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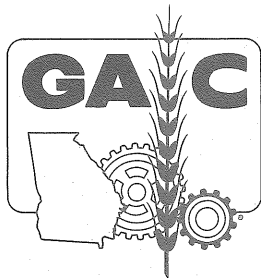
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GEORGIA AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL

COUNCIL MISSION: "To advance the business of agriculture through economic development, environmental stewardship and education to improve the quality of life for all Georgians."

August 16, 2017

RE: Docket Number EPA-HQ-OW-2017-0203, Definition of "Waters of the United States"—
 Recodification of Pre-Existing Rules

Administrator Pruitt:


Since 1966, the Georgia Agribusiness Council has been enhancing the quality of life for all Georgians by advancing the business of agriculture through economic development and environmental stewardship. The Council represents over 1050 businesses connected to all aspects of farming, from family farms to equipment dealers to fertilizer companies and more. These farms and businesses form the basis for Georgia's economy and provide significant contributions to the communities they serve in mostly rural areas of our state and across America. Agriculture is the dominant force in Georgia's economy, accounting for more than \$74.9 billion in economic impact and over 410,800 jobs. A healthy agricultural economy provides a foundation for ever improving quality of life that is enjoyed by Georgia citizens statewide.

We support the proposal to repeal the 2015 "Waters of the U.S." rule (aka "WOTUS" or "Clean Water Rule") and to temporarily replace it with the regulations that existed before the 2015 Clean Water Rule. The poorly executed revisions to the rule in 2015 created much concern throughout our industry. Our Georgia Agribusiness Council membership, as well as every agricultural organization and producer we met with, had serious concerns about the consequences it will have for our state. In fact, on October 15, 2014, at the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition in Moultrie, Georgia, we displayed a 3ft x 12ft banner (see photo). It quickly filled with signatures from farmers, education leaders, ag association executives and families from the area. We planned to have the banner out for two days - it quickly filled up in less than six hours. That says it all. The signatures aren't from activists, they are from Americans that see this effort for what it is - overregulation. We could have easily filled many more banners just like the one in the photo.

The EPA should move forward and eliminate the current rule once and for all, then write a new rule that protects water quality without trampling the rights of landowners, businesses and the states. The rewrite of this regulation should be an inclusive process with significant input from the various stakeholders. The path forward for CWA changes is not necessarily untenable. In fact, it's rather simple. First, proposed regulations should have substantial opportunity for stakeholder/landowner input. Second, work with stakeholders to formulate language to move forward. Third, engage elected Members of Congress and hold Committee hearings as a part of the legislative process. Finally, let Congress vote. Not only do we believe this is wholly appropriate, we believe it is the only way to adequately advance this issue.

We strongly support EPA for taking this important first step toward developing a new definition of waters of the United States that will protect water quality while also promoting economic growth, providing regulatory clarity, and respecting the proper roles of Congress and the states under the Constitution. We support the proposed repeal of these regulations and commit to you our efforts to engage landowners and other stakeholders to start the process over.

Sincerely,


 Bryan R. Tolar
 President

