

Water protection in Miss. needs clarified: Letter

Andrew Whitehurst Gulf Restoration Network Water Policy Director, Madison 9:30 p.m. CDT October 18, 2014



A representative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was in Jackson recently sowing fear of the 2014 Clean Water Rule to an agriculture and industry audience.

This rule was written by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to clarify what types of waters are protected under the Clean Water Act.

Two U.S. Supreme Court cases in 2001 and 2006 produced some confusing language from Justice Anthony Kennedy for determining if small streams and wetlands are connected enough to larger water bodies to be considered “waters of the United States” and thus protected.

The resulting regulatory chaos left many streams and wetlands threatened. In the ensuing years, many acres of wetlands and miles of small streams were filled or degraded.

The Clean Water Rule seeks to clarify what Kennedy’s words made murky.

This rule does not change the Clean Water Act.

Normal agricultural practices, such as clearing existing ditches and irrigation practices, are still exempt.

According to EPA data, more than 110,000 Mississippi residents drink water from a surface supply fed by small headwater streams.

People whose drinking water comes from the Ross Barnett Reservoir can benefit from the Clean Water Rule. The miles of small streams in the upper reaches of the Pearl River, and the wetlands along them, will be better protected if the EPA’s Clean Water Rule is adopted.

Streams with forested banks and functional wetlands along them produce cleaner water for people.

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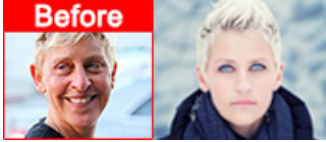
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