

EPA Administrator Announces Plan to Retool and Reinvigorate Clean Water Enforcement Program

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson announced today at a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing that the agency is stepping up its efforts on Clean Water Act enforcement. The Clean Water Action Enforcement Plan is a first step in revamping the compliance and enforcement program. It seeks to improve the protection of our nation's water quality, raise the bar in federal and state performance and enhance public transparency.

"The safety of the water that we use in our homes -- the water we drink and give to our children -- is of paramount importance to our health and our environment. Having clean and safe water in our communities is a right that should be guaranteed for all Americans," said Administrator Jackson. "Updating our efforts under the Clean Water Act will promote innovative solutions for 21st century water challenges, build stronger ties between EPA, state, and local actions, and provide the transparency the public rightfully expects."

The plan announced today outlines how the agency will strengthen the way it addresses the water pollution challenges of this century. These challenges include pollution caused by numerous, dispersed sources, such as concentrated animal feeding operations, sewer overflows, contaminated water that flows from industrial facilities, construction sites, and runoff from urban streets.

The goals of the plan are to target enforcement to the most significant pollution problems, improve transparency and accountability by providing the public with access to better data on the water quality in their communities, and strengthen enforcement performance at the state and federal levels. Elements of the plan include the following:

- Develop more comprehensive approaches to ensure enforcement is targeted to the most serious violations and the most significant sources of pollution.
- Work with states to ensure greater consistency throughout the country with respect to compliance and water quality. Ensure that states are issuing protective permits and taking enforcement to achieve compliance and remove economic incentives to violate the law.
- Use 21st century information technology to collect, analyze and use information in new, more efficient ways and to make that information readily accessible to the public. Better tools will help federal and state regulators identify serious compliance problems quickly and take prompt actions to correct them.

Last July, Administrator Jackson directed EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance to develop the plan in response to data showing that the nation's water quality is unacceptably low in many parts of the country.

More information on the plan: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/civil/cwa/cwaenfplan.html>