



HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03755  
P.O. BOX 483 603/643-4123

APR 15 2003

To: Senator John Sununu  
Senate Russell Courtyard \$  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Attn: EPA, Water Docket ID No. OW-2002-0050

For the past 30 years the Clean Water Act has served to protect many of this nation's watersheds and wetlands. The proposed change to declare that isolated wetlands and waterbodies are no longer subject to the protections afforded by the CWA is of great concern to our community, located on the Connecticut River in New Hampshire.

Hanover's many isolated wetlands, which are widely scattered across our landscape as a result of glaciation, are critical to the recharge of groundwater on which a high percentage of our citizens depend. Isolated wetlands and vernal pools also provide essential habitat and breeding locations for birds and amphibians, which are significant elements in the local hierarchy of wildlife.

Since the definition of "isolated waters" is vague, we also fear the consequences of this change that may lead to increased development on the shores of our local and regional water bodies. The reduced level of protection for water bodies will have serious impact since a region-wide quality environment is essential for the tourism upon which a large proportion of our state's economy is based. Loss of wetlands will also reduce wildlife populations that provide hunting opportunities.

The Connecticut River is no longer the sewer it once was, as evidenced by the return of Atlantic salmon and other species. Much of the progress made over the past couple of decades can be credited to the federal and state investment made in municipal water treatment. Today, Hanover's Select Board members have learned that there is virtually no continuing federal funding, and very little state support, for such initiatives—just when our town's sewage treatment plant is nearing maximum capacity. Depending solely on community investments of this magnitude to maintain and extend the clean water gains we've realized seems destined to frustration and possibly failure.

Though construction of sewage treatment plants has been an important factor in this improvement, the wetlands in our town have also played, and continue to play, a major role in absorbing pollutants at no cost to the public. The Environmental Protection Agency itself has pointed out that wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, that they are "biological supermarkets." The Connecticut River, and its biota, are completely dependent on the river's associated wetlands for the quantity and quality of its water, and for the life it supports.

THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION OF HANOVER, NH DOES NOT SUPPORT THESE CHANGES.

Sincerely,

Judith Reeve, Chairperson  
For the Conservation Commission

4/14/03