

**Alabama Rivers Alliance * Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments * American Rivers
American Sustainable Business Council * Beyond Pesticides * Beyond Toxics
Cahaba River Society * Center for Biological Diversity * Center for Food Safety
Clean Water Action * Defend H2O * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice
Endangered Habitats League * Endangered Species Coalition * Environment America
Environmental Protection Information Center * Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Earth U.S. * Gulf Restoration Network * Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Kentucky Waterways Alliance * Klamath Forest Alliance * Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food,
Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition * League of Conservation Voters
National Family Farm Coalition * Natural Resources Defense Council
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides * Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Oregon Environmental Council * Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Prairie Rivers Network * Pesticide Action Network North America * PolicyLink
San Francisco Baykeeper * Save The River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
Sierra Club * Southern Environmental Law Center
The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change * The Good Food Institute
Toxic Free NC * Turtle Island Restoration Network * Waterkeeper Alliance
WE ACT for Environmental Justice * WildEarth Guardians**

RE: Oppose H.R. 953 (“Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2017”)

May 22, 2017

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to oppose H.R. 953 (“Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2017”). A more apt title for this damaging legislation is the “Poison Our Waters Act” because it would eliminate Clean Water Act safeguards that protect our waterways and communities from excessive pesticide pollution. The Pesticide General Permit targeted in this legislation has been in place for nearly six years now and alarmist predictions by pesticide manufacturers and others about the impacts of this permit have failed to bear any fruit.¹

This bill is the same legislation that pesticide manufacturers and other special interests have been pushing for years. It has been opposed not only by the Obama Administration² but also more than 150 public health, fishing, and conservation organizations (see attached list). Contrary to earlier claims made by its proponents, this bill will not improve nor impact spraying to combat Zika virus and

¹ See testimony of Ken Kopocis, Deputy Assist. Administrator, Office of Water, U.S. Evtl. Prot. Agency, before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (March 18, 2015): “We have not been made aware of any issues associated with the Pesticide General Permit. Nobody has brought an instance to our attention where somebody has not been able to apply a pesticide in a timely manner . . . [t]here have been no instances. We’ve been getting very good data. . . .” available at <http://transportation.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=398705>

² President Barack Obama: "Statement of Administration Policy: H.R. 897 - Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2015," May 23, 2016. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=117996>.

other human health threats. The Pesticide General Permit at issue already allows for spraying to combat vector-borne diseases such as Zika and the West Nile virus. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the permit “provides that pesticide applications are covered automatically under the permit and may be performed immediately for any declared emergency pest situations” (emphasis added).³

Further, the Clean Water Act has no significant effect on farming practices. The Pesticide General Permit in no way affects land applications of pesticides for the purpose of controlling pests (that is, spraying that doesn’t discharge into water bodies). Irrigation return flows and agricultural stormwater runoff do not require permits, even when they contain pesticides. Existing agricultural exemptions in the Clean Water Act remain.

Repealing the Pesticide General Permit – as this damaging legislation seeks to do – would allow pesticides to be discharged into water bodies without any meaningful oversight since the federal pesticide registration law (the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)) does not require tracking of such applications.

Now that the Pesticide General Permit is in place, the public is finally getting information that they couldn’t obtain before about the types of pesticides being sprayed or discharged into local bodies of water. All across the country, pesticide applicators are complying with the Pesticide General Permit to protect water quality without issue.

The Pesticide General Permit simply lays out commonsense practices for applying pesticides directly to waters that currently fall under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. Efforts to block this permit are highly controversial, as evidenced by the attached list of groups opposed.

Please protect the health of your state’s citizens and all Americans by opposing H.R. 953.

Sincerely,

Earthjustice
League of Conservation Voters
Natural Resources Defense Council
Center for Biological Diversity
Sierra Club
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Sustainable Business Council
National Family Farm Coalition
Waterkeeper Alliance
Clean Water Action
Environment America
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations
American Rivers
Southern Environmental Law Center
Defenders of Wildlife

³ U.S. Env’tl. Prot. Agency, Pesticide General Permit Factsheet: Mosquito Control Activities, *available at* http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/pgp_factsheet_mosquitocontrol.pdf

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