

Opinion: Sneaky attack on clean water rules

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Congress often kills or delays federal regulations it doesn't like by simply denying agencies the money they need to carry them out. This spares Congress from actually debating the regulation on its merits.

House Republicans are adept at this, especially on environmental rules. Their latest intended victim is a worthy initiative aimed at protecting streams and wetlands from development and pollution.

In April, the Obama administration issued new guidelines to federal agencies charged with enforcing the Clean Water Act, chiefly the Army Corps of Engineers. The guidelines, which the administration hopes to codify in a federal regulation later this year, are badly needed. Two muddled Supreme Court decisions, and earlier guidance from the George H. W. Bush administration, had effectively limited protections to navigable waterways. The new guidelines provide much-needed protections to thousands of miles of small streams and millions of acres of wetlands that are no less crucial to the health of the nation's drinking water and its aquatic ecosystems.

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