or
- (2) The wetlands are physically separated from jurisdictional waters by “man-made dikes or barriers, natural river berms, beach dunes, and the like”; or
- (3) Where a wetland’s physical proximity to a jurisdictional water is reasonably close, that wetland is “neighboring” and thus adjacent. For example, wetlands located within the riparian area or floodplain of a jurisdictional water will generally be considered neighboring, and thus adjacent. One test for whether a wetland is sufficiently proximate to be considered “neighboring” is whether there is a demonstrable ecological interconnection between the wetland and the jurisdictional waterbody. For example, if resident aquatic species (e.g., amphibians, aquatic turtles, fish, or ducks) rely on both the wetland and the jurisdictional waterbody for all or part of their life cycles (e.g., nesting, rearing, or feeding), that may demonstrate that

---

<sup>x</sup> Under normal circumstances, a wetland will meet all three factors of hydrology, hydrophytic vegetation, and hydric soils, as required by agency regulations, and described in the United States, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Wetlands Delineation Manual* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1987) or appropriate Regional Supplement. The regulatory definition of waters of the U.S. includes “wetlands adjacent to waters (other than waters that are themselves wetlands) identified [as jurisdictional].” 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(7); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(7).

<sup>xi</sup> The plurality standard in *Rapanos* may provide an alternative basis for asserting jurisdiction. See Section 5.

the wetland is neighboring and thus adjacent. The agencies recognize that as the distance between the wetland and jurisdictional water increases, the potential ecological interconnection between the waters is likely to decrease.

An unbroken surface or shallow sub-surface hydrologic connection to jurisdictional waters may be established by a physical feature or discrete conveyance that supports periodic flow between the wetland and a jurisdictional water. Water does not have to be continuously present in this hydrologic connection and the flow between the wetland and the jurisdictional water may move in either or both directions. The hydrologic connection need not itself be a water of the U.S. A shallow subsurface hydrologic connection is lateral water flow through a shallow subsurface layer, such as may be found in steeply sloping forested areas with shallow soils, soils with a restrictive horizon, or in karst systems.<sup>36</sup> Shallow subsurface connections may be found below the ordinary root zone (below 12 inches), where other wetland delineation factors may not be present. A combination of physical factors may reflect the presence of a shallow subsurface connection, including, position in the landscape (for example, on a slope directing flow from wetland to jurisdictional waters), stream hydrograph, and soil surveys (for example, exhibiting indicators of high transmissivity over an impermeable layer).

If uplands separating a wetland from jurisdictional water can reasonably be characterized as “man-made dikes or barriers, natural river berms, beach dunes, and the like,” then, under the agencies’ regulations, the wetlands are adjacent even if no apparent hydrologic connection exists. It is important to note that natural river berms are formed by sediment deposits accumulating at or near the stream bank during flood events. Such berms vary in height from inches to feet, and also can be quite wide.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, multiple beach dunes may exist between a wetland and jurisdictional water (including primary and secondary dunes), because beach dunes typically function as an interdunal system (particularly on barrier islands).

The link between physical proximity and a physical or ecological (biological) connection is well documented in the scientific literature. A wetland within the riparian area<sup>38</sup> or floodplain<sup>39</sup> typically has such an interconnection. For example, adjacent wetlands typically help to store floodwaters, pollutants, and sediments that could otherwise reach a jurisdictional water.<sup>40</sup> Adjacent wetlands often provide important sources of stored water that augment stream flow during low-flow periods.<sup>41</sup> Species, such as amphibians, certain reptiles (e.g., watersnakes), waterfowl, invertebrates, and fish (including anadromous and catadromous fish), move between an adjacent wetland and a jurisdictional water for spawning, nesting, feeding, refuge, and other life stage requirements.<sup>42</sup> Species that move between an adjacent wetland and a jurisdictional water are distinguishable from migratory species. Migratory species use the wetland during a journey to a different area<sup>43</sup> and are not to be used as a scientific basis for demonstrating an ecological interconnection for adjacency. While it is not appropriate to determine adjacency based solely on any specific threshold of distance, as the distance between the wetland and jurisdictional water increases, the potential interconnection between the waters will decrease and a finding of adjacency is less likely. The distance between a tributary and its adjacent wetlands may vary by region, as well as based on site-specific factors within regions.

All wetlands within a wetland mosaic should ordinarily be considered collectively when determining adjacency. Wetlands present in such systems act generally as a single ecological

unit. A “wetland mosaic” refers to a landscape where wetland and non-wetland components are too numerous and closely associated to be appropriately delineated or mapped separately. These areas often have complex microtopography, with repeated small changes in elevation occurring over short distances. Tops of ridges and hummocks are often non-wetland but are interspersed with wetlands having hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology.

Under Justice Kennedy’s standard, the following legal test for Clean Water Act jurisdiction applies: If a wetland is adjacent to a traditional navigable water or a non-wetland interstate water, a finding of adjacency is sufficient in and of itself to demonstrate that the wetland is subject to Clean Water Act jurisdiction. On the other hand, a finding that a particular wetland is adjacent to a jurisdictional waterbody other than a traditional navigable water or non-wetland interstate water is not sufficient in and of itself to establish Clean Water Act jurisdiction over that wetland. For the latter category of adjacent wetlands, in order to establish Clean Water Act jurisdiction, field staff, on a case-by-case basis, must determine whether the particular adjacent wetland, alone or in combination with similarly situated wetlands in that watershed, has a significant nexus with traditional navigable waters or non-wetland interstate waters (see discussion below).

A determination of *adjacency* is based on an evaluation of the relationship between a wetland and the nearest jurisdictional water, which includes consideration of both physical and ecological connections between those waterbodies. In contrast, a determination of *significant nexus* is a different inquiry, which is based on evaluating whether there is a significant nexus between that adjacent wetland (in combination with similarly situated adjacent wetlands in the watershed) and a traditional navigable water or a non-wetland interstate water.

As discussed in Section 3, the agencies generally consider all wetlands within the watershed that are adjacent to jurisdictional waters to be “similarly situated” waters “in the region.” (Wetlands adjacent to non-jurisdictional waters are considered “other waters.”) The relevant watershed is defined by the topographic area draining into the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water. However, as with tributaries, field staff may utilize a smaller area for a significant nexus analysis where this is sufficient to establish the presence or absence of a significant nexus for adjacent wetlands within the watershed as a whole. When identifying other adjacent wetlands in the watershed to be considered in the significant nexus analysis, field staff may use resources such as direct observation or U.S. Geological Survey maps, aerial photography, or other reliable remote sensing information. Using such information, staff should include in the evaluation as many adjacent wetlands as is necessary to support and document the presence or absence of a significant nexus. Field staff are not required to identify or evaluate every adjacent wetland located within a particular watershed being assessed and are generally not expected to develop new information on the location of such wetlands. As with tributaries, field staff should use the best available information on the adjacent wetlands in the point of entry watershed, which may include scientific literature on the functions and effects of wetlands within the watershed generally and how those wetlands significantly affect the physical, chemical, or biological integrity of the traditional navigable waters or interstate waters. For affirmative determinations especially, consideration of a subset of adjacent wetlands may be sufficient, since including additional adjacent wetlands in the analysis would only establish a more significant nexus to the traditional navigable water or interstate water.

When evaluating significant nexus for adjacent wetlands, field staff should consider the many functions of waters such as sediment trapping, nutrient recycling, pollutant trapping and filtering, retention or attenuation of flood waters, runoff storage, and provision of habitat. In general, tributaries and their adjacent wetlands function as an integrated hydrologic system, and as a unit they may affect the amount of pollutants and floodwaters that reach the downstream traditional navigable waters or interstate waters.

## **Section 6: Other Waters**

The “other waters” or “(a)(3) waters” provision of EPA’s and the Corps regulations includes:

All other waters such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, or natural ponds, the use, degradation or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce. . . .<sup>44</sup>

The agencies recognize that Supreme Court decisions in *SWANCC* and *Rapanos* have identified limitations on the scope of (a)(3) waters that may be determined to be jurisdictional under the CWA. The agencies expect to further clarify the scope of waters subject to CWA jurisdiction, including jurisdiction over (a)(3) waters after *SWANCC* and *Rapanos*, as part of a notice and comment rulemaking. In the meantime, the agencies will make case-by-case, fact-specific determinations of jurisdiction under (a)(3) in the manner discussed below.

### Physically Proximate Other Waters

EPA and the Corps will make fact-specific determinations of jurisdiction for other waters that are in close physical proximity to traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, or their jurisdictional tributaries, and that alone or in combination with similarly situated proximate other waters in the region significantly affect the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of traditional navigable waters or interstate waters. For purposes of this guidance, proximate other waters are non-wetland waters that would satisfy the regulatory definition of “adjacent” if they were wetlands. They include lakes, ponds, and other non-wetland waters that are bordering, contiguous, or neighboring to jurisdictional waters, including waters that are separated from jurisdictional waters by man-made dikes or barriers, natural river berms, beach dunes and the like. Such waters have many of the same functions and effects with respect to jurisdictional waters as adjacent wetlands. The agencies believe it is scientifically appropriate and consistent with Justice Kennedy’s opinion to evaluate significant nexus for such waters in the same manner as for adjacent wetlands.

For purposes of the significant nexus analysis, all physically proximate other waters in the same point-of-entry watershed should be evaluated together as similarly situated waters in the region. This is appropriate for the same reasons as it is appropriate to evaluate all adjacent wetlands in the point-of-entry watershed together as similarly situated waters.

## Other Waters that Are Not Physically Proximate to Jurisdictional Waters

Non-physically proximate other waters are isolated, intrastate, non-navigable waters and wetlands that would not meet the regulatory definition of “adjacent” with respect to jurisdictional waters. The agencies note that the (a)(3) provisions of our regulations remain in effect and that the SWANCC decision specifically addressed only the presence of migratory birds as a basis for asserting jurisdiction, and not the validity of the (a)(3) provisions generally. However, the agencies interpret Justice Kennedy’s opinion as suggesting that the same significant nexus standard that he articulated for adjacent wetlands is appropriate for (a)(3) waters, and we have thus clarified above how this standard should be applied in the case of (a)(3) waters that are in close physical proximity to jurisdictional waters. At the same time, we recognize that for other waters that are geographically separated from jurisdictional tributaries, establishing a significant nexus may be more challenging. Thus, at this time, we are not providing specific guidance on making such determinations and are instead directing agency field staff to continue the current practice of referring determinations for non-physically proximate other waters to their respective Headquarters and obtaining formal project-specific approval before asserting or denying jurisdiction.

The general approach for determining significant nexus for such waters would be the same as discussed in Section 3. Because such waters may be widely scattered geographically, and physically remote from jurisdictional waters, field staff should generally conduct significant nexus analyses for such waters individually, unless there is a compelling scientific basis for treating a group of such waters as similarly situated waters in the same region. In accordance with the decision in *SWANCC*, consideration of use by migratory species is not relevant to the significant nexus determination for such waters.

The agencies emphasize that this document is guidance, which lacks the force of law; the agencies expect to proceed with notice and comment rulemaking to further clarify the regulatory definition of the term “waters of the United States.” As a part of that process, we will further consider, based on a review of the scientific literature, how a significant nexus analysis should be conducted for non-physically proximate other waters.

### **Section 7: Waters Generally Not Jurisdictional**

The scope of “waters of the United States” does not include all waters. EPA and the Corps previously have described in preambles to CWA regulations waters that the agencies generally do not consider to be waters of the U.S.<sup>45</sup> The agencies’ position regarding these waters is unchanged. The categories of waters generally not “waters of the U.S.” include:

- Wet areas that are not tributaries or open waters and do not meet the regulatory definition of wetlands.<sup>46</sup>
- Waterbodies excluded from coverage under the CWA by existing regulations.
- Waters that lack a significant nexus when one is required for jurisdiction.

- Artificially irrigated areas which would revert to upland if the irrigation ceased.
- Artificial lakes or ponds created by excavating and/or diking dry land to collect and retain water and which are used exclusively for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, or rice growing.
- Artificial reflecting pools or swimming pools excavated in uplands.
- Small ornamental bodies of water created by excavating and/or diking dry land to retain water for primarily aesthetic reasons.
- Water-filled depressions created in dry land incidental to construction activity and pits excavated in dry land for the purpose of obtaining fill, sand, or gravel, unless and until the construction or excavation operation is abandoned and the resulting body of water meets the definition of waters of the United States.
- Groundwater drained through subsurface drainage systems.<sup>xii</sup>
- Erosional features (gullies and rills), and swales and ditches that are not tributaries or wetlands (see Section 4).

## **Section 8: Documentation**

EPA and Corps field staff should document in the administrative record the available information supporting a jurisdictional determination. In addition to location and other descriptive information regarding the water at issue, the record should include a clear explanation of the rationale for the jurisdictional conclusion, and include, as appropriate:

- Information leading to a conclusion that a water falls within a category considered in this guidance to be jurisdictional without the need to demonstrate a significant nexus;
- Information used to conclude that a water has a significant nexus when one is required for jurisdiction;
- Information supporting a conclusion that a water lacks a significant nexus, when one is required for jurisdiction; or
- Information supporting a conclusion that a water falls within one of the categories of geographic features generally considered non-jurisdictional.

In short, both affirmative and negative jurisdictional determinations should be well-documented, to ensure both public transparency and defensibility should a jurisdictional

---

<sup>xii</sup> A “subsurface” drainage system is an agricultural practice designed to drain subsurface water through a below ground pipe system in order to maintain the groundwater table below the root zone to facilitate crop production. The construction or maintenance of subsurface drain systems may require a CWA permit, if it involves discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S.



conclusion be challenged. The level of documentation may be greater for jurisdictional determinations associated with complex projects.

Other sections of this guidance discuss the findings necessary for particular categories of waters to be considered jurisdictional and/or to have a significant nexus. Information relevant to these findings can come from many sources, including but not limited to maps, aerial photography, soil surveys, watershed studies, local development plans, literature citations, and references from studies pertinent to the parameters being reviewed. Such information need not always be specific to the water whose jurisdictional status is being evaluated; regional and national studies of the same type of water or similarly situated waters can help to inform a jurisdictional analysis as long as they are applicable to the water being evaluated. Information derived from field observation is not required in cases where a "desktop" analysis can provide sufficient information to make the requisite findings. However, for more complex or difficult jurisdictional determinations, it may be important to supplement such information with field observation.

An important part of a jurisdictional analysis is the location and type of water under consideration, so as to readily determine if the jurisdictional status of similarly situated waters in the region has been previously determined. If so, the jurisdictional conclusion, rationale, and supporting information for a similarly situated water are directly relevant. As Justice Kennedy noted in *Rapanos*, where a significant nexus has been established for a particular wetland, "it may be permissible, as a matter of administrative convenience or necessity, to presume covered status for other comparable wetlands in the region."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, once the jurisdictional status for a particular water within a watershed has been established, field staff can apply the significant nexus analysis for that water to any subsequent determinations if they establish (and document) that the water at issue is the same type and in the same watershed as the jurisdictional water.

## APPENDIX

### DISCUSSION OF LEGAL AND SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR GUIDANCE SECTIONS

The U.S. Supreme Court has addressed the scope of waters of the United States protected by the CWA in three cases. In *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes, Inc.* (474 U.S. 121 (1985)), the Supreme Court held that wetlands adjacent to a traditional navigable water were properly considered to be “waters of the United States.” In *SWANCC*, the Court addressed the question of CWA jurisdiction over isolated, non-navigable, intrastate ponds, and concluded that CWA jurisdiction could not be based solely on the presence of migratory birds. In *Rapanos*, the Court addressed CWA protections for wetlands adjacent to non-navigable tributaries, and issued five opinions with no single opinion commanding a majority of the Court. The plurality opinion, authored by Justice Scalia, stated that “waters of the United States” extended beyond traditional navigable waters to include “relatively permanent, standing or flowing bodies of water.”<sup>48</sup> The plurality went on to clarify that relatively permanent waters “do not necessarily exclude” streams, rivers, or lakes that might dry up in extraordinary circumstances, such as drought, and seasonal rivers, which contain continuous flow during some months of the year but no flow during dry months. The plurality opinion also asserted that only wetlands with a “continuous surface connection” to other jurisdictional waters are considered “adjacent” and protected by the CWA.<sup>49</sup> Justice Kennedy’s concurring opinion took a different approach than Justice Scalia’s. Justice Kennedy concluded that “waters of the United States” included wetlands that had a significant nexus to traditional navigable waters, “if the wetlands, either alone or in combination with similarly situated lands in the region, significantly affect the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of other covered waters more readily understood as ‘navigable’” (*id.* at 780). The four justices who signed on to Justice Stevens’ opinion would have upheld jurisdiction under the agencies’ existing regulations and stated that they would uphold jurisdiction under either the plurality or Justice Kennedy’s opinion (*id.* at 810). Neither *SWANCC* nor the opinions in *Rapanos* invalidated any of the regulatory provisions defining “waters of the United States.”

#### *Section 1: Traditional Navigable Waters*

##### **Legal Basis**

The Supreme Court has recognized that navigability is a flexible concept and “[e]ach application of [the *Daniel Ball* test] . . . is apt to uncover variations and refinements which require further elaboration.”<sup>50</sup> EPA and the Corps will be guided by examples of the types of evidence found relevant and sufficient for a traditional navigable waters determination in court decisions, although these will be fact-specific determinations and not every type of evidence will be available or needed in every circumstance. Field staff have sought guidance in particular on how to determine whether a water is susceptible to being used for commercial navigation such that it is a traditional navigable water. The cases discussed below provide specific examples of the types of evidence courts have found sufficient to demonstrate such susceptibility.

In *FPL Energy Marine Hydro L.L.C. v. FERC*, a case involving the Federal Power Act, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit reiterated the fact that “*actual use* is not necessary for a navigability determination” and repeated earlier Supreme Court holdings that navigability and capacity of a water to carry commerce could be shown through “physical characteristics and experimentation.”<sup>51</sup> In that case, the D.C. Circuit upheld a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission navigability determination that was based upon three experimental canoe trips taken specifically to demonstrate the river’s navigability.<sup>52</sup> The navigability determination was affirmed although the stream had five sets of rapids, and all parties agreed that the stream has never been used for commercial traffic, that there was no evidence of recreational use of the stream, and that the only evidence indicating actual use of the stream came from the three trips made for the purpose of litigation.<sup>53</sup>

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has also implemented the Supreme Court’s holding that a water need only be susceptible to being used for waterborne commerce to be navigable-in-fact. In *Alaska v. Ahtna, Inc.*, the Ninth Circuit held that current use of an Alaskan river for commercial recreational boating is sufficient evidence of the water’s capacity to carry waterborne commerce at the time that Alaska became a state.<sup>54</sup> It was found to be irrelevant whether or not the river was actually being navigated or being used for commerce at the time, because current recreational boating showed that the river always had the capacity to support navigation by the types of boats that were in use at the time of statehood.<sup>55</sup> Here, the stream was found to be navigable although the shallowest part of the river is just a foot deep during the low season; the river is customarily used, or is susceptible to use, by watercraft such as powerboats, 12-foot-long inflatable rafts, and motorized freight canoes and double-ended paddle canoes; hunters and fishermen travelled the river by boat in the past; most of the use of the river is recreational; and it is possible to take guided fishing and sightseeing trips on the river.<sup>56</sup>

## ***Section 2: Interstate Waters***

### **Legal Basis**

The language of the CWA indicates that Congress intended the term “navigable waters” to include interstate waters without imposing a requirement that they be traditional navigable waters themselves or be connected to traditional navigable waters. The precursor statutes to the CWA always subjected interstate waters and their tributaries to federal jurisdiction.<sup>xiii</sup> The text of the CWA, specifically CWA section 303 that establishes ongoing requirements for interstate waters, in conjunction with the definition of navigable waters, provides clear indication of Congress’ intent to protect interstate waters that were previously subject to federal regulation.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> See endnote 13. Section 2(d)(1) of the Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, 62 Stat. at 1156, stated:

The pollution of interstate waters in or adjacent to any State or States (whether the matter causing or contributing to such pollution is discharged directly into such waters or reaches such waters after discharge into a tributary of such waters), which endangers the health or welfare of persons in a State other than that in which the discharge originates, is hereby declared to be a public nuisance and subject to abatement as herein provided.

Other provisions of the statute provide additional textual evidence of the scope of the primary jurisdictional term of the Act. Congress defined “navigable waters” in CWA section 502(7) to mean “the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas.” Interstate waters are the waters of the several States and, thus, the United States. While the 1972 Act was clearly not limited to interstate waters, it was equally clearly intended to include interstate waters. Most importantly, there is a specific provision in the 1972 CWA establishing requirements for those interstate waters which were subject to the prior Water Pollution Control Acts. The CWA requires States to establish water quality standards for navigable waters and submit them to the Administrator for review, including “interstate waters.” CWA section 303(a)(1) states:

In order to carry out the purpose of this Act, any water quality standard applicable to *interstate waters* which was adopted by any State and submitted to, and approved by, or is awaiting approval by, the Administrator pursuant to this Act as in effect immediately prior to the date of enactment of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, *shall remain in effect*. . . .

(Emphasis added.) Thus, Congress intended continued protection of interstate waters.

While EPA and the Corps believe congressional intent is clear, the agencies also have a longstanding regulatory interpretation that interstate waters fall within the scope of CWA jurisdiction.<sup>57</sup> The agencies’ interpretation was promulgated contemporaneously with the passage of the CWA and is consistent with the statutory and legislative history of the Act. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has never addressed the CWA’s coverage of interstate waters, and its decisions in *SWANCC* and *Rapanos* do not question the jurisdictional status of interstate waters or impose additional jurisdictional requirements on interstate waters.

As noted above, the precursor statutes to the CWA always subjected interstate waters and their tributaries to federal jurisdiction. While Congress intended tributaries to interstate waters to be subject to the CWA, the statute does not define the extent of tributaries that are covered. In light of Justice Kennedy’s opinion, the agencies believe it is reasonable to assert jurisdiction over tributaries, adjacent wetlands and other waters which have a significant nexus to interstate waters consistent with the framework established by Justice Kennedy in *Rapanos* for establishing jurisdiction over waters with a significant nexus to traditional navigable waters (see sections 4, 5, and 6 of this guidance for additional information). Justice Kennedy’s standard seeks to ensure that waters Congress intended to subject to federal jurisdiction are indeed protected, both by recognizing that waters and wetlands with a significant nexus to covered waters have important beneficial effects on those waters, and by recognizing that polluting or destroying waters with a significant nexus can harm downstream covered waters.

### ***Section 3: Significant Nexus***

#### **Legal and Scientific Basis**

In *Rapanos*, Justice Kennedy provides an approach for determining what constitutes a “significant nexus” that can serve as a basis for statutory jurisdiction.<sup>xiv</sup> “The required nexus must be assessed in terms of the statute’s goals and purposes. Congress enacted the law to ‘restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation’s waters,’ 33 U.S.C. § 1251(a), and it pursued that objective by restricting dumping and filling in ‘navigable waters,’ §§ 1311(a), 1362(12).”<sup>58</sup> Justice Kennedy provided further guidance for determining whether wetlands should be considered to possess the requisite nexus in the context of assessing whether wetlands are jurisdictional: “if the wetlands, either alone or in combination with similarly situated [wetlands] in the region, significantly affect the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of other covered waters more readily understood as ‘navigable.’”<sup>59</sup> While Justice Kennedy focused on adjacent wetlands in light of the facts of the cases before him, it is reasonable to utilize the same analysis for tributaries and other waters such as ponds, lakes and non-adjacent wetlands that are not themselves directly connected to a tributary system but may still have a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water or interstate water.

In determining which waters to consider “similarly situated” for purposes of analyzing whether they have a significant nexus “in combination” with the water at issue, it is reasonable to begin with the categories of waters the agencies identified in promulgating their definition of “water of the United States.” For example, tributaries are similarly situated within the landscape because they are part of a stream network that provides flow to the downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water. Adjacent wetlands are similarly situated within the landscape because the agencies’ definition is focused on their proximity to another water of the United States – “adjacent” is defined in regulations as bordering, neighboring or contiguous (see Section 5 for further discussion). Similarly, other waters (“(a)(3) waters”) that are in close physical proximity to traditional navigable or interstate waters or their tributaries are similarly situated with respect to those waters in much the same way as adjacent wetlands. Justice Kennedy’s standard allows the agencies to analyze whether all similarly situated waters in a region together have a significant nexus to the downstream traditional navigable water. With this standard, Justice Kennedy has recognized that even where it is difficult to demonstrate that a particular individual wetland adjacent to a small headwater tributary has a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water, the destruction of all such adjacent wetlands in a region could have a significant effect on the traditional navigable water and, thus, the CWA must protect those wetlands in order to protect the traditional navigable water. The same logic applies to tributaries and physically proximate other waters.

Waters should generally be considered “in the region” if they are within a watershed that drains to a traditional navigable water or interstate water, defined by the point at which a tributary system first enters a traditional navigable water or interstate water. Using a watershed as the framework for conducting significant nexus evaluations is scientifically supportable. Watersheds are generally regarded as the most appropriate spatial unit for water resource

---

<sup>xiv</sup> Again, the four justices who signed on to Justice Stevens’ opinion would have upheld jurisdiction under the agencies’ existing regulations and stated that they would uphold jurisdiction under either the plurality or Justice Kennedy’s opinion. Justice Kennedy concludes that *Riverside Bayview* and *SWANCC* “establish the framework for” determining whether an assertion of jurisdiction constitutes a reasonable interpretation of “navigable waters” - “the connection between a nonnavigable water or wetland and a navigable water may be so close, or potentially so close, that the Corps may deem the water or wetland a ‘navigable water’ under the Act”; “[a]bsent a significant nexus, jurisdiction under the Act is lacking.” 547 U.S. at 767.

management.<sup>60</sup> Anthropogenic actions and natural events can have widespread effects within the watershed that collectively impact the quality of the relevant traditional navigable water or interstate water.<sup>61</sup> For this reason, it is more appropriate to conduct a significant nexus determination at the watershed scale than to focus on a specific site, such as an individual stream segment. The watershed that contributes flow to the point of entry to a traditional navigable or interstate water is a logical spatial framework for the evaluation of the nexus. The functions of the contributing waters are inextricably linked and have a cumulative effect on the integrity of the traditional navigable water or interstate water. The size of that watershed can be determined by identifying the topographic area that drains to the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water, and then using that point of entry watershed to conduct a significant nexus evaluation.<sup>62</sup>

Justice Kennedy's opinion provides guidance pointing to many functions of waters that might demonstrate a significant nexus, such as sediment trapping, nutrient recycling, pollutant trapping and filtering, retention or attenuation of flood waters, runoff storage, and provision of habitat.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Justice Kennedy noted that a hydrologic connection is not necessary to establish a significant nexus, because in some cases the lack of hydrologic connection would show the significance of a water to the aquatic system, such as retention of flood waters or pollutants that would otherwise flow downstream to the traditional navigable water or interstate water.<sup>64</sup> Finally, Justice Kennedy was clear that the requisite nexus must be more than "speculative or insubstantial"<sup>65</sup> in order to be significant.

#### ***Section 4: Tributaries***

### **Legal and Scientific Basis**

#### **Tributaries Covered Under the *Rapanos* Plurality Standard**

As noted above, jurisdictional determinations based on the plurality standard would have the support of the four justices joining the plurality opinion as well as the four dissenting justices. The plurality concluded that the agencies' regulatory authority should extend only to "relatively permanent, standing or continuously flowing bodies of water"<sup>66</sup> connected to traditional navigable waters, and to "wetlands with a continuous surface connection to" such relatively permanent waters.<sup>67</sup> "Relatively permanent waters" were described as waters that typically flow year-round except in times of drought, or waters that have a continuous flow at least seasonally. The plurality opinion emphasized that relatively permanent waters do not include tributaries "whose flow is '[c]oming and going at intervals . . . [b]roken, fitful.'"<sup>68</sup> Therefore, "relatively permanent waters" do not include ephemeral tributaries which flow only in response to precipitation and intermittent streams which do not have continuous flow at least seasonally.<sup>xv</sup>

---

<sup>xv</sup> Note that under the Kennedy standard, such waters may be jurisdictional where they have a significant nexus.

Moreover, waters that have had at least seasonal flow on a historic basis remain jurisdictional despite the fact that man-made diversions for irrigation, water supply or other reasons have caused a tributary, or portion thereof, to flow less than seasonally.<sup>xvi</sup>

Field staff have flexibility to determine what seasonal flow means in each particular case.<sup>69</sup> Seasonal flow can be the result of snow melt, seasonal patterns in precipitation, and seasonal fluctuations in ground water levels. In the arid west, stream discharges are driven by three large-scale weather patterns.<sup>70</sup> Precipitation produced by these weather patterns varies greatly for any given locality, but generally, precipitation shifts from winter in the north to summer in the south. The variation of precipitation in time, coupled with the highly variable topography of the arid west, results in spatially variable precipitation patterns.<sup>71</sup> For example, seasonal flow in most of New Mexico and large portions of Arizona and Colorado would be during the period of two months, July and August, when they normally receive between 30-50 percent of their annual precipitation as rain.<sup>72</sup> In some areas, snow melt drives stream flow, and seasonal flow is typically in the spring.<sup>73</sup> Seasonal patterns of flow may be less pronounced in the semi-arid Midwest, perhaps because of less seasonal precipitation patterns and relatively more vegetative cover.<sup>74</sup> In the east precipitation is more uniform but increased evapotranspiration during the growing season can reduce ground water levels and surface flows to create seasonal and ephemeral flows.<sup>75</sup>

#### Tributaries Covered Under the *Rapanos* Kennedy Standard

Justice Kennedy rejected the plurality's approach that only "relatively permanent" tributaries are within the scope of CWA jurisdiction. Instead, Justice Kennedy concluded that "Congress could draw a line to exclude irregular waterways, but nothing in the statute suggests it has done so"; in fact, he states that Congress has done "[q]uite the opposite."<sup>76</sup> Further, Justice Kennedy concludes, based on "a full reading of the dictionary definition" of "water," that "the Corps can reasonably interpret the Act to cover the paths of such impermanent streams."<sup>xvii</sup> Even in Justice Kennedy's rejection of Justice Stevens' opinion it is clear that he was specifically rejecting the broad scope of jurisdiction over wetlands without further analysis, and not specifically addressing jurisdiction over tributaries: "[T]he dissent would permit federal regulation whenever wetlands lie alongside a ditch or drain, however remote and insubstantial, that eventually may flow into traditional navigable waters. The deference owed to the Corps' interpretation of the statute does not extend so far."<sup>77</sup>

Elsewhere, Justice Kennedy suggests that it may be appropriate to assert jurisdiction over all tributaries with an ordinary high-water mark. Justice Kennedy described the Corps' standard

---

<sup>xvi</sup> See *S. D. Warren Co. v. Maine Bd. of Env'tl. Prot.*, 547 U.S. 370, 379 n.5 (2006)("[N]or can we agree that one can denationalize national waters by exerting private control over them.").

<sup>xvii</sup> 547 U.S. at 770. First, Justice Kennedy notes that the term "waters" can mean "flood or inundation," according to the *Webster's Second* definition, and that these events are "impermanent by definition." *Id.* Second, even looking to the plurality's preferred dictionary definition of "waters," i.e., "water "[a]s found in streams and bodies forming geographical features such as oceans, rivers, [and] lakes,"" Justice Kennedy notes that "intermittent flow can constitute a stream." *Id.* (alteration in original). And finally, Justice Kennedy notes that the plurality's reference to the statement by the *Riverside Bayview* Court comparing "wetlands to 'rivers, streams, and other hydrographic features more conventionally identifiable as 'waters'" . . . could just as well refer to intermittent streams." *Id.* at 771 (citations omitted).

for asserting jurisdiction over tributaries: “[T]he Corps deems a water a tributary if it feeds into a traditional navigable water (or a tributary thereof) and possesses an ordinary high-water mark . . . .”<sup>78</sup> Justice Kennedy concluded that this standard “presumably provides a rough measure of the volume and regularity of flow.”<sup>79</sup> In addition, if it is applied reasonably consistently, the Corps’ existing standard for tributaries “may well provide a reasonable measure of whether specific minor tributaries bear a sufficient nexus with other regulated waters to constitute ‘navigable waters’ under the Act.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, Justice Kennedy’s opinion may reasonably be read as allowing the agencies to determine that a case-specific significant nexus determination is not necessary for tributaries possessing an ordinary high water mark, though it also indicates that he considers the presence of a significant nexus to be the appropriate test.

The agencies have decided that, given Justice Kennedy’s indication that significant nexus is still the guiding standard, it is appropriate for purposes of this guidance to assert jurisdiction over tributaries utilizing the same standard Justice Kennedy articulated for adjacent wetlands. In establishing the significant nexus standard, Justice Kennedy recognized that upstream adjacent wetlands can have significant effects on the physical, chemical and biological integrity of downstream waters covered under the CWA. As a scientific matter, tributaries can, of course, have similar effects and it is reasonable to utilize the same standard for determining whether tributaries have a significant nexus to downstream covered waters. Through rule making, the agencies will further consider whether the existence of an ordinary high-water mark alone is sufficient to establish a significant nexus to downstream traditional navigable or interstate waters, without requiring a site-specific analysis, as Justice Kennedy invites in his opinion.

As noted in Section 3, it is reasonable to consider all tributaries in a watershed to be “similarly situated” for purposes of a significant nexus analysis because they contribute flow to the downstream traditional navigable water or interstate water and provide similar functions to those downstream waters. Further, Section 3 demonstrated that it is reasonable to consider the region for significant nexus analysis to be a watershed defined by the area draining into the nearest traditional navigable water or interstate water through a single point of entry.

The agencies’ identification of the presence of an ordinary high water mark as one of the factors for considering a water to be a tributary for purposes of this guidance is consistent with Justice Kennedy’s observation that an ordinary high water mark may be a reasonable measure of whether a tributary possesses a significant nexus with a traditional navigable water or interstate water. This observation, in turn, is supported by both the agencies’ scientific judgment in the past and the scientific literature of the present. As the Corps stated in promulgating the definition of “waters of the U.S.” in 1977 to include tributaries, “[t]he regulation of activities that cause water pollution cannot rely on . . . artificial lines, however, but must focus on all waters that together form the entire aquatic ecosystem. Water moves in hydrologic cycles, and the pollution of . . . part of the aquatic ecosystem . . . will affect the water quality of the other waters within that aquatic ecosystem.”<sup>81</sup> For more than 30 years, EPA and the Corps have interpreted the CWA to protect “the many tributary streams that feed into the tidal and commercially navigable waters . . . since the destruction and/or degradation of the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of each of these waters is threatened by the unregulated discharge of dredged or fill material.”<sup>82</sup> As Congress and the Supreme Court have recognized,



“[w]ater moves in hydrologic cycles and it is essential that discharge of pollutants be controlled at the source.”<sup>83</sup>

A large volume of scientific literature documents the important functions that tributaries, including headwater streams, provide to downstream waters.<sup>xviii</sup> Headwater streams, which may include perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams, are the most common streams in the United States. Collectively, they determine the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of downstream waters, and provide many of the same functions as non-headwater streams.<sup>84</sup> Headwater streams reduce the amount of sediment delivered to downstream waters by trapping sediment from water and runoff.<sup>85</sup> Headwater streams are responsible for most nutrient cycling and removal, and thus transforming and changing the amount of nutrients delivered to downstream waters.<sup>86</sup> A close connection exists between the water quality of these streams and the water quality of downstream water bodies.<sup>87</sup> Activities such as discharging a pollutant into one part of the tributary system are well-documented to affect other parts of the system, even when the point of discharge is far upstream from the navigable water that experiences the effect of the discharge.<sup>88</sup> These streams provide habitat and protection for amphibians, fish, and other aquatic or semi-aquatic species living in and near the stream that may use the downstream waters, including traditional navigable waters, for other portions of their life stages.<sup>89</sup> They also serve as migratory corridors for fish. Tributaries can improve or maintain biological integrity and control water temperatures in the downstream waters. Headwater streams serve as a source of food materials such as insects, larvae, and organic matter to nourish the fish, mammals, amphibians, and other organisms in downstream streams, rivers, and lakes.<sup>90</sup> Disruptions in these biological processes affect the ecological functions of the entire downstream system.<sup>91</sup> Headwater streams help to maintain base flow in the larger rivers downstream, which is particularly important in times of drought. At the same time, the network of headwater streams can regulate the flow of water into downstream waters, mitigating low flow and high flow extremes, reducing local and downstream flooding, and preventing excess erosion caused by flooding.<sup>92</sup>

## ***Section 5: Adjacent Wetlands***

### ***Legal and Scientific Basis***

#### Adjacent Wetlands Covered under the *Rapanos* Plurality Standard

Under the plurality standard, wetlands that have a continuous surface connection with a relatively permanent, non-navigable tributary are jurisdictional without the need for a significant nexus finding. The plurality opinion indicates that “continuous surface connection” is a “physical connection requirement.”<sup>93</sup> A continuous surface connection does not, however, require surface water to be continuously present between the wetland and the tributary.

#### Adjacent Wetlands Covered under the *Rapanos* Kennedy Standard

---

<sup>xviii</sup> For purposes of applying the current body of scientific literature to the questions created by the *Rapanos* Supreme Court decision, traditional navigable waters can be considered analogous to downstream waters. This is because the vast majority of traditional navigable waters are downstream of headwater streams.

Because the question in *Rapanos* was whether particular adjacent wetlands were “waters of the U.S.,” Justice Kennedy’s opinion focused on the standard for determining whether wetlands have the requisite nexus:

With respect to wetlands, the rationale for Clean Water Act regulation is, as the Corps has recognized, that wetlands can perform critical functions related to the integrity of other waters—functions such as pollutant trapping, flood control, and runoff storage. 33 CFR § 320.4(b)(2). Accordingly, wetlands possess the requisite nexus, and thus come within the statutory phrase “navigable waters,” if the wetlands, either alone or in combination with similarly situated lands in the region, significantly affect the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of other covered waters more readily understood as “navigable.” When, in contrast, wetlands’ effects on water quality are speculative or insubstantial, they fall outside the zone fairly encompassed by the statutory term “navigable waters.”<sup>94</sup>

With respect to wetlands adjacent to traditional navigable waters, Justice Kennedy concluded that the agencies’ regulation “rests upon a reasonable inference of ecologic interconnection, and the assertion of jurisdiction for those wetlands is sustainable under the Act by showing adjacency alone.”<sup>95</sup> The agencies will apply Justice Kennedy’s reasoning to conclude wetlands adjacent to non-wetland interstate waters are similarly jurisdictional without the need of demonstrating a significant nexus.

For wetlands adjacent to tributaries that have a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water or interstate water, however, absent more specific regulations, the agencies must establish that the wetland alone or in combination with other adjacent wetlands in the watershed has a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water or interstate water. Justice Kennedy provided some guidance as to the analysis necessary to conclude that a water has a sufficient nexus. Justice Kennedy’s concern was that neither the Corps nor the reviewing courts applied the proper legal standard.<sup>xix</sup> Although evidence was presented in one of the consolidated cases that the wetlands were providing habitat, sediment trapping, nutrient recycling, flood peak diminution and reduction, and flow water augmentation, the Corps did not marshal this evidence to conclude that the wetlands had a significant nexus to downstream traditional navigable waters.<sup>96</sup> The administrative record in the other case noted the wetland’s connection to wildlife habitat and water quality and “also noted that the project would have a major, long-term detrimental effect on wetlands, flood retention, recreation and conservation and overall ecology.”<sup>97</sup> Justice Kennedy did not indicate that this evidence was irrelevant, in fact, he concluded that “[m]uch the same evidence” previously analyzed by the Corps could establish a significant nexus with traditional navigable waters, particularly with additional evidence about the connection between the wetlands and the navigable water.<sup>98</sup>

A hydrologic connection is neither determinative of nor required to show a significant nexus. Justice Kennedy noted that a “mere hydrologic connection should not suffice in all cases;

---

<sup>xix</sup> Justice Kennedy thought that in both the consolidated cases before the Supreme Court, “the record contains evidence suggesting the possible existence of a significant nexus according to the principles outlined above. Thus the end result in these cases and many others to be considered by the Corps may be the same as that suggested by the dissent, namely, that the Corps’ assertion of jurisdiction is valid.” 547 U.S. at 783.

the connection may be too insubstantial for the hydrologic linkage to establish the required nexus with navigable waters as traditionally understood.”<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, Justice Kennedy was also clear that a hydrologic connection between a wetland and a tributary is not required to establish a significant nexus: “Given the role wetlands play in pollutant filtering, flood control, and runoff storage, it may well be the absence of hydrologic connection (in the sense of interchange of waters) that shows the wetlands’ significance for the aquatic system.”<sup>100</sup>

## ***Section 6: Other Waters***

### ***Legal and Scientific Basis***

Other waters are those for which jurisdiction was previously asserted under section (a)(3) of the Corps’ regulations, which provide for CWA jurisdiction over “[a]ll other waters . . . the use, degradation, or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce. . . .” These include isolated, non-navigable intrastate waters. This provision of the regulations was the focus of the *SWANCC* decision. In that case, the Court was considering the validity of the Corps’ assertion of jurisdiction over ponds and mudflats under (a)(3). In rejecting the assertion of jurisdiction in that case, the Court held that “[i]t was the significant nexus between the wetlands and ‘navigable waters’ that informed our reading of the CWA in *Riverside Bayview Homes*.”<sup>101</sup> Justice Kennedy further explained the *SWANCC* decision – and his understanding of when EPA and the Corps could assert jurisdiction over “other waters” – in his concurring opinion in *Rapanos*: “In *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook Cty. v. Army Corps of Engineers*, 531 U.S. 159 (2001) (*SWANCC*), the Court held, under the circumstances presented there, that to constitute ‘navigable waters’ under the Act, a water or wetland must possess a ‘significant nexus’ to waters that are or were navigable in fact or that could reasonably be so made.”<sup>102</sup> Because the Court in *SWANCC* was considering the validity of the Corps’ assertion of jurisdiction over ponds and mudflats under (a)(3) of the Corps’ regulations, it is reasonable to conclude that Justice Kennedy intends his significant nexus standard to apply to the “other waters” of this regulation.

An “other water” is jurisdictional only if it both has a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water or interstate water and meets the regulatory definition. One of the ways of demonstrating that a water is one “the use, degradation or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce” is through demonstration that the water has a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water or interstate water. If a water meets Justice Kennedy’s significant nexus standard, the degradation or destruction of that water could harm the traditional navigable water or interstate water and therefore could affect interstate or foreign commerce.

While all adjacent wetlands are reasonably proximate to a jurisdictional water by regulation and, therefore, “similarly situated,” the other waters provision of the regulations encompasses a wide-range of waters. For purposes of this guidance, the agencies have decided that it is appropriate to divide other waters into two classes, those that are physically proximate to traditional navigable or interstate waters or their tributaries, and those that are not. For the first group, it is reasonable to treat these in much the same manner as adjacent wetlands, since they stand in the same relationship to and serve many of the same functions as such wetlands with respect to the aquatic systems that they are near. For instance, physically proximate waters

can function to retain floodwaters, recharge groundwater, provide habitat for waterfowl and other species, and process and retain nutrients and pollutants that may otherwise enter tributaries; they may even be connected to a river during high floods and provide a protected habitat for eggs and young of many fish species, as well as provide refuge for spawning for some species.<sup>103</sup>

For the reasons articulated in Section 3 of this guidance, the agencies will interpret “in the region” for such proximate other waters to be the watershed boundary defined by the geographic area that drains to the nearest downstream traditional navigable or interstate water through a single point of entry.

In applying the significant nexus standard to such waters, it is important to note that Justice Kennedy concluded that a water may have a significant nexus even if it does not have a hydrologic connection to the traditional navigable water or interstate water: “Given the role wetlands play in pollutant filtering, flood control, and runoff storage, it may well be the absence of a hydrologic connection (in the sense of interchange of waters) that shows the wetlands’ significance for the aquatic system.”<sup>104</sup> This statement applies equally to proximate other waters. Thus, effects that should be considered include circumstances where proximate other waters trap pollutants such as nutrients or sediment, for example, or where they hold precipitation or snow melt, thereby reducing contamination or flooding of traditional navigable or interstate waters.

In contrast, applying the significant nexus standard to geographically isolated other waters is more challenging. Justice Kennedy recognized that physical proximity can be an important factor in the analysis of significant nexus.<sup>xx</sup> In light of the challenges in applying the significant nexus standard to geographically isolated other waters, the agencies have identified physical proximity as an important factor when conducting a significant nexus analysis for such waters.

The agencies believe that the significant nexus test articulated by Justice Kennedy is the right theoretical approach for assessing all other waters, isolated and proximate, but because of the greater practical difficulty of applying this standard to geographically isolated other waters, we are directing field staff to continue for now the current practice of referring determinations for non-physically proximate other waters to their respective Headquarters and obtaining formal project-specific approval before asserting or denying jurisdiction. Because such waters are often geographically dispersed and isolated from each other, as well as from other jurisdictional waters, it is also not clear at this time how such waters should be grouped for purposes of considering them “similarly situated” and “in the region.” For this reason, until the agencies are able to further consider this issue through rule making, significant nexus determination will generally evaluate such waters individually, unless there is a compelling scientific basis for treating a group of such waters as similarly situated waters in the same region. In accordance with the decision in *SWANCC*, consideration of use by migratory species is not relevant to the significant nexus determination for such waters.

---

<sup>xx</sup> “Through regulations or adjudication, the Corps may choose to identify categories of tributaries that, due to their volume of flow (either annually or on average), their proximity to navigable waters, or other relevant considerations, are significant enough that wetlands adjacent to them are likely, in the majority of cases, to perform important functions for an aquatic system incorporating navigable waters.” 547 U.S. at 780.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-500, 86 Stat. 816. The 1972 legislation extensively amended the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA), which was originally enacted in 1948. Further amendments to the FWPCA enacted in 1977 changed the popular name of the statute to the “Clean Water Act.” See Pub. L. No. 95-217, 91 Stat. 1566; 33 U.S.C. 1251 note. The current FWPCA is codified at 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251-1387. This guidance will refer to provisions of the current act by relevant “CWA section.”

<sup>2</sup> 531 U.S. 159 (2001).

<sup>3</sup> *Carabell v. U.S. Army Corps of Eng’rs*, 391 F.3d 704 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2004); *United States v. Rapanos*, 376 F.3d 629 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2004). After certiorari was granted, these cases were consolidated, and the resulting opinion cited as *Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715 (2006).

<sup>4</sup> CWA section 101(a).

<sup>5</sup> While section 311 uses the phrase “navigable waters of the United States,” EPA has interpreted it to have the same breadth as the phrase “navigable waters” used elsewhere in section 311, and in other sections of the CWA. See *United States v. Texas Pipe Line Co.*, 611 F.2d 345, 347 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1979); *United States v. Ashland Oil & Transp. Co.*, 504 F.2d 1317, 1324-25 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1974). In 2002, EPA revised its regulatory definition of “waters of the United States” in 40 C.F.R. part 112 to ensure that the actual language of the rule was consistent with the regulatory language of other CWA programs. *Oil Pollution & Response; Non-Transportation-Related Onshore & Offshore Facilities*, 67 Fed. Reg. 47,042 (July 17, 2002). A district court vacated the rule for failure to comply with the Administrative Procedure Act, and reinstated the prior regulatory language. *American Petroleum Ins. v. Johnson*, 541 F.Supp. 2d 165 (D. D.C. 2008). However, EPA interprets “navigable waters of the United States” in CWA section 311(b), in the pre-2002 regulations, and in the 2002 rule to have the same meaning as “navigable waters” in CWA section 502(7).

<sup>6</sup> For example, the CWA section 402 program regulates discharges of pollutants from “point sources” to waters of the United States, whether these pollutants reach jurisdictional waters directly or indirectly. The plurality opinion in *Rapanos* noted that “there is no reason to suppose that our construction today significantly affects the enforcement of §1342. . . . The Act does not forbid the ‘addition of any pollutant *directly* to navigable waters from any point source,’ but rather the ‘addition of any pollutant *to* navigable waters.’” 547 U.S. at 743. Clean Water Act section 311(b)(1) provides: “[I]t is the policy of the United States that there should be no discharges of oil or hazardous substances into or upon the navigable waters of the United States or adjoining shorelines . . . or which may affect natural resources belonging to, appertaining to, or under the exclusive management authority of the United States.” (Emphasis added.) “Discharge” is broadly defined in CWA section 311(a)(2) to include “any spilling, leaking, pumping, pouring, emitting, emptying or dumping,” with certain enumerated exceptions, and is not limited to point source discharges.

<sup>7</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(8); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.”).

<sup>8</sup> CWA section 404(f); 40 C.F.R. § 232.3; 33 C.F.R. § 323.4.

<sup>9</sup> CWA section 402(1)(1) (“The Administrator shall not require a permit under this section for discharges composed entirely of return flows from irrigated agriculture. . . .”); CWA section 502(14)(“[The] term [point source] does not include agricultural stormwater discharges and return flows from irrigated agriculture.”); 40 C.F.R. § 122.3(f) (return flows from irrigated agriculture are excluded from the NPDES program); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (The term “point source” “does not include return flows from irrigated agriculture or agricultural storm water runoff.”).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(1); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(1); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.”(a)); 40 C.F.R. § 110.1 (“navigable waters” (a)).

<sup>11</sup> Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899, § 10, 33 U.S.C. § 403.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(2); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(2); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.”(b)), 40 C.F.R. § 110.1 (“navigable waters” (b)).

<sup>13</sup> Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, § 10(e), 62 Stat. 1155, 1161.

<sup>14</sup> Field staff generally should use the Strahler method. In Strahler’s method, a first-order stream has no tributaries, a second-order stream is formed by the joining of any two first-order streams, and a third order stream is formed by the junction of any two second-order streams. Arthur N. Strahler, “Quantitative Analysis of Watershed Geomorphology,” *American Geophysical Union Transactions* 38 (1957): 913-920.

<sup>15</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(5); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(5); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.”(e)).

<sup>16</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(7); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(7); 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.”(e)).

<sup>17</sup> 547 U.S. at 759.

- 
- <sup>18</sup> James M. Omernik, "The Misuse of Hydrologic Unit Maps for Extrapolation, Reporting and Ecosystem Management," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 39.3 (2003): 563-73.
- <sup>19</sup> The country is divided and subdivided into successively smaller watersheds, and the U.S. Geological Survey has developed a standardized watershed classification system--the Hydrologic Unit System--to organize watershed boundaries in a nested hierarchy by size. A unique hydrologic unit code (HUC) consisting of two to twelve digits (based on the level of classification) identifies each watershed in the country. The system divides the country into 21 regions, and progressively smaller sub-regions, accounting units, cataloging units, watersheds, and sub-watersheds, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service delineating the boundaries for the smallest two levels. The 10-digit HUC, for instance, is the "watershed" level in the classification system. See United States, Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, "Overview and History of Hydrologic Units and the Watershed Boundary Dataset," *Natural Resource Conservation Service*. Web. 25 Jan. 2011.; United States, United States Geological Survey, USGS Water-Supply Paper 2294, *Hydrologic Unit Maps* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Paul R. Seaber, F. Paul Kapinos, and George L. Knapp, 1987).
- <sup>20</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(e).
- <sup>21</sup> Luna B. Leopold, M. Gordon Wolman, and John P. Miller, *Fluvial Processes in Geomorphology* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1964).
- <sup>22</sup> Nyle C. Brady and Ray R. Weil, *The Nature and Properties of Soils*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- <sup>23</sup> Luna B. Leopold, *A View of the River* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) 3.
- <sup>24</sup> United States, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA/600/R-06/126: *Field Operations Manual for Assessing the Hydrologic Permanence and Ecological Condition of Headwater Streams* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ken M. Fritz, Brent R. Johnson, and David M. Walters, 2006) 5.
- <sup>25</sup> See, e.g., 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(2), (5); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(2)(5).
- <sup>26</sup> Richard B. Alexander, *et al.*, "The Role of Headwater Streams in Downstream Water Quality," *Journal of the American Water Resource Association* 43.1 (2007): 41-59; Stephen R. Carpenter, *et al.*, "Nonpoint Pollution of Surface Waters with Phosphorous and Nitrogen," *Ecological Applications* 8.3 (1998): 559-68; Dana W. Kolpin, *et al.*, "Pharmaceuticals, Hormones and Other Organic Wastewater Contaminants in U.S. Streams: 1999-2000: A National Reconnaissance," *Environmental Science and Technology* 36.6 (2002): 1202-1211.
- <sup>27</sup> United States, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, ERDC TR-04-1: *Review of Ordinary High Water Mark Indicators for Delineating Arid Streams in the Southwestern United States* (Hanover, NH: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Robert W. Lichvar and James S. Wakeley, 2004).
- <sup>28</sup> Generally, only the very large streams and rivers in the U.S. are monitored with stream gages for flow and the U.S. Geological Service maintains a network of only 7500 stream gages. United States, USGS, Fact Sheet 2009-3020, *National Stream Flow Information Program Implementation Status Report* (March 2009). Smaller streams often do not have gages located on them, and not only would it be costly to monitor flow at sites like small headwater streams that are not currently gaged (Ken M. Fritz, Brent R. Johnson, and David M. Walters, "Physical Indicators of Hydrologic Permanence in Forested Headwater Streams." *Journal of the North American Benthological Society* 27.3 (2008): 690-704), monitoring studies can take one to two years (United States, U.S. EPA, EPA 600/R-06/126, *Field Operations Manual for Assessing the Hydrologic Permanence and Ecological Condition of Headwater Streams* (Cincinnati, Ohio: U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development, National Exposure Research Laboratory, Fritz *et al.*, 2006)).
- <sup>29</sup> Joan L. Florsheim, Jeffery F. Mount, and Anne Chin, "Bank Erosion as a Desirable Attribute of Rivers," *Bioscience* 58 (2008): 519-29.
- <sup>30</sup> Takashi Gomi, Roy C. Sidle, and John S. Richardson, "Understanding Processes and Downstream Linkages of Headwater Systems," *BioScience* 52 (2002): 905-16 (Gomi, *et al.*).
- <sup>31</sup> Louis A. Kaplan, Richard A. Larson, and Thomas L. Bott, "Patterns of Dissolved Organic Carbon in Transport," *Limnology and Oceanography* 25 (1980): 1034-43; Robin L. Vannote, *et al.*, "The River Continuum Concept," *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 37 (1980): 130-37; J. Bruce Wallace, Sue L. Eggert, Judith L. Meyer, and Jackson R. Webster, "Multiple Trophic Levels of a Stream Linked to Terrestrial Litter Inputs," *Science* 277 (1997): 102-04; Mark S. Wipfli and David P. Gregovich, "Export of Invertebrates and Detritus from Fishless Headwater Streams in Southeastern Alaska: Implications for Downstream Salmonid Production," *Freshwater Biology* 47.5 (2002): 957-69.
- <sup>32</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>33</sup> 547 U.S. at 779-80.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 780.

<sup>35</sup> 33 CFR § 328.3(c); 40 CFR § 230.3(b).

<sup>36</sup> Kevin J. Devito, Alan R. Hill, and Nigel Roulet, “Groundwater-Surface Water Interactions in Headwater Forested Wetlands of the Canadian Shield,” *Journal of Hydrology* 181 (1996): 127-47; Michael A. O’Driscoll and Richard R. Parizek, “The Hydrologic Catchment Area of a Chain of Karst Wetlands in Central Pennsylvania, USA,” *Wetlands* 23 (2003): 171-79; Bradley J. Cook and F. Richard Hauer, “Effects of Hydrologic Connectivity on Water Chemistry, Soils, and Vegetation Structure and Function in an Intermontane Depressional Wetland Landscape,” *Wetlands* 27 (2007): 719-38.

<sup>37</sup> Charles H. Wharton, Wiley M. Kitchens, and Timothy W. Sipe, *The Ecology of Bottomland Hardwood Swamps of the Southeast: A Community Profile* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FWS/OBS-81/37, 1982) 9.

<sup>38</sup> As defined by the National Research Council, “riparian areas” are “transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions, ecological processes, and biota. They are areas through which surface and subsurface hydrology connect waterbodies with their adjacent uplands. They include those portions of terrestrial ecosystems that significantly influence exchanges of energy and matter with aquatic ecosystems (i.e., a zone of influence). Riparian areas are adjacent to perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams, lakes, and estuarine-marine shorelines.” United States, National Research Council, *Riparian Areas: Functions and Strategies for Management* (Washington, D.C. : National Academy Press, 2002) 33.

<sup>39</sup> A “flood plain” is the relatively broad and smooth valley floor that is constructed by an active river and periodically covered with floodwater from that river during intervals of overbank flow. *See also* Theodore H. Schumde, “Floodplain,” *The Encyclopedia of Geomorphology*, ed. Rhodes W. Fairbridge (New York: Reinhold, 1968) 359-62.

<sup>40</sup> William J. Mitsch and James G. Gosselink, “The Value of Wetlands: Importance of Scale and Landscape Setting,” *Ecological Economics* 35.200 (2000): 25-33; Curtis J. Richardson, “Ecological Functions and Human Values in Wetlands: A Framework for Assessing Forestry Impacts,” *Wetlands* 14.1 (1994): 1-9.

<sup>41</sup> Arid West Water Quality Research Project, *Habitat Characterization Study Final Report* (Phoenix: URS Corporation, 2002); William J. Mitsch and James G. Gosselink, *Wetlands*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007) 347.

<sup>42</sup> Robin L. Wellcome, *Fisheries Ecology of Floodplain Rivers* (London: Longman, 1979); Virginia Carter, “Wetland Hydrology, Water Quality, and Associated Functions,” *National Water Summary on Wetland Resources*, eds. Judy D. Fretwell, John S. Williams, and Phillip J. Redman (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, USGS Water-Supply Paper 2425, 1996) 35-48; Alexander D. Huryn and K. Elizabeth Gibbs, “Riparian Sedge Meadows in Maine: A Macroinvertebrate Community Structured by River-Floodplain Interaction,” *Invertebrates in Freshwater Wetlands of North America: Ecology and Management*, eds. Darold Batzer, Russell B. Rader, and Scott A. Wissinger (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), 363-82; Victor S. Lamoureux and Dale M. Madison, “Overwintering Habitats of Radio-Implanted Green Frogs, *Rana clamitans*,” *Journal of Herpetology* 33 (1999): 430-35; Leonard A. Smock, “Riverine Floodplain Forests of the Southeastern United States: Invertebrates in an Aquatic-terrestrial Ecotone,” *Invertebrates in Freshwater Wetlands of North America: Ecology and Management*, eds. Darold Batzer, Russell B. Rader, and Scott A. Wissinger (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999) 137-65; James H. Harding, *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Great Lakes Region* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Ted R. Sommer, Louise Conrad, Gavin O’Leary, Frederick Feyrer, and William C. Harrell, “Spawning and Rearing of Splittail in a Model Floodplain Wetland,” *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* 131 (2002): 966-74; Daniel D. Magoulick, and Robert M. Kobza, “The Role of Refugia for Fishes During Drought: A Review And Synthesis,” *Freshwater Biology* 48 (2003): 1186-98; Joseph L. Ebersole, *et al.*, “Juvenile Coho Salmon Growth and Survival Across Stream Network Seasonal Habitats,” *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* 135 (2006): 681-1697.

<sup>43</sup> United States, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Semipalmated Sandpiper Habitat Model* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2001).

(<[http://www.fws.gov/r5gomp/gom/habitatstudy/metadata/semipalmated\\_sandpiper\\_model.htm](http://www.fws.gov/r5gomp/gom/habitatstudy/metadata/semipalmated_sandpiper_model.htm)>.)

<sup>44</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(3); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(3); *see also* 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.” (c)).

<sup>45</sup> 51 Fed. Reg. at 41,217; 53 Fed. Reg. at 20,765.

<sup>46</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(b); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(t), 40 C.F.R. § 122.2 (“waters of the U.S.” (b)).

<sup>47</sup> 547 U.S. at 782.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 739.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 742.

- 
- <sup>50</sup> *United States v. Appalachian Elec. Power Co.*, 311 U.S. 377, 406 (1940).
- <sup>51</sup> *FPL Energy Marine Hydro L.L.C. v. FERC*, 287 F.3d at 1157 (internal quotation omitted).
- <sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 1157-59.
- <sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 1157.
- <sup>54</sup> *Alaska v. Ahtna, Inc.*, 891 F.2d 1401, 1405 (9th Cir. 1989).
- <sup>55</sup> *Id.* at 1404.
- <sup>56</sup> *Id.* at 1402-03.
- <sup>57</sup> The term "waters of the United States" is defined by regulation to include "all interstate waters including interstate wetlands." 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a)(2), (5); 40 C.F.R. § 230.3(s)(2)(5).
- <sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 779.
- <sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 780.
- <sup>60</sup> See, e.g., United States, EPA 841-B-08-002: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters: Planning & Implementation Steps* (Washington D.C.: U.S. EPA, March 2008); James M. Omernik and Robert G. Bailey, "Distinguishing Between Watersheds and Ecoregions," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 33.5 (1997): 939-40; David R. Montgomery, "Process Domains and the River Continuum," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 35 (1999): 397-410; Thomas C. Winter, "The Concept of Hydrologic Landscapes," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 37 (2001): 335-49; Jill S. Baron, et al., "Meeting Ecological and Societal Needs for Freshwater," *Ecological Applications* 12 (2002): 1247-60; J. David Allan, "Landscapes and Riverscapes: The Influence of Land Use on Stream Ecosystems," *Annual Review of Ecology Evolution and Systematics* 35 (2004): 257-84. United States, U.S. EPA and USDA/ARS Southwest Watershed Research Center, EPA/600/R-08/134, ARS/2330462008: *The Ecological and Hydrological Significance of Ephemeral and Intermittent Streams in the Arid and Semi-arid American Southwest* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. EPA and USDA/ARS Southwest Watershed Research Center, Levick et al., 2008) (Levick, et. al.).
- <sup>62</sup> Peter E. Black, "Watershed Functions," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 33.1 (1997): 1-11.
- <sup>63</sup> 547 U.S. at 775, 779-80.
- <sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 775.
- <sup>65</sup> *Id.* at 780.
- <sup>66</sup> 547 U.S. at 739.
- <sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 742.
- <sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 732-33 n.5 (alteration in original).
- <sup>69</sup> United States, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Memorandum to Assert Jurisdiction for NWP-2007-945 (Marks Creek)" (Washington D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 23 January 2008).
- <sup>70</sup> United States, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, ERDC TR-04-1: *Review of Ordinary High Water Mark Indicators for Delineating Arid Streams in the Southwestern United States* (Hanover, NH: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Robert W. Lichvar and James S. Wakeley, 2004); Lisa L. Ely, "Response of Extreme Floods in the Southwestern United States to Climatic Variations in Holocene," *Geomorphology* 19 (1997): 175-201.
- <sup>71</sup> Ian Reid and Lynne E. Frostick, "Channel Form, Flow and Sediments in Deserts," *Arid Zone Geomorphology: Process, Form and Change in Drylands 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, ed. David S.G. Thomas (Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 1977) 205-29; William L. Graf, "Definition of Floodplains Along Arid-Region Rivers," *Flood Geomorphology*, ed. Victor R. Baker, R. Craig Kochel, and Peter C. Patton (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1988) 231-242.
- <sup>72</sup> Levick, et al. 14-15. (See endnote 60.)
- <sup>73</sup> "Memorandum to Assert Jurisdiction for NWP-2007-945 (Marks Creek)." (See endnote 69.)
- <sup>74</sup> N. Leroy Poff and James V. Ward, "Implications of Streamflow Variability and Predictability for Lotic Community Structure: a Regional Analysis of Streamflow Patterns," *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Science* 46 (1989): 1805-18, 1809.
- <sup>75</sup> Matthew J. Czikowsky and David R. Fitzjarrald, "Evidence of Seasonal Changes in Evapotranspiration in Eastern U.S. Hydrological Records," *Journal of Hydrometeorology* 5 (2004): 974-88.
- <sup>76</sup> 547 U.S. at 770.
- <sup>77</sup> *Id.* at 778-79.
- <sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 781.
- <sup>79</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>80</sup> *Id.*



- 
- <sup>81</sup> 42 Fed. Reg. 37,122, 37,128 (July 19, 1977).
- <sup>82</sup> *Id.* at 37,123.
- <sup>83</sup> 474 U.S. at 133 (quoting S.Rep.No. 414, 92d. Cong., 1st Sess., at 77 (1972)).
- <sup>84</sup> Gomi, *et al.*; Tracie L. Nadeau and Mark C. Rains, "Hydrological Connectivity Between Headwater Streams and Downstream Waters: How Science Can Inform Policy," *Journal of the American Resources Association* 43 (2007): 118-33.; Levick, *et al.* (See endnote 60.)
- <sup>85</sup> Martin Dieterich and Norman H. Anderson, "Dynamics of Abiotic Parameters, Solute Removal and Sediment Retention in Summer-Dry Headwater Stream of Western Oregon," *Hydrobiologia* 379 (1998): 1-15; State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (2003a); S H. Duncan, R E. Bilby, J W. Ward, and J T. Heffner, "Transport of Road-Surface Sediment through Ephemeral Stream Channels," *Water Resources Bulletin* 23.1 (1987): 113-19.
- <sup>86</sup> Bruce J. Peterson, *et al.*, "Control of Nitrogen Export from Watersheds by Headwater Streams," *Science* 292 (2001): 86-90; Judith.L. Meyer and J. Bruce Wallace, "Lost Linkages and Lotic Ecology: Rediscovering Small Streams," *Ecology: Achievement and Challenge*, ed. Malcolm C. Press, Nancy J. Huntly, and Simon Levin (Orlando: Blackwell Science, 2001) 295- 317, 310; Ken J. Hall and Bruce C. Anderson, "The Toxicity and Chemical Composition of Urban Stormwater Runoff," *Canadian Journal of Civil Engineering* 15 (1988): 98-106; David A. Lieb and Robert F. Carline, "Effects of Urban Runoff from a Detention Pond on Water Quality, Temperature and Caged Gammarus Minus (Say) (*Amphipoda*) in a Headwater Stream," *Hydrobiologia* 441.1 (2000): 107-16; Robert E. Pitt, "Receiving Water Impacts Associated with Urban Runoff," *Handbook of Ecotoxicology*, eds. David J. Hoffman, Barnett A. Rattner, G. Allen Burton Jr., and John Cairns Jr. (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2002); Richard B. Alexander, Richard A. Smith, Gregory E. Schwarz, "Effect of Stream Channel Size on the Delivery of Nitrogen to the Gulf of Mexico," *Nature* 403 (2000): 758-61.
- <sup>87</sup> State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (2003a); United States, State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, *Nonpoint Source Impacts on Primary Headwater Streams* (Columbus, OH: Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, 2003) (identified as 2003b) [[http://www.epa.state.oh.us/portals/35/wqs/headwaters/HWH\\_nonpoint\\_jan2003.pdf](http://www.epa.state.oh.us/portals/35/wqs/headwaters/HWH_nonpoint_jan2003.pdf) >]; Wipfli and Gregovich; Winsor H. Lowe and Gene E. Likens, "Moving Headwater Streams to the Head of the Class," *BioScience* 55 (2005):196-97; Mary C. Freeman, Catherine M. Pringle, and C. Rhett Jackson, "Hydrologic Connectivity and the Contribution of Stream Headwaters to Ecological Integrity at Regional Scales," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 43.1 (2007): 5-14. (See endnote 31).
- <sup>88</sup> United States, National Research Council, Committee on the U.S. Geological Survey, *Watershed Research in the U.S. Geological Survey* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997) 4; Frank M. Dunnivant and Elliot Anders, *A Basic Introduction To Pollutant Fate and Transport: An Integrated Approach With Chemistry, Modeling, Risk Assessment, and Environmental Legislation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006).
- <sup>89</sup> Judith L Meyer, *et al.*, "The Contribution of Headwater Streams to Biodiversity in River Networks," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 43.1 (2007): 86-103.
- <sup>90</sup> Gomi, *et al.* 911. (See endnote 30.)
- <sup>91</sup> Kaplan. *et al.*; Vannote, *et al.*; Wallace, *et al.*; Wipfli and Gregovich. (See endnote 31.)
- <sup>92</sup> State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (2003a); State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (2001); Levick, *et al.* (See endnote 31.)
- <sup>93</sup> 547 U.S. at 747.
- <sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 779-80.
- <sup>95</sup> *Id.* at 780
- <sup>96</sup> *Id.* at 783.
- <sup>97</sup> *Id.* at 785.
- <sup>98</sup> *Id.* at 784.
- <sup>99</sup> *Id.* at 784-85.
- <sup>100</sup> *Id.* at 786.
- <sup>101</sup> 531 U.S. at 167.
- <sup>102</sup> 547 U.S. at 759.
- <sup>103</sup> See, e.g., Ralph W. Tiner, "Geographically Isolated Wetlands of the United States," *Wetlands* 23.3(2003): 494-516; Dennis F. Whigham and Thomas E. Jordan, "Isolated Wetlands and Water Quality," *Wetlands* 23.3 (2003): 541-49; Charles R. Goldman and Alexander J. Horne, *Limnology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1983); Paul H. Zedler, "Vernal Pools and the Concept of 'Isolated Wetlands,'" *Wetlands* 23.3 (2003): 597-607; Ellen T. Bauder, Andrew J. Bohonak, Barry Hecht, Marie A. Simovich, David Shaw, David G. Jenkins, and Mark Rains, *A Draft Regional Guidebook for Applying the Hydrogeomorphic Approach to Assessing Wetland Functions of Vernal Pool*

---

*Depressional Wetlands in Southern California* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University, 2009).  
<sup>104</sup> 547 U.S. at 786.



THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

SEP 15 2016

The Honorable Eugene Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
Government Accountability Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I am replying to alleged violations of the Antideficiency Act, as required by section 145.8 of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-11 (2015).

In an opinion dated December 14, 2015, the Government Accountability Office concluded that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency violated 31 U.S.C. § 1341 by using certain social media platforms to educate the public regarding the agency's Clean Water Rule. GAO alleged that the EPA's use of the social media platform "Thunderclap" constituted "covert propaganda" in violation of a statutory prohibition on using appropriated funds for publicity or propaganda purposes. GAO also alleged that inclusion of two links to external websites in an EPA blog post violated a statutory prohibition on using appropriated funds for indirect or "grassroots" lobbying.

The alleged Antideficiency Act violation turns on a disputed question of law. The EPA's Office of General Counsel has thoroughly examined the matter and determined that the agency's efforts to educate the American public regarding the EPA's mission to protect clean water did not violate the Antideficiency Act. In a letter to GAO dated August 7, 2015, the EPA General Counsel, Avi Garbow, articulated the legal basis for the EPA's determination. The GAO opinion includes no case that the EPA had not already considered except a line of inapposite First Amendment cases. Instead, GAO adopts new analytical approaches that are inconsistent with its prior opinions.

The violation of 31 U.S.C. § 1341 is alleged to have occurred on September 29, 2014, and April 7, 2015, in the Environmental Programs and Management account, Treasury Account Symbol 06816/170108.

Thunderclap

GAO alleged that the EPA's use of the social media platform Thunderclap constituted "covert propaganda" in violation of a statutory prohibition on using appropriated funds for publicity or propaganda purposes. The Comptroller General "decisions have defined covert propaganda as material such as editorials or other articles prepared by an agency or its contractors at the behest of the agency and circulated as the ostensible position of parties outside the agency." B-301022 at 4, Mar 10, 2004. Notably, here GAO did not find "covert propaganda" in the EPA's communications with 980 people who signed up for the Thunderclap website to post a message on their social media accounts at an appointed time ("Thunderclap supporters"). GAO acknowledges that the EPA's Thunderclap campaign webpage was "visibly attributed to the EPA as it displayed the agency's profile photo and, under the title, 'by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.'" Yet GAO finds that EPA violated the Antideficiency Act because the message that the Thunderclap supporters ultimately chose to post on their own social media accounts was not attributed to the EPA.

Anyone who signed up for the Thunderclap campaign had the option of using the Thunderclap campaign message (“EPA message”) or customizing the message. The only part of the message that could not be edited was the link to the EPA’s website. This means that any one of the 980 people who signed up for the EPA’s Thunderclap campaign – or even all of them – could have changed the message that was posted to their social media accounts to say *anything*. Specifically, in order to become a Thunderclap supporter, that person had to (1) see a tweet asking that they join the campaign; (2) navigate to the Thunderclap page, read the description of the campaign and choose to participate; (3) read a pop-up page with a draft social media message that they were explicitly encouraged to edit and customize; and (4) affirmatively navigate to the social media site of their choice and authorize the posting of the message. Therefore, the Thunderclap supporters were not mere “conduits of EPA’s message,” as GAO alleges, but rather recipients of information that they could choose to reject, customize or formally adopt.

GAO asserts that its decision regarding the EPA’s use of Thunderclap is distinguishable from its past cases, but the only difference is that GAO uses two entirely different analytical frameworks that cannot be reconciled. The EPA’s use of Thunderclap is directly analogous to another case in which GAO found that the Department of Defense did not violate the publicity or propaganda prohibition. B-316443 at 11, July 21, 2009. In that case, DOD created an outreach program for retired military officers who served as media analysts to which DOD provided talking points and other information. GAO found that because there was no evidence that DOD attempted to conceal its role in influencing the media analysts’ views, and there was no evidence that DOD contracted with or otherwise paid the analysts for their positive commentary, DOD did not violate the publicity or propaganda prohibition. Applying the framework from the DOD decision to the EPA’s situation, there should be no difference in results. As GAO explicitly found here, there is no evidence that the EPA attempted to conceal its role in the creation of the Thunderclap and there is no evidence or allegation that the EPA contracted with or paid the Thunderclap supporters to post a message on their social media accounts.

Furthermore, the publicity or propaganda prohibition provides that “[n]o part of any appropriation” shall be used for publicity or propaganda, and indeed no part of any appropriation was used for the alleged violation here. GAO explicitly found that the Thunderclap page the EPA created “was visibly attributed to EPA, as it displayed the agency’s profile, photo and under the title, ‘by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.’” Like DOD’s multi-million dollar outreach campaign to retired military officers who served as media analysts, which GAO found permissible, the EPA’s expenditure of nominal amounts reaching out to the 980 Thunderclap supporters was permissible. And because the EPA had no control over the message that the Thunderclap supporters might ultimately post on their own time and at their own expense – or indeed whether a message would be posted at all had less than a minimum number of 500 participants signed up – there is no point in time at which the EPA used appropriated funds impermissibly.

#### Hyperlinks

GAO alleged that inclusion of two links to external websites in an EPA blog post violated a statutory prohibition on using appropriated funds for indirect or “grassroots” lobbying. The EPA blog post included hyperlinks to (1) an article on the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)’s website about how brewers need a reliable supply of clean water for their products and (2) a July 2010 article on Surfrider’s website about why surfers get sicker than beachgoers. GAO concluded that the EPA’s use of these hyperlinks constituted an express appeal to the public to contact Congress in opposition to pending legislation that would prevent implementation of the Clean Water Rule because the external webpages also included “action” buttons that linked to other pages on the external websites where readers were urged to contact Congress in connection with the Clean Water Rule legislation.

GAO has previously always required a clear appeal *by an agency* to find a violation. B-325248, Sept. 9, 2014 (“The prohibition is violated where there is evidence of a clear appeal by an agency to the public to contact Members of Congress in support of, or in opposition to, pending legislation.”). Here, the EPA’s blog post did not contain any appeal to the public to contact Congress. In order to get to such an appeal, a member of the public would need to follow the hyperlink to another entity’s webpage and then view the banner information on the side to find buttons to click on to navigate to pages about Congress.

GAO concedes that not “every hyperlink must constitute an endorsement of the linked webpage” and in doing so establishes an unworkable “I know it when I see it” approach rather than relying on its time-tested analysis of whether (1) there is pending legislation and (2) a clear appeal *by an agency* to the public to contact members of Congress in support, or in opposition to that legislation. Under this new context-based approach, GAO’s analysis fundamentally turns on the EPA’s decision to link to environmental groups’ websites during a controversial rulemaking. This is inconsistent with GAO’s long history of narrowly interpreting the grassroots lobbying prohibition to avoid constitutional concerns.

In an attempt to legitimize this new, context-based approach, GAO cites to four First Amendment free speech cases. But the question of whether a governmental entity was engaging in “government speech” or creating a public forum for purposes of First Amendment jurisprudence is not relevant to the critical question of whether *the EPA* made a “clear appeal” to the public to contact Congress in connection with any pending legislation when it included hyperlinks to articles on Surfrider and NRDC’s websites.

With respect to the NRDC website in particular, as GAO acknowledges, the page that the EPA linked to did not mention Congress or legislation at all, but described the NRDC’s partnership with breweries, discussed the importance of the regulations, and called for enforcement of the Clean Water Act. The action button on that page merely stated “Add your voice and help make great beer.” Thus, in order to view a “clear appeal,” the reader would have needed to first click the link on the EPA blog and then click another link on the NRDC webpage. This is too attenuated to constitute a “clear appeal” by an agency under GAO’s prior opinions. To find that agencies cannot link to legitimate articles that educate the public because there may be a link on that page which, if a reader chose to activate it, would take them to another page (that the agency had not directly linked to) containing an appeal to contact Congress is not workable.

Furthermore, with respect to the Surfrider website, neither the EPA (nor GAO) can find any evidence that there was any reference to taking action or contacting Congress on Surfrider’s website at the time of the EPA’s obligation of funds – i.e., when EPA posted its blog with the hyperlink. To find, as GAO does, that an agency is responsible for the future content of a webpage it links to “rather than just the message as it may have existed at a single point in time” is unworkable as a practical matter and unreasonable as a matter of law. The content on webpages changes daily. Further, the relevant obligation of funds in this case occurs when a federal employee takes action to link to the external website. If content is added to another entity’s website in the future, then it is unclear at what point in time GAO believes appropriated funds would be obligated for the purposes of grassroots lobbying in violation of the Antideficiency Act.

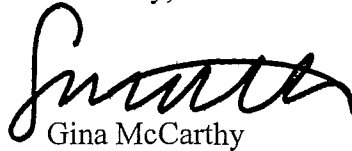
Under GAO’s analysis, individual government employees could be held personally responsible and administratively disciplined for linking to pages that do not contain appeals by other entities to contact Congress at the time they take their action. Even if an agency employee were to spend every moment at work monitoring the hyperlinked entity’s website, an appeal to contact Congress could be added after the employee went home at night that would immediately cause them to be in violation of the

Antideficiency Act. In other words, an agency could obligate appropriated funds to link to a website perfectly legitimately, and, at some point in the future, that *prior* legitimate obligation of funds could suddenly become an Antideficiency Act violation without any further action or obligation of funds by the agency.

In sum, the internet is a hive of interconnected and constantly changing information. To find that federal agencies are responsible not only for the page they link to but also for (1) subsequent links from that external site to other pages and (2) any changes made to that page after they link to it is not supported by GAO's prior case law or any other case law on the Antideficiency Act. Because no violation has occurred, no disciplinary action has been taken and no further steps are required on the part of the EPA.

Identical reports are being submitted to the President, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in accordance with the process set forth in OMB Circular A-11.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina McCarthy", written in a cursive style.

Gina McCarthy

### EO Review Counts - Results

How many rules did OIRA review from 01/01/2014 to 12/31/2014 ?

Number Of Agencies with Results: 24 [View By Page](#) [New Count](#)

Legend for Column Headings

ECON SIG	Economically Significant
NOT ECON SIG	Other than Economically Significant

AGENCY	Number of Reviews			Average Review Time (Days)		ALL
	ECON SIG	NOT ECON SIG	TOTAL	ECON SIG	NOT ECON SIG	
ALL	114	338	452	106	134	127
ALL%	25.22%	74.77%	100%			
<a href="#">USDA</a>	10	19	29	68	92	84
<a href="#">DOC</a>	0	20	20	-	69	69
<a href="#">DOD</a>	3	26	29	64	73	72
<a href="#">ED</a>	5	9	14	67	70	69
<a href="#">DOE</a>	17	3	20	293	421	312
<a href="#">HHS</a>	52	31	83	66	128	89
<a href="#">DHS</a>	2	26	28	36	104	99
<a href="#">HUD</a>	0	8	8	-	165	165
<a href="#">DOI</a>	3	14	17	5	122	101
<a href="#">DOJ</a>	0	11	11	-	144	144
<a href="#">DOL</a>	3	26	29	96	171	163
<a href="#">STATE</a>	0	6	6	-	119	119
<a href="#">DOT</a>	8	27	35	137	217	199
<a href="#">TREAS</a>	1	9	10	71	122	117
<a href="#">VA</a>	2	10	12	11	155	131
<a href="#">EPA</a>	8	43	51	109	239	219
<a href="#">FAR</a>	0	10	10	-	46	46
<a href="#">EEOC</a>	0	2	2	-	43	43
<a href="#">GSA</a>	0	1	1	-	42	42
<a href="#">NASA</a>	0	2	2	-	74	74
<a href="#">NARA</a>	0	2	2	-	78	78
<a href="#">OPM</a>	0	16	16	-	42	42
<a href="#">SBA</a>	0	10	10	-	113	113
<a href="#">SSA</a>	0	7	7	-	82	82



- [Home](#) | [Unified Agenda](#) | [Regulatory Review](#) | [Information Collection Review](#) | [FAQs / Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#)

## EO Review Counts - Results

How many rules did OIRA review from 01/01/2015 to 12/31/2015 ?

Number Of Agencies with Results: 29 [View By Page](#) [New Count](#)

Legend for Column Headings

ECON SIG	Economically Significant
NOT ECON SIG	Other than Economically Significant

AGENCY	Number of Reviews			Average Review Time (Days)		ALL
	ECON SIG	NOT ECON SIG	TOTAL	ECON SIG	NOT ECON SIG	
ALL	130	285	415	84	90	88
ALL%	31.32%	68.67%	100%			
<a href="#">USDA</a>	6	21	27	174	176	176
<a href="#">DOC</a>	0	22	22	-	43	43
<a href="#">DOD</a>	2	26	28	76	53	55
<a href="#">ED</a>	4	8	12	30	36	34
<a href="#">DOE</a>	12	6	18	137	138	137
<a href="#">HHS</a>	48	30	78	59	93	72
<a href="#">DHS</a>	4	16	20	66	47	51
<a href="#">HUD</a>	2	12	14	199	125	135
<a href="#">DOI</a>	6	13	19	56	112	94
<a href="#">DOJ</a>	0	7	7	-	117	117
<a href="#">DOL</a>	9	20	29	90	97	95
<a href="#">STATE</a>	0	5	5	-	67	67
<a href="#">DOT</a>	9	17	26	120	137	131
<a href="#">TREAS</a>	2	6	8	69	49	54
<a href="#">VA</a>	7	3	10	75	95	81
<a href="#">EPA</a>	16	31	47	71	99	89
<a href="#">AID</a>	0	1	1	-	224	224
<a href="#">ATBCB</a>	1	1	2	353	265	309
<a href="#">FAR</a>	1	10	11	80	45	48
<a href="#">EEOC</a>	0	2	2	-	50	50
<a href="#">GSA</a>	0	1	1	-	43	43
<a href="#">NASA</a>	0	1	1	-	66	66
<a href="#">NARA</a>	0	1	1	-	349	349
<a href="#">OGE</a>	0	1	1	-	86	86
<a href="#">OPM</a>	1	7	8	87	26	34
<a href="#">PEACE</a>	0	1	1	-	388	388
<a href="#">PBGC</a>	0	3	3	-	33	33
<a href="#">SBA</a>	0	7	7	-	57	57
<a href="#">SSA</a>	0	6	6	-	45	45



**Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)**  
**Executive Order Reviews Completed between**  
**January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015**

**Environmental Protection Agency**

<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: The 2016 Critical Use Exemption from the Phaseout of Methyl Bromide  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">02/10/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">05/07/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 06/12/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS44</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Proposed Greenhouse Gas Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings Under CAA Section 231 for Aircraft, and ANPRM on the International Process for Reducing Aircraft GHGs and Future Standards  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">03/02/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">06/09/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 07/01/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS31</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> State Implementation Plans: Response to Petition; Findings of Substantial Inadequacy; and SIP Calls to Amend Provisions Applying to Excess Emissions During Periods of Startup, Shutdown and Malfunction  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">03/11/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">05/21/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 06/12/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AR68</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Statutory or Judicial Deadline</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Fuel Efficiency Standards for Medium- and Heavy-Duty Engines and Vehicles - Phase 2  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">03/27/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">06/18/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 07/13/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS16</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Change of Listing Status for Certain Substitutes Under the Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP) Program  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">04/24/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">07/01/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 07/20/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS18</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Standards of Performance for Greenhouse Gas Emissions From New, Modified, and Reconstructed Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">05/07/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">08/02/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 10/23/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AQ91</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR  <b>TITLE:</b> Renewable Fuel Volume Standards, 2014-2016  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">05/07/2015</a>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">05/29/2015</a>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 06/10/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS22</a>  <b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Statutory or Judicial Deadline</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AR19</a></p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p>

**TITLE:** Data Requirements Rule for the One-Hour Sulfur Dioxide Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS)  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 05/30/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 07/24/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/21/2015

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Carbon Pollution Emission Guidelines for Existing Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 06/01/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/02/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/23/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AR33](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Standards of Performance for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 06/22/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/13/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AM08](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Review of Amendments to Emissions Guidelines (EG) for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills (WWW and Cc)  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 06/22/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/13/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/27/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AS23](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Source Determination for Certain Emissions Units in the Oil and Natural Gas Sector  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 06/23/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/17/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 09/18/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AS06](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Emission Standards for New and Modified Sources in the Oil and Natural Gas Sector  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 06/23/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/17/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 09/18/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AS30](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Federal Plan for Regulating Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Electric Generating Units  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/02/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/02/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/23/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AS47](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Control Techniques Guideline for the Oil and Natural Gas Sector  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/21/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 08/17/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 09/18/2015

**RIN:** [2060-ZA22](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Renewable Fuel 2014 Volume Standards  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/22/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 05/07/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AR76](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Withdrawn

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** NESHAP for Brick and Structural Clay Products Manufacturing and NESHAP for Clay Ceramics Manufacturing  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/24/2015  
**COMPLETED:** 09/23/2015  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/26/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AP69](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AQ75</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Petroleum Refinery Sector Risk and Technology Review and New Source Performance Standards		
<b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">08/27/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">09/28/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 12/01/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AP38</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone		
<b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">08/28/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">09/30/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Statutory or Judicial Deadline	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 10/26/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS51</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Update to the Refrigerant Management Requirements Under Section 608 of the Clean Air Act		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">09/05/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">10/14/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 11/09/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AQ48</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Fine Particulate Matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards: State Implementation Plan Requirements		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">09/23/2014</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">02/27/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 03/23/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS60</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program - General Revisions		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">09/25/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">12/16/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 01/15/2016		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS05</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Interstate Transport Rule for the 2008 Ozone NAAQS		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">09/29/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">11/15/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 12/03/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS02</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Treatment of Data Influenced by Exceptional Events - Rule Revisions		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">10/08/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">11/03/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 11/20/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AR34</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Implementation of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone: State Implementation Plan Requirements		
<b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">10/11/2014</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">01/30/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 03/06/2015		
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-ZA21</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Concluded</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Supplemental Exceptional Events Implementation Guidance		
<b>STAGE:</b> Notice	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">10/15/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	
<b>COMPLETED:</b> <a href="#">11/03/2015</a>	<b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change	
<b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-AR	<b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2060-AS76</a>	<b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a>
<b>TITLE:</b> Considering Cost in Appropriate and Necessary Finding for the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS)		
<b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule	<b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No	
<b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <a href="#">10/21/2015</a>	<b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None	

**COMPLETED:** [11/19/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/01/2015

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Renewable Fuel Volume Standards, 2014-2016  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [10/30/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [11/30/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/14/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AS22](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Standards of Performance for New Residential Wood Heaters and New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [12/12/2014](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [02/02/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 03/16/2015

**RIN:** [2060-AP93](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Statutory  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP  
**TITLE:** Pesticides; Certification of Pesticide Applicators  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [04/16/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [08/05/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/24/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ20](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP  
**TITLE:** Pesticides; Agricultural Worker Protection Standard Revisions  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [08/06/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [09/28/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 11/02/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ22](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP  
**TITLE:** Chemical Substances When Manufactured or Processed as Nanoscale Materials; TSCA Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [10/06/2014](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [03/19/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/06/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ54](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OECA  
**TITLE:** NPDES Electronic Reporting Rule  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [07/01/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [09/22/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/22/2015

**RIN:** [2020-AA47](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OLEM  
**TITLE:** Addition of Subsurface Component to the Hazard Ranking System (HRS)  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [06/10/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [12/21/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 02/29/2016

**RIN:** [2050-AG67](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OLEM  
**TITLE:** Additions to List of Section 241.4 Categorical Non-Waste Fuels  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [07/15/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [12/16/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 02/08/2016

**RIN:** [2050-AG74](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER  
**TITLE:** Management Standards for Hazardous Waste Pharmaceuticals  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [03/19/2015](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [08/11/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 09/25/2015

**RIN:** [2050-AG39](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-SWER  <b>TITLE:</b> Hazardous Waste Generator Improvements Rule  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>03/19/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>08/11/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 09/25/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2050-AG70</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-SWER  <b>TITLE:</b> Hazardous Waste Export-Import Revisions Rule  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>05/16/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>09/03/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 10/19/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2050-AG77</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-SWER  <b>TITLE:</b> Revising Underground Storage Tank Regulations - Revisions to Existing Requirements and New Requirements for Secondary Containment and Operator Training  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>09/25/2014</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>04/29/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 07/15/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2050-AG46</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-SWER  <b>TITLE:</b> OSWER Vapor Intrusion Policies and Activities  <b>STAGE:</b> Notice  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>09/25/2014</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>06/04/2015</u></p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2050-ZA08</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Concluded</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> Water Quality Standards Regulatory Revisions  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>01/08/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>07/02/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 08/21/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-AF16</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> Clean Water Rule: Definition of "Waters of the United States"  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>04/06/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>05/26/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 06/29/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-AF30</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> 2014 Effluent Guidelines Program Plan (304m Plan)  <b>STAGE:</b> Notice  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>04/13/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>06/26/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 08/04/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-ZA24</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Steam Electric Power Generating Point Source Category  <b>STAGE:</b> Final Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>07/02/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>09/29/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 11/03/2015</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-AF14</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> Yes  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System General Permit Remand Rule  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>10/17/2015</u>  <b>COMPLETED:</b> <u>12/11/2015</u>  <b>PUBLICATION DATE:</b> 01/06/2016</p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-AF57</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> Judicial  <b>COMPLETED ACTION:</b> Consistent with Change</p>
<p><b>AGENCY:</b> EPA-WATER  <b>TITLE:</b> Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Oil and Gas Extraction Category: Pretreatment Standards for Wastewater From Unconventional Oil and Gas Extraction in the Onshore Subcategory  <b>STAGE:</b> Proposed Rule  <b>RECEIVED DATE:</b> <u>11/19/2014</u></p>	<p><b>RIN:</b> <a href="#">2040-AF35</a>                      <b>Status:</b> <a href="#">Published</a></p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:</b> No  <b>LEGAL DEADLINE:</b> None</p>

**COMPLETED:** [03/30/2015](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/07/2015

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** NPDES Stormwater Multi-Sector General Permit (MSGP)  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [12/22/2014](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [05/18/2015](#)

**RIN:** [2040-ZA21](#)                      **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)**  
**Executive Order Reviews Completed between**  
**January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014**

**Environmental Protection Agency**

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AQ91](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** Standards of Performance for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from New Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units  
**STAGE:** Notice **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [01/16/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED:** [02/05/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 02/26/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AQ86](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** Control of Air Pollution From Motor Vehicles: Tier 3 Motor Vehicle Emission and Fuel Standards  
**STAGE:** Final Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [01/24/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED:** [03/03/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/28/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AR72](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** RFS Renewable Identification Number (RIN) Quality Assurance Program  
**STAGE:** Final Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [02/25/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED:** [07/02/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/18/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AS04](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Listing of Substitutes for Refrigeration and Air Conditioning and Revision of the Venting Prohibition for Certain Refrigerant Substitutes  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [03/07/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED:** [05/15/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/09/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AQ75](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** Petroleum Refinery Sector Risk and Technology Review and NSPS  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [03/11/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED:** [05/15/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 06/30/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AQ11](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Ferroalloys Production  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [03/26/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED:** [09/04/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/06/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AR33](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**TITLE:** Carbon Pollution Guidelines for Existing Power Plants: Emission Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Existing Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule **ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [03/31/2014](#) **LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED:** [06/02/2014](#) **COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 06/18/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR **RIN:** [2060-AR88](#) **Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Carbon Pollution Standards for Modified & Reconstructed Power Plants: Standards of Performance for GHG Emissions From Modified & Reconstructed Stationary Sources: Electric Utility Generating Units

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [04/21/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [06/02/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 06/18/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AP43](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Revision--Health and Environmental Protection Standards for Uranium and Thorium Mill Tailings and Uranium In Situ Leaching Processing Facilities

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [04/22/2014](#)

**REVIEW EXTENDED**

**COMPLETED:** [09/26/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/26/2015

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AR21](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** RFS Pathways II and Amendments to the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS2)

**STAGE:** Final Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [04/28/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [07/02/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/18/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AS18](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Change of Listing Status for Certain Substitutes Under the Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP) Program

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [05/15/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [07/09/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/06/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AP26](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) Subpart W: Standards for Radon Emissions From Operating Uranium Mill Tailings: Review

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [06/10/2013](#)

**REVIEW EXTENDED**

**COMPLETED:** [01/13/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 05/02/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AM08](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Standards for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [06/10/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [06/30/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/17/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Statutory, Judicial

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AR80](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: The 2014 and 2015 Critical Use Exemption From the Phaseout of Methyl Bromide

**STAGE:** Final Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [06/12/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [07/07/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/31/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AS23](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** Review of Amendments to Emissions Guidelines (EG) for Municipal Solid Waste Landfills (WWW and Cc)

**STAGE:** Prerule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [06/23/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [06/30/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 07/17/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AR68](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**TITLE:** State Implementation Plans: Response to Petition; Findings of Substantial Inadequacy; and SIP Calls to Amend Provisions Applying to Excess Emissions During Periods of Startup, Shutdown and Malfunction

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** [07/23/2014](#)

**COMPLETED:** [09/04/2014](#)

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 09/17/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR

**RIN:** [2060-AP93](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)



**TITLE:** Standards of Performance for New Residential Wood Heaters, New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces, and New Residential Masonry Heaters  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/26/2013  
**COMPLETED:** 01/02/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 02/03/2014  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Statutory  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Adjustments to the Allowance System for Controlling HCFC Production, Import, and Export for 2015-2019  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/26/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 09/18/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/28/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AR04](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Notice of Availability for Federal Guidance Report No. 14: Radiation Protection Guidance for Diagnostic and Interventional X-Ray Procedures  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/31/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 10/22/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-ZA20](#)  
**Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** NESHAP for Brick and Structural Clay Products Manufacturing and NESHAP for Clay Ceramics Manufacturing  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 09/26/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 11/20/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/18/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AP69](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Carbon Pollution Emission Guidelines for Existing Stationary Sources: EGUs in Indian Country and U.S. Territories  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 09/29/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 10/28/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 11/04/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AR33](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 10/08/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 11/25/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/17/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AP38](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Withdr.of the Prior Deter. or Presump. That Compl. w/CAIR or the NOx SIP Call Const. RACT or RACM for the 97 8-Hr Ozone & 97Fine Part. NAAQS; & Rev. to RACT Guid. & RFP Req. for the 97Fine Part. NAAQS  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 11/14/2011  
**COMPLETED:** 04/11/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 06/09/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AQ07](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: The 2014 Critical Use Exemption From the Phaseout of Methyl Bromide  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 12/11/2013  
**COMPLETED:** 01/24/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 03/07/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AR80](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-AR  
**TITLE:** Data Requirements Rule for the 1-Hour Sulfur Dioxide Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS)  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 12/20/2013  
**COMPLETED:** 03/21/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 05/13/2014  
**RIN:** [2060-AR19](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP  
**TITLE:** Hydraulic Fracturing Chemicals and Mixtures  
**STAGE:** Prerule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 03/13/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 05/08/2014  
**RIN:** [2070-AJ93](#)  
**Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 05/19/2014

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Significant New Use Rule for Glymes

**STAGE:** Final Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/26/2014

**COMPLETED:** 11/25/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/16/2014

**RIN:** [2070-AJ52](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Significant New Use Rule (SNUR); Benzidine-Based Dyes; Di-n-pentyl phthalate (DnPP); and Alkanes, C12-13, Chloro

**STAGE:** Final Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/26/2014

**COMPLETED:** 12/08/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/29/2014

**RIN:** [2070-AJ73](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Significant New Use Rule for Toluene Diisocyanates (TDI) and Related Compounds

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/26/2014

**COMPLETED:** 12/15/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/15/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ91](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Long-Chain Perfluoroalkyl Carboxylate and Perfluoroalkyl Sulfonate Chemical Substances; Significant New Use Rule

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 08/26/2014

**COMPLETED:** 12/15/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/21/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ99](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Lead-Based Paint Program; Amendment to Jurisdictions and Renovator Refresher Training Requirements

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 09/17/2014

**COMPLETED:** 12/19/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/14/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AK02](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Pesticides; Agricultural Worker Protection Standard Revisions

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 10/25/2013

**COMPLETED:** 02/20/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 03/19/2014

**RIN:** [2070-AJ22](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OCSP

**TITLE:** Nanoscale Materials; Reporting Under TSCA Section 8(a)

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 11/22/2010

**COMPLETED:** 10/06/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/06/2015

**RIN:** [2070-AJ54](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Withdrawn

**AGENCY:** EPA-OECA

**TITLE:** NPDES Electronic Reporting Rule

**STAGE:** Notice

**RECEIVED DATE:** 04/12/2014

**COMPLETED:** 11/18/2014

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 12/01/2014

**RIN:** [2020-AA47](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-OEI

**TITLE:** Modification of Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Reporting Requirements Primarily Associated With Metal Mining

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule

**RECEIVED DATE:** 05/13/2011

**COMPLETED:** 03/07/2014

**RIN:** [2025-AA11](#)

**Status:** [Concluded](#)

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No

**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None

**COMPLETED ACTION:** Withdrawn

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER

**TITLE:** Rulemaking on the Definition of Solid Waste

**RIN:** [2050-AG62](#)

**Status:** [Published](#)

**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 03/15/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 11/17/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/13/2015

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER  
**TITLE:** Risk Management Program Request for Information  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 05/22/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 07/24/2014

**RIN:** [2050-ZA07](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER  
**TITLE:** Revisions to the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan; Subpart J Product Schedule Listing Requirements  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 07/22/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 12/18/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 01/22/2015

**RIN:** [2050-AE87](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER  
**TITLE:** Additions to List Section 241.4 Categorical Non-Waste Fuels  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 09/07/2013  
**REVIEW EXTENDED**  
**COMPLETED:** 03/11/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/14/2014

**RIN:** [2050-AG74](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-SWER  
**TITLE:** Standards for the Management of Coal Combustion Residuals Generated by Commercial Electric Power Producers  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 10/27/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 12/19/2014  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/17/2015

**RIN:** [2050-AE81](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Small Vessel General Permit for Discharges Incidental to the Normal Operation of Vessels Less than 79 Feet  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 02/08/2013  
**COMPLETED:** 06/11/2014

**RIN:** [2040-ZA22](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** 2012 Implementation Guidance on FAFO Regulations: CAFOs that Discharge (Pork Producer Guidance)  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 03/06/2012  
**COMPLETED:** 07/03/2014

**RIN:** [2040-ZA16](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Withdrawn

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Revisions to the Nov. 22, 2002 Memorandum "Establishing TMDL Wasteload Allocations (WLAs) for Stormwater Sources and NPDES Permit Requirements Based on those WLAs"  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 03/13/2012  
**COMPLETED:** 11/24/2014

**RIN:** [2040-ZA17](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Final 2012 and Preliminary 2014 Effluent Guidelines Program Plans  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 05/17/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 08/27/2014

**RIN:** [2040-ZA18](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List 4  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** 05/17/2014  
**COMPLETED:** 08/27/2014

**RIN:** [2040-ZA23](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Effluent Guidelines and Standards for the Dental Point Source Category

**RIN:** [2040-AF26](#) **Status:** [Published](#)

**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [05/29/2014](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [09/15/2014](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 10/22/2014

**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Criteria and Standards for Cooling Water Intake Structures  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [07/30/2013](#)  
**REVIEW EXTENDED**  
**COMPLETED:** [05/19/2014](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/15/2014

**RIN:** [2040-AE95](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** Judicial  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Statutory or Judicial Deadline

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES): Use of Sufficiently Sensitive Test Methods for Permit Applications and Reporting  
**STAGE:** Final Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [08/08/2011](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [06/04/2014](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 08/19/2014

**RIN:** [2040-AC84](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Drinking Water: Regulatory Determinations for Contaminants on the Third Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List (CCL 3)  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [08/31/2013](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [04/14/2014](#)

**RIN:** [2040-ZA20](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Definition of "Waters of the United States" Under the Clean Water Act  
**STAGE:** Proposed Rule  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [09/17/2013](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [03/24/2014](#)  
**PUBLICATION DATE:** 04/21/2014

**RIN:** [2040-AF30](#) **Status:** [Published](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** Yes  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change

**AGENCY:** EPA-WATER  
**TITLE:** Permitting Guidance for Oil and Gas Hydraulic Fracturing Activities Using Diesel Fuels  
**STAGE:** Notice  
**RECEIVED DATE:** [09/21/2013](#)  
**COMPLETED:** [02/05/2014](#)

**RIN:** [2040-ZA15](#) **Status:** [Concluded](#)  
**ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT:** No  
**LEGAL DEADLINE:** None  
**COMPLETED ACTION:** Consistent with Change



October 1, 2014

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Maj. Gen. John Peabody  
Deputy Commanding General  
Civil and Emergency Operations  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Attn: CECW-CO-R 441 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

**Re: Definition of “Waters of the United States” Under the Clean Water Act<sup>1</sup>**

Dear Administrator McCarthy and Major General Peabody:

The Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration (Advocacy) submits these comments regarding the proposed rule to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, and together, “the agencies”). Advocacy believes that EPA and the Corps have improperly certified the proposed rule under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) because it would have direct, significant effects on small businesses. Advocacy recommends that the agencies withdraw the rule and that the EPA conduct a Small Business Advocacy Review panel before proceeding any further with this rulemaking.

**The Office of Advocacy and the Regulatory Flexibility Act**

Advocacy was established pursuant to Pub. L. 94-305 to represent the views of small entities before federal agencies and Congress. Advocacy is an independent office within SBA, so our views do not necessarily reflect those of SBA or the Administration. The RFA, as amended by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA),<sup>2</sup> requires small entities to be considered in the federal rulemaking process. The RFA requires federal agencies to consider the impact of their proposed rules on small businesses. When a rule is expected to have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities, agencies must evaluate the impact, consider less

<sup>1</sup> Definition of Waters of the United States Under the Clean Water Act, 79 *Fed. Reg.* 22188 (April 21, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Pub. L. 104-121, Title II, 110 Stat. 857 (1996) (codified in various sections of 5 U.S.C. §601 et seq.).

burdensome alternatives, and in the case of EPA, convene a Small Business Advocacy Review panel.<sup>3</sup> The RFA directs Advocacy to monitor agency compliance with the RFA. To this end, Advocacy may file written comments reflecting small business concerns about the impact of a rulemaking.<sup>4</sup> Because of small business concerns with the proposed rule, Advocacy held a roundtable on July 21, 2014 and has heard from numerous small entities in many industries.

## **Background**

The Clean Water Act (CWA) was enacted in 1972 to “restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation’s waters.”<sup>5</sup> The CWA accomplishes this by eliminating the “discharge of pollutants into the navigable waters.”<sup>6</sup> The CWA defines “navigable waters” as “the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas.”<sup>7</sup> Existing regulations currently define “waters of the United States” as traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, all other waters that could affect interstate or foreign commerce, impoundments of waters of the United States, tributaries, the territorial seas, and adjacent wetlands.<sup>8</sup>

The CWA requires a permit in order to discharge pollutants, dredged, or fill materials into any body of water deemed to be a “water of the United States.”<sup>9</sup> The EPA generally administers these permits, but EPA and the Corps jointly administer and enforce certain permit programs under the Act.<sup>10</sup>

The extent of the Act’s jurisdiction has been the subject of much litigation and regulatory action, including three Supreme Court decisions. Actions of the Court have expanded and contracted the definition, especially regarding wetlands and smaller bodies of water.

- In 1985, the Supreme Court determined that adjacent wetlands may be included in the regulatory definition of “waters of the United States.”<sup>11</sup>
- In 2001, the Court held that migratory birds’ use of isolated “nonnavigable” intrastate ponds was not sufficient cause to extend federal jurisdiction under the CWA.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2006, the Supreme Court considered whether wetlands near ditches or man-made drains that eventually empty into traditional navigable waters were

---

<sup>3</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 603, 605.

<sup>4</sup> The Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111-240 § 1601) also requires agencies to give every appropriate consideration to Advocacy’s written comments on a proposed rule. This response must be included in an explanation or discussion accompanying the final rule’s publication in the *Federal Register* unless the agency certifies that the public interest is not served by doing so.

<sup>5</sup> 33 U.S.C. § 1251(a) (1972).

<sup>6</sup> Id. at § 1251(a)(1).

<sup>7</sup> Id. at § 1362(7).

<sup>8</sup> 33 C.F.R. § 328.3(a); 40 C.F.R. §230.3(s).

<sup>9</sup> 33 U.S.C. §§ 1311(a), 1342, 1344.

<sup>10</sup> Id. at § 1344.

<sup>11</sup> *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes*, 474 U.S. 121, 134-135 (1985).

<sup>12</sup> *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (SWANCC)*, 531 U.S. 159, 174 (2001).

considered “waters of the United States.”<sup>13</sup> Justice Scalia, writing for the plurality, determined that “*only* those wetlands with a continuous surface connection to bodies that are ‘waters of the United States’ [ . . . ] are ‘adjacent to’ such waters and covered by the Act.”<sup>14</sup> Justice Kennedy concurred in the judgment, but concluded that the Corps must establish the existence of a “significant nexus” when it asserted jurisdiction over wetlands adjacent to non-navigable tributaries.<sup>15</sup>

The courts have left much uncertainty regarding what constitutes a “water of the United States.” Such uncertainty has made it difficult for small entities to know which waters are subject to jurisdiction and CWA permitting.

To address this uncertainty, the EPA and Corps proposed this rule which would revise the regulatory definition of “waters of the United States” and would apply to all sections of the Clean Water Act. The proposed rule defines “waters of the United States” within the framework of the CWA as the following seven categories:

- All waters which are currently used, were used in the past, or may be susceptible to use in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide;
- All interstate waters, including interstate wetlands;
- The territorial seas;
- All impoundments of a traditional navigable water, interstate water, the territorial seas or a tributary;
- All tributaries of a traditional navigable water, interstate water, the territorial seas or impoundment;
- All waters, including wetlands, adjacent to a traditional navigable water, interstate water, the territorial seas, impoundment or tributary; and
- On a case-specific basis, other waters, including wetlands, provided that those waters alone, or in combination with other similarly situated waters, including wetlands, located in the same region, have a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water, interstate water or the territorial seas.<sup>16</sup>

The proposed rule defines several terms for the first time: “neighboring,” “riparian area,” “floodplain,” “tributary,” and “significant nexus”; and it clarifies the terms, “adjacent” and “wetlands.”<sup>17</sup> The rule leaves the regulatory definitions of “traditional navigable waters,” “interstate waters,” “the territorial seas,” and “impoundments” unchanged.<sup>18</sup>

### **Regulatory Flexibility Act Requirements**

The RFA states that “[w]henever an agency is required by section 553 of this title, or any other law, to publish general notice of proposed rulemaking for any proposed rule, or

---

<sup>13</sup> *Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715, 729 (2006).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 742.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 779 (Kennedy, J., concurring).

<sup>16</sup> 79 *Fed. Reg.* at 22,198.

<sup>17</sup> See *Id.* at 22,263, for the complete definitions of “adjacent,” “neighboring,” “riparian area,” “floodplain,” “tributary,” “wetlands,” and “significant nexus.”

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

publishes a notice of proposed rulemaking for an interpretative rule involving the internal revenue laws of the United States, the agency shall prepare and make available for public comment an initial regulatory flexibility analysis [IRFA]. Such analysis shall describe the impact of the proposed rule on small entities.”<sup>19</sup>

Under Section 609(b) of the RFA, EPA is required to conduct small business advocacy review panels, often referred to as SBREFA panels, when it is unable to certify that a rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses. SBREFA panels consist of representatives of the rulemaking agency, the Office of Management and Budget’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), and the Chief Counsel for Advocacy. SBREFA panels give small entity representatives (SERs) a chance to understand an upcoming proposed rule and provide meaningful input to help the agency comply with the RFA. SERs help the panel understand the ramifications of the proposed rule and significant alternatives to it.

Section 605(b) of the RFA allows an agency to certify that a rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities in lieu of preparing an IRFA.<sup>20</sup> When certifying, the agency must provide a factual basis for the certification.<sup>21</sup> In the current case, the agencies have certified that revising the definition of “waters of the United States” will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses.

### **The Proposed Rule Has Been Certified in Error**

Advocacy believes that the agencies have improperly certified this rule. Advocacy, and the small businesses we have spoken to, believe that

- The agencies used an incorrect baseline for determining their obligations under the RFA;
- The rule imposes costs directly on small businesses; and
- The rule will have a significant economic impact on small businesses.

#### **A. The Agencies Use the Incorrect Baseline for its Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification**

Advocacy believes that the agencies used the wrong baseline for their RFA certification. In certifying the rule, the agencies state that, “This proposed rule is narrower than that under the existing regulations...fewer waters will be subject to the CWA under the proposed rule than are subject to regulation under the existing regulations.”<sup>22</sup> On this

---

<sup>19</sup> 5 U.S.C. §603.

<sup>20</sup> 5 U.S.C. §605.

<sup>21</sup> Id.

<sup>22</sup> Id.



basis the agencies conclude that, “This action will not affect small entities to a greater degree than the existing regulations.”<sup>23</sup>

The “existing regulations” that the agencies refer to in this reasoning is the 1986 rule defining the scope of waters of the United States. Compared to the 1986 definition, the proposed changes represent a narrowing of coverage. However, in the economic analysis accompanying the rule, the agencies assess the regulation vis-à-vis current practice and determine that the rule increases the CWA’s jurisdiction by approximately 3 percent.<sup>24</sup> The agencies’ certification and economic analysis contradict each other.

Advocacy believes that the proper baseline from which to assess the rule’s impact is current practice. Guidance from the Office of Management and Budget’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) substantiates this view. OIRA’s Circular A-4 provides guidance to federal agencies on the development of regulatory analysis.<sup>25</sup> It states that “The baseline should be the best assessment of the way the world would look absent the proposed action.”<sup>26</sup> The 1986 regulation has been abrogated by several Supreme Court cases and is no longer in use.<sup>27</sup> The Corps and EPA also issued a guidance document in 2008 which sought to bring jurisdictional determinations in line with these Supreme Court cases.<sup>28</sup> The 1986 regulation does not represent the current method for determining jurisdiction and has not served that purpose for more than thirteen years. Using an obsolete baseline improperly diminishes the effects of this rule. Advocacy agrees with the agencies’ economic analysis that uses current practice as the appropriate baseline for evaluating the rule.

## **B. The Rule Imposes Costs Directly on Small Businesses**

The second basis for the certification appears to be the agencies’ position that the impact on small businesses will be indirect, hence not requiring an initial regulatory flexibility analysis or a SBAR panel.<sup>29</sup> EPA cites *Mid-Tex Electric Cooperative, Inc., v. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission*<sup>30</sup> and *American Trucking Associations, Inc., v. EPA*<sup>31</sup> in support of their certification.<sup>32</sup> Advocacy believes that the agencies’ reliance on *Mid-Tex* and *American Trucking* is misplaced because the proposed rule will have direct effects on small businesses.

---

<sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>24</sup> Id.

<sup>25</sup> Office of Management and Budget, *Circular A-4*, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars\\_a004\\_a-4/#e](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a004_a-4/#e) (September 17, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> See *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (SWANCC)*, 531 U.S. 159, 174 (2001); *Rapanos v. United States*, 547 U.S. 715, 729 (2006).

<sup>28</sup> Clean Water Act Jurisdiction Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s Decision in *Rapanos v. United States* and *Carabell v. United States*, December 2, 2008, <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/CWAwaters.cfm> .

<sup>29</sup> 79 *Fed. Reg.* at 22,220.

<sup>30</sup> *Mid-Tex Electric Cooperative, Inc. v. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)*, 773 F.2d 327, 342 (D.C. Cir. 1985).

<sup>31</sup> *American Trucking Associations v. EPA*, 175 F.3d 1027 (D.C. Cir. 1999).

<sup>32</sup> 79 *Fed. Reg.* at 22,220.

In *Mid-Tex*,<sup>33</sup> the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued regulations instructing generating utilities how to include costs of construction work in their rates. Although the generating utilities were large businesses, their customers included small entities, to whom they may or may not have been able to pass on these costs through any rate changes.<sup>34</sup> The issue raised in this case was whether the agency had improperly certified the rule because it failed to consider the impact on the small business customers. The court concluded that an agency is required to file an IRFA only in cases where a regulation directly affects small businesses;<sup>35</sup> if it does not, an agency may properly certify.

In *Mid-Tex*, the proposed regulation's applicability to small businesses is akin to the FERC regulation's applicability to the generating utilities themselves, not their customers, as EPA seems to believe. Generating utilities were an intervening actor between the regulatory agency and the small business customers; the utilities had a substantial amount of discretion as to whether they would pass on their construction costs to their small entity customers and, if so, how much of those costs they would pass on.

Such is not the case with this rule. First, there is no intervening regulated actor. In *Mid-Tex*, the generating utilities were the entities regulated and bound by FERC guidelines, and it was not certain that they would pass on the costs of the new guidelines to their small business customers. In the current case, the Clean Water Act and the revised definition proposed in this rule directly determine permitting requirements and other obligations. It is unquestionable that small businesses will continue to seek permits under the Clean Water Act. Therefore they will be subject to the application of the proposed definition and the impacts arising from its application.

Second, the rule defines the scope of jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act without any discretion left to any entity or intermediary. The rule does not, for example, set a goal for which types or how many waters must be included in jurisdiction, leaving the Corps or states to determine the exact definition of waters of the United States in particular instances. This rule establishes the definition and all small entities are bound by it.

In *American Trucking*,<sup>36</sup> the EPA's certification of rules to establish a primary national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) for ozone was challenged. The basis of the EPA's certification was that the NAAQS regulated small entities indirectly through state implementation plans. The rules gave states broad discretion to determine how to achieve compliance with the NAAQS.<sup>37</sup> The rules *required* EPA to approve any state plan that met the standards; it could not reject a plan based upon its view of the wisdom of a state's choices.<sup>38</sup> Under these circumstances, the court concluded that EPA had properly

---

<sup>33</sup> 773 F.2d at 342.

<sup>34</sup> Id. The generating utilities were not required to pass on the rate increases and in some cases were limited by state law in how much of the rate increase could be passed on to customers.

<sup>35</sup> Id.

<sup>36</sup> 175 F.3d 1027 (D.C. Cir. 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Id.

<sup>38</sup> Id. at 1044.

certified because any impacts to small entities would flow from the individual states' actions and thus be indirect.<sup>39</sup>

EPA's proposed rule is distinguishable from the regulations at issue in *American Trucking*. The states were intervening actors with broad discretion regarding how to implement the federal standards. The EPA rules only told the states what the goal was; the states were left to develop the plans that would implement those goals and thereby impose impacts on small businesses.<sup>40</sup> In the current case, the agencies are not defining a goal nor are they authorizing any third party to determine the means and methods for reaching the goal. To the contrary, the agencies are defining the term governing the applicability of their own CWA programs. A change in the scope of the definition of "waters of the United States" necessarily leads to an increase in the scope and impact of the CWA since the programs thereunder only apply to waters that fall within this definition. The agencies, not a third party, determine whether a given body of water is within the jurisdiction of the requirements of the Clean Water Act and therefore subject to it.

Small businesses have also provided specific examples of how this rule will directly impact them. For example, during a May hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business, Jack Field of the Lazy JF Cattle Co. testified that the rule would essentially eliminate an exemption for normal farming practices that he relies upon to do things such as building a fence to control his grazing cattle.<sup>41</sup> The proposed rule would eliminate the exemption for farmers whose actions do not comply with Natural Resources Conservation Services standards.<sup>42</sup>

Small entities in the utility industry have expressed that this proposed rule could eliminate the advantages of Nationwide Permit 12 – Utility Line Projects (NWP 12). Utility companies use NWP 12 to construct and maintain roads that provide access to the utility grid. Under NWP 12 a "single and complete" project that results in less than a ½ acre loss of waters of the U.S. is allowed to proceed under NWP 12 rather than obtain an individual CWA permit.<sup>43</sup> Currently, each crossing of a road over a water of the U.S. is treated as a "single and complete" project. The proposed rule creates large areas in which NWP 12 could no longer be used at all. Under this proposed rule waters in the same riparian area or floodplain all become adjacent waters and therefore waters of the U.S. If all of the waters in the riparian area or floodplain are treated as one interconnected water of the U.S. it would be virtually impossible for small utility companies to use NWP 12. Small utilities would need to apply for the more costly and time consuming individual

---

<sup>39</sup> Id. at 1045.

<sup>40</sup> Id. at 1044.

<sup>41</sup> Testimony of Jack Field, Owner Lazy JF Cattle Co. at U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business Hearing entitled "Will EPA's Waters of the United States Rule Drown Small Businesses?", May 29, 2014 at <http://smallbusiness.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=373099>.

<sup>42</sup> 79 Fed. Reg. at 22,194; Notice of Availability Regarding the Exemption From Permitting Under Section 404(f)(1)(A) of the Clean Water Act to Certain Agricultural Conservation Practices, 79 Fed. Reg. 22,276.

<sup>43</sup> Reissuance of Nationwide Permits, 77 Fed. Reg. 10195 (February 21, 2012).

permits. This is a direct cost imposed solely as a result of the changes to the definition of the term “waters of the United States” proposed in this rule.

These examples, as well as comments that Advocacy has received from small entities in other industries, demonstrate that the impact of the proposed rule will be direct. Therefore, the agencies are required to measure the impacts of the rule and to determine whether those impacts are significant for a substantial number of small entities.

### **C. The Rule Will Have a Significant Economic Impact on Small Businesses**

The economic analysis clearly indicates that this rule is likely to have a significant economic effect on small businesses. In the analysis, the agencies examine the anticipated changes to permitting under CWA Section 404 (development projects that discharge dredge or fill materials into waters of the U.S.). They find that in current practice 98 percent of streams and 98.5 percent of wetlands meet the definition of waters of the U.S.;<sup>44</sup> under the revised definition these figures rise to 100 percent.<sup>45</sup> They find zero percent of “other waters” (the seventh category in the revised definition) to be covered in current practice, but the revised definition would cover 17 percent of this category.<sup>46</sup> The agencies evidence an understanding that this increase in jurisdiction will lead to greater costs stating, “A change in assertion of CWA jurisdiction could result in indirect costs of implementation of the CWA 404 program: a greater share of development projects would intersect with jurisdictional waters, thus requiring the sponsors of those additional projects to obtain and comply with CWA 404 permits.”<sup>47</sup>

The agencies estimate that CWA 404 permit costs would increase between \$19.8 million and \$52.0 million dollars annually, and they estimate that section 404 mitigation costs would rise between \$59.7 million and \$113.5 million annually.<sup>48</sup> These amounts do not reflect additional possible cost increases associated with other Clean Water Act programs, such as Section 402 permitting or Section 311 oil spill prevention plans.<sup>49</sup> The agencies further state that the economic analysis done with respect to the 404 program increase is likely not representative of the changes that may occur with respect to 402 and 311 permitting,<sup>50</sup> leaving small businesses without a clear idea of the additional costs they are likely to incur for these Clean Water Act programs.

The economic analysis also singles out a particular class of businesses potentially affected by the revised definition, yet fails to evaluate any of these potential effects. EPA acknowledges that “a large portion of traditional 402 permit holders are located nearby large water sources to support their operations.”<sup>51</sup> The agencies do not identify how many

---

<sup>44</sup> Economic Analysis of Proposed Revised Definition of Waters of the United States, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 11 (March 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Id.

<sup>46</sup> Id.

<sup>47</sup> Id. at 13. Advocacy disagrees with the agencies’ assertion that this cost is indirect (see above).

<sup>48</sup> Id. at 16.

<sup>49</sup> Id. at 12.

<sup>50</sup> Id.

<sup>51</sup> Id.

of these businesses may be small nor do they discuss the expected impact of this rule on them. Yet this proposed rule would directly affect those small businesses that may be located next to large water sources and which fall within the 3 percent of waters that will be newly included in the definition “waters of the U.S.”

Concerns raised by small businesses as well as the agencies’ own economic analysis both indicate that small businesses will see a cost increase as a result of the revised definition. The EPA and the Corps have obligations under OMB guidance, and the RFA to measure and communicate this increase. Their certification of no small business impact is inappropriate in light of this information. Because of this probable small business impact, the RFA requires the agencies to complete an IRFA and a SBAR panel.

### **Conclusion**

Advocacy and small businesses are extremely concerned about the rule as proposed. The rule will have a direct and potentially costly impact on small businesses. The limited economic analysis which the agencies submitted with the rule provides ample evidence of a potentially significant economic impact. Advocacy advises the agencies to withdraw the rule and conduct a SBAR panel prior to promulgating any further rule on this issue.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact Kia Dennis, Assistant Chief Counsel, at [REDACTED]

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Winslow Sargeant, Ph.D.

Chief Counsel for Advocacy

/s/ Kia Dennis

Assistant Chief Counsel

/s/ Stephanie Fekete

Legal Fellow