

Earth Day: Does the Clean Water Act Protect Our Water? - AvvoStories

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People can live without a lot of things. But clean water is not one of them. The [Clean Water Act](#) is the primary legal framework for regulating pollutant discharges into the waters of the United States.

Now, recent efforts by the EPA may redefine which US waterways receive protection under the Clean Water Act. If they succeed, [nearly 60%](#) of the nation's water could lose this defense.

Clean Water Act

The first federal legislation to limit water pollution was the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, establishing major statutory provisions with regard to water protection. The Clean Water Act, drafted in 1972, created guidelines for wastewater treatment, effluent guidelines and a framework for monitoring water health. Numerous revisions – 1977 and 1987, most notably – have further enhanced the provisions set forth in 1972. Still, Americans argue about just how much of our water is protected under the Act. The source of the confusion is in the Act's terminology, which refers to "waters of the United States" and "navigable waters" without defining either term.