



SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

southernenvironment.org

The assault on clean water threatens Tennessee.

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 Tennessee'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 TENNESSEE?

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 four Tennesseans.⁶ Under the rule, supported by industrial polluters who continue to litigate to uphold it, more than 32,000 miles of streams that flow into Tennessee's rivers and lakes are at risk.⁷ Woods Reservoir is among the popular lakes stripped of protections against pollution by this rule.

Hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands in Tennessee that provide flood protection, filter pollution, and provide essential wildlife habitat are also at risk under the 2020 rule.⁸ Over 17,000 acres of wetlands are at risk in the Duck River watershed, more than 23,400 acres in the Wolf River basin, and nearly 3,500 acres in the Harpeth River watershed.⁹

ECONOMIC IMPACTS FOR TENNESSEE

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 Tennessee's vibrant recreational industry. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that in 2011 \$2.9 billion was spent on wildlife recreation in

Clean water is big business in Tennessee.



\$23 billion from tourism industry



\$974 million from local breweries



\$2.9 billion spent on wildlife recreation



\$1.1 billion spent on fishing

Tennessee, including \$1.1 billion on fishing, and more than 2.6 million people participated in wildlife related recreational activities in Tennessee.¹¹

Tennessee's thriving breweries, wineries, and distilleries rely on clean water. Small Tennessee breweries contribute more than \$974 million to our economy every year and support 6,385 jobs.¹² Our winery industry is valued at \$124.4 million and nearly half of the counties in Tennessee have at least one winery.¹³ Our one-of-a-kind whiskey trail draws people from all over the world, and whiskey ranks as one of the state's top exports, valued at \$691 million.¹⁴

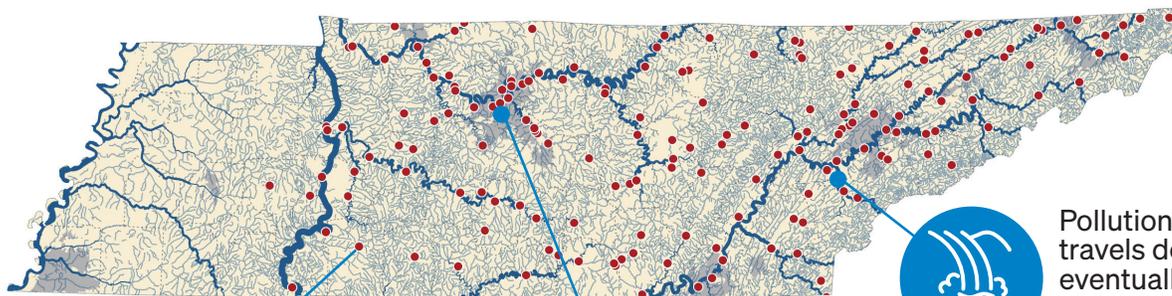


Tourism is Tennessee's No. 2 industry, accounting for over \$23 billion in spending. All 95 counties in Tennessee brought in more than \$1 million from the economic impact of tourism in 2019.¹⁵

People come to Tennessee to visit the unique natural and historic attractions. Whether it's to visit one of our up-and-coming craft distilleries, whitewater raft in the Ocoee, or visit the Great Smoky Mountains—the places that draw people to Tennessee rely on clean water. The Great Smoky Mountains alone welcomes more than 9 million visitors annually that spent \$818 million in the communities surrounding the park in 2011.¹⁶



Tennessee's communities are interconnected with waterways.



Most people in Tennessee get their drinking water from surface water intakes connected to rivers and streams.

● Public drinking water intakes



In Nashville, the drinking water for over 1 million people is at risk.



Pollution dumped upstream travels downstream and eventually flows into our coastal waterways, estuaries, and the ocean, putting billions of dollars of revenue at risk.

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.