The assault on clean water threatens North Carolina.

DESPITE THE FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY OF CLEAN WATER, the previous administration dismantled the longstanding safeguards of the Clean Water Act, which has kept our nation’s waters clean for nearly 50 years. This bedrock environmental law is a central tool used by state and local governments to shield and protect clean water needed for healthy communities, businesses, and families. Without its protections, polluted waters threaten North Carolina’s local economies, communities, and way of life. It is urgent that EPA restore strong clean water protections.

Allowing open dumping into upstream waters spells trouble for everyone downstream. Pollution dumped by industry flows from smaller streams into our rivers and lakes, across state lines and downriver, contaminating waters used by families and communities for drinking and recreation. The best way to protect clean water is to stop harmful pollution at its source, before it reaches our waterways.

The Trump administration’s removal of federal clean water protections in 2020* left up to half of the nation’s stream miles,1 over 45 million wetland acres,2 and many important public recreational lakes and drinking water reservoirs3 vulnerable to pollution and destruction by industry. In the South, the removal risks the drinking water sources for over 35 million people, or three out of four Southerners.4

WHAT’S AT STAKE IN NORTH CAROLINA?
The prior administration’s removal of federal protections threatens drinking water sources for 217 million Americans,5 including the drinking water for three out of every five North Carolinians.6 Under the rule, supported by industrial polluters who continue to litigate to uphold it, more than 49,000 miles of streams that flow into North Carolina’s rivers, lakes, and coastal waters are at risk.7 Hyco Lake and Sutton Lake are particularly vulnerable to pollution because the prior administration removed protections from lakes developed as cooling water reservoirs for utilities.

Millions of acres of wetlands in North Carolina that provide flood protection, filter pollution, and provide essential wildlife habitat are also at risk under the 2020 rule.8 In the Neuse and Cape Fear river basins alone, over 800,000 acres of wetlands are vulnerable because of the rule.9

ECONOMIC IMPACTS FOR NORTH CAROLINA
By EPA’s own estimates, the rule put at risk at least $339 million and up to $572 million annually in benefits to Americans, including the value of streams’ and wetlands’ capacity to reduce flooding, filter pollution, provide wildlife habitat, and support hunting and fishing.10 Protecting small streams and wetlands sustains fish and wildlife, and North Carolina’s vibrant recreational industry. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that in 2011

Clean water is big business in North Carolina.

$3.3 billion spent on wildlife recreation

$1.8 billion from local breweries

$1.5 billion spent on fishing

$1.97 billion from local wineries
$3.3 billion was spent on wildlife recreation in North Carolina, including $1.5 billion on fishing, and more than 3.5 million people participated in wildlife related recreational activities in North Carolina.\(^{11}\) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that, in 2015, North Carolina had the 2nd highest participation of recreational saltwater anglers in the U.S. with 1.4 million anglers.\(^{12}\)

North Carolina’s coastal counties are reliant on clean water. Collectively, North Carolina’s ocean economy contributes $2.1 billion to our state’s value and supports 43,385 jobs annually. The seafood industry accounts for $188 million of that total value and supports 1,300 livelihoods.\(^{13}\)

In 2015, over 42 million pounds of shellfish were brought to shore by commercial fishermen, generating $62,324,000 for North Carolina’s economy. North Carolina had the highest commercial landings revenue and volume in the South Atlantic region with 66 million pounds of fish caught and $95 million in revenue.\(^{14}\)

People visit North Carolina for our beautiful coast and Outer Banks, unique rivers and streams, waterfalls, and ample fishing opportunities. Each day, $5.4 million is generated in taxes from tourism in North Carolina.\(^{15}\)

North Carolina’s thriving brewery and winery industries rely on clean water. Small North Carolina breweries contribute more than $1.8 billion to our economy every year and support 13,177 jobs.\(^{16}\) Similarly, the wine and grape industry adds $1.97 billion to our economy and sustains 10,296 livelihoods.\(^{17}\)

---

For more information, please visit ProtectSouthernWater.org.

* Two federal courts vacated the Trump administration’s unlawful rule as of October 15, 2021. Until litigation is final, there is a risk that the 2020 rule could be reinstated. At the time of this writing, protections for streams and wetlands remain in jeopardy.

Footnotes can be found at: https://www.southernenvironment.org/cleanwaternc/