

Another sneak attack on clean water law

May 30, 2013 by Kristin Schafer



Don't do it, Senators. Yet again, an attempt is in the works to roll back protections of our streams and rivers — along with the critters who live in them and communities that rely on them — from harmful pesticides.

This time the push to weaken our national water law takes the form of two nearly identical amendments to the Senate's version of the Farm Bill (#1100 and #1103). The rollback effort first showed up as a [proposed amendment](#) to the China Currency Bill (no really!) in the fall of 2011. It's since been introduced several times as a [stand-alone law](#), and showed up in a coordinated [media push](#) by conservative lawmakers. This is a bad idea that needs to be shut down once and for all.

We've been tracking the effort to undermine protections to our waterways for a few years now, and the initiatives seem to get ever more creative. Meanwhile the basic requirements in question — that users get a permit when spraying pesticides over waterways — have been in place for a year and a half across the country. And the sky has not fallen.

Pesticide law doesn't cut it

Confused? Here's the backstory, in brief:

Back in 2009, a judge ruled that our waterways were not adequately protected by our (old and weak) pesticide laws, and that the longstanding [exemption for pesticides](#) under the Clean Water Act should be removed.

The pesticide lobby and some members of Congress [tried for months](#) to block efforts to carry out this ruling. But thanks in large part to widespread engagement of PAN supporters and others across the country, their original proposed [legislation](#) to reinstall the loophole stalled at the end of 2011.

So as of January 1 of last year, pesticides applied on or near waterways require a permit under the clean water rules. This is a very good thing.

Holding the line

Senators Cardin (D-MD) and Boxer (D-CA), as well as other clean water champions, have held the line again and again as these rollback efforts surface. This time, since the effort is linked to the Farm Bill, it has moved forward in the agriculture committee rather than the environment committee which Boxer chairs. But next week, it's coming to the Senate floor.

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Published on Pesticide Action Network (<http://www.panna.org>)

More than 150 organizations across the country have signaled their concern to key Senate offices — reminding lawmakers in a joint letter that the efforts to gut the Clean Water Act protections are highly controversial, and that the current protections in place are working. As stated in the letter:

. . . without the Clean Water Act, we do not have requirements to track where toxic pesticides have been sprayed directly into waterways. And without the Clean Water Act, there are no commonsense backstops requiring applicators to at least consider alternatives to spraying toxic pesticides directly onto waterways.

[Take Action »](#) Tell your Senator to block the latest efforts to undermine our clean water law! Our voices have been critical to holding the line so far, and are needed again.

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