



**RESOLUTION**  
**of the**  
**WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL**  
**regarding**  
**CLEAN WATER ACT JURISDICTION**  
**Coeur d'Alene, Idaho**  
**October 26, 2018**

**WHEREAS**, the Clean Water Act (CWA) is built upon the principle of cooperative federalism in which Congress intended the states, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement the CWA as partners, delegating co-regulator authority to the states;

**WHEREAS**, the CWA's cooperative federalism framework has resulted in significant water quality improvements since the law's enactment in 1972, and western states have made great strides in protecting water quality and coordinating water quality and water quantity decisions; and

**WHEREAS**, EPA has actively sought meaningful state consultation, engagement and participation in its review and development of a new proposed rule to define Waters of the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, States are best positioned to manage the water within their borders because of their on-the-ground knowledge of the unique aspects of their hydrology, geology, and legal frameworks; and

**WHEREAS**, States have both state statutory and constitutional authority pursuant to their "waters of the state" jurisdiction to protect the quality of waters within their borders and such jurisdiction generally extends beyond the limits of federal jurisdiction under the CWA; and

**WHEREAS**, CWA Section 101(b) supports the states' critical role in protecting water quality by stating: "It is the policy of Congress to recognize, preserve, and protect the primary responsibilities and rights of States to prevent, reduce, and eliminate pollution;" and

**WHEREAS**, CWA Section 101(g) further provides that the primary and exclusive authority of each state to "allocate quantities of water within its jurisdiction shall not be superseded, abrogated, or otherwise impaired by this Act;" and

**WHEREAS**, a one-size-fits-all national approach to federal regulations, guidance, and programs pertaining to the CWA does not recognize specific conditions and needs in the West, where water can be scarce and a variety of unique waterbodies exist, including but not limited to small ephemeral washes and arroyos, snow dependent intermittent streams, effluent dependent and dominated streams, prairie potholes, playa lakes, and terminal lakes, as well as numerous man-made reservoirs, impoundments, and water and stormwater conveyance structures; and

**WHEREAS**, physical, biological, and chemical differences between waters, and hydrologic differences, both spatially and temporally, as well as considerable differences in legal doctrines that govern water in western states, mean that any federal effort to clarify CWA jurisdiction will inevitably impact each State differently, thus underscoring the need to thoroughly involve states in developing and implementing any rule so as to clearly respect and avoid conflict with state authority over the regulation of water quality and the allocation of waters and water rights within their respective borders; and

**WHEREAS**, any efforts to redefine or clarify CWA jurisdiction have, on their face, numerous federalism implications that have the potential to significantly impact states and alter the distribution of power and responsibilities among the states and the federal government; and

**WHEREAS**, as co-regulators, States are separate and apart from the general public, and have a unique role with the federal government in the development and implementation of any rule to clarify or redefine CWA jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS**, information-sharing does not equate to meaningful consultation, and the uncertainty and differences of opinion that exist regarding CWA jurisdiction requires EPA and the Corps to develop and implement federal CWA jurisdiction efforts in authentic partnership with the states; and

**WHEREAS**, uncertainty and differences of opinion have and continue to exist regarding CWA jurisdiction among States, and challenge EPA and the Corps to develop and implement any new rule in cooperation with the States, based on principles of cooperative federalism, and together to provide greater certainty and a clearer definition of the limits of federal jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS**, perennial streams with a relatively permanent surface water connection to navigable waters are now presumptively considered to be under federal CWA jurisdiction.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Congress and the Administration should ensure that any federal effort to clarify or define CWA jurisdiction and define Waters of the United States:

1. Gives as much weight and deference as possible to state needs, priorities, and concerns.
2. Includes robust and meaningful state participation and consultation in the development and implementation of any rule, acknowledging the inherent federalism implications.
3. Gives full force and effect to Congress' intent and the purposes of CWA Sections 101(b) and 101(g).
4. Recognizes that Justice Kennedy's "significant nexus" test in *Rapanos* requires a connection between waters that is more than speculative or insubstantial to establish jurisdiction. Federal CWA jurisdiction efforts should also quantify "significance" to ensure that the term's usage does not extend jurisdiction to waters with a *de minimis* connection to jurisdictional waters, applied to individual waters on a case-by-case and not watershed basis.
5. Complies with the limits Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court have placed on CWA jurisdiction, while providing clear and recognizable limits to the extent of CWA jurisdiction, consistent with the plurality opinion authored by Justice Scalia in *Rapanos*.
6. Specifically excludes waters and features outside the scope of CWA jurisdiction, including:
  - (a) Groundwater;
  - (b) Man-made conveyances and related control features for water supply, stormwater and flood water management, including but not limited to: (i) agricultural irrigation canals, laterals and ditches and drains; (ii) municipal and industrial water supply pipelines, conduits, and aqueducts; (iii) storm sewers, drains, and flood flow bypass features; (iv) roadside barrow pits, ditches, and culverts.

- (c) Man-made impoundments on ephemeral or intermittent streams (or off stream impoundments), such as farm and stock ponds, dugouts and similar features; and
  - (d) Dip ponds that are excavated on a temporary, emergency basis to combat wildfires and address dust abatement; and
  - (e) Isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters and wetlands, including prairie potholes and playa lakes, as well as intrastate terminal lakes, individually or in combination with similarly situated waters; and
  - (f) Arroyos, coulees, washes and similar features.
7. Acknowledges that states have authority to protect all “waters of the state,” and that excluding waters from federal jurisdiction does not mean that they will be exempt from state regulation and protection.
  8. Continues to provide access to appropriate technical and financial assistance to the States to protect and improve water quality under existing EPA programs without regard to jurisdictional determinations.
  9. Provides a clearly delineated process for resolving differences of opinion over federal and non-federal jurisdiction, and jurisdiction between different States and Tribes (treated as States).
  10. Provides for mapping of jurisdictional waters as a joint federal/state/tribal effort employing the best available data and tools, with appropriate provisions and processes for map maintenance.
  11. Includes an appropriate delay in the effective date of any new rule or otherwise allows for a transition enabling States to take such actions as may be necessary to address any gaps in state law, regulation and protection.

The State of Washington voiced concerns and abstained from the vote.