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## **EPA Moves to Rollback Clean Water Protections**

**BERNARDSVILLE, NJ – June 27, 2017** - EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced the agency is moving forward with a rule to rescind the 2015 Clean Water Rule. The Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, led by New Jersey Audubon and National Wildlife Federation, and its partners are deeply dismayed by this action. Repealing the Clean Water Rule threatens the water resources of the entire nation, including the Delaware River Watershed, which supplies clean and reliable drinking water to over 15 million people.

“We all depend on clean water and wetlands – whether its water for our families, small business owners, or hunters and anglers – and the repeal of the Clean Water Rule threatens the vitality of our communities and economy,” said Maddy Urbish, Director of the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed at New Jersey Audubon.

The Clean Water Rule was adopted by the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in May 2015 to clarify longstanding confusion over which water bodies are protected by the landmark Clean Water Act. The rule more clearly defined what kinds of waters are protected and which ones are exempt. Before finalizing the rule in 2015, the EPA and Army Corps held more than 400 meetings with stakeholders across the country and incorporated over one million comments, 87% of which were supportive of the rule.

Healthy wetlands and headwater streams provide the clean, cool flows and essential habitat for fish and wildlife populations that are essential for a thriving economy. Along with supplying five percent of the U.S. population with drinking water, the Delaware River Watershed supports over \$25 billion in direct annual economic activity, including a thriving recreation industry, a strong agricultural sector, and a nationally significant port system. It also provides over \$21 billion in ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water filtration. Lacking clear and understandable protection under the Clean Water Rule puts these vital resources at risk.

“The Clean Water Rule is a commonsense safeguard for streams and communities throughout New Jersey. It protects our drinking water and the wetlands we need to filter pollutants and provide vital habitat for wildlife.” remarked Eric Stiles, President and CEO of New Jersey Audubon. “A repeal of this rule flies in the face of science and will hurt our wildlife and economy.”

Kelly Mooij, Vice President of Government Relations at New Jersey Audubon added, “To ensure all Americans have access to reliable, drinkable, clean water, the EPA and Army Corps must use the best available science on the ecological functions and connectivity of the nation’s waters to develop and implement rules for protecting them through the Clean Water Act.”

Repealing the 2015 Clean Water Rule and gutting protections that have prevented the pollution of the nation's waterways for decades is a huge step backwards, and the Coalition urges the EPA and Army Corps to reverse course and focus on providing strong protections for our water resources.

**About New Jersey Audubon**

New Jersey Audubon is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, and one of the oldest independent Audubon's, New Jersey Audubon is working to make New Jersey a better place for people and wildlife. New Jersey Audubon fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats. For more information, visit [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org)