

## EPA says taking over private property will benefit the economy

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Can the EPA run your property better than you? The Environmental Protection Agency says that its proposal to extend its regulatory powers over wetlands and waterways would produce economic benefits.

Republican lawmakers warn that the agency is trying to extend its power to regulate private property.

The EPA's rule would redefine the term "waters of the United States" to include all "tributaries, regardless of size and flow, and all lakes, ponds and wetlands within a floodplain" [reports](#) E&E News. Other bodies of water, "such as geographically isolated wetlands, would have to be shown on a case-by-case basis to have a significant chemical, physical or biological effect on larger waterways downstream — a major point of concern for environmental groups" E&E added.

According to a [document](#) obtained by E&E News purporting to be from the EPA, the Clean Water Act rule would cost the U.S. between \$133.7 million and \$231 million per year and yield yearly benefits from \$300.7 million to \$397.6 million — meaning the rule could produce up to \$263.9 million in economic benefits a year.

Republicans are displeased.

"The EPA's draft water rule is a massive power grab of private property across the U.S. This could be the largest expansion of EPA regulatory authority ever," said Texas Republican Rep. Lamar Smith. "If the draft rule is approved, it would allow the EPA to regulate virtually every body of water in the United States, including private and public lakes, ponds and streams."

The EPA says that claims of private property takeovers are false. The agency [told](#) Fox News that the draft water rule would "not expand EPA's or the (Army Corps of Engineers') jurisdiction or protect any new waters that have not historically been covered under the Clean Water Act."

Environmentalists have applauded the EPA's rule as much needed clarification under the Clean Water Act, arguing that previous court decisions had caused confusion over what waterways the agency had authority over.

"The benefits of protecting our rivers, lakes and streams are clear," [said](#) Ally Fields, a clean water advocate at Environment America. "With the drinking water for 117 million Americans at risk, it's time for the EPA to fix the Clean Water Act and protect all our waterways."

The EPA is basing its rule on a [draft environmental report](#) looking into the connectivity of waterways. The report has yet to be reviewed by the EPA's science advisory panel and Republican lawmakers have urged the White House to put a hold on the rule until it has been reviewed.

"If EPA moves forward with this draft rule, as they have already committed to, the property rights of millions of Americans would be at stake," [said](#) Louisiana Republican Sen. David Vitter, who joined with two House Republicans in asking the White House to stall the rule last month until it has been fully reviewed.

"The agency's own science advisors have not had the opportunity to review the science underpinning this rule," said Rep. Smith. "Any rule that could give EPA the authority to tell us what to do in our own backyards needs to be supported by sound science."

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