



## Write an op-ed to help fight the proposed “Waters of the U.S.” regulation

NACO encourages you to write and submit an op-ed or opinion column to your newspaper outlining your position on the proposed changes to the definition of “Waters of the U.S.” Below are issue-specific message points to consider including and general guidance on writing op-ed pieces. Remember, your ability to craft and tailor the message to fit your community is very important to placing an op-ed.

### **Issue-specific “Waters of the U.S.” points**

- The opening sentence and paragraph should grab readers’ attention and spark their interest to read more. *Example:*
  - Most would agree that protecting clean water for generations to come is a good thing. A newly-proposed definition from the federal government reminds us that too much of a good thing can be bad.
  - Discuss proposed definition and their impact (points below).
  - Include the impact of project delays and increased costs, including local implications (“In our county, this means that...”)
- A new definition, proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, erases the distinction between bodies of water – like streams and lakes – and roadside ditches and drains.
- Under the new definition, public safety ditches, flood control channels, canals and other critical water systems would be subject to the Clean Water Act regulations.
- The new definition would dramatically expand regulation, requiring counties to obtain federal permits before doing common-sense, routine work.
- In many cases, counties are responsible for maintaining water systems that keep people safe from flooding; however, this proposal could put more people in harm’s way by inhibiting projects that keep water off of roads and away from homes.
- This over-regulation would result in more red tape, greater bureaucratic hurdles, longer delays and countless unanticipated costs.
- This latest example of federal over-regulation doesn’t make sense and creates confusion.
- Everybody wants clean water, but this kind of over-regulation does more harm than good.

More issue-specific information is available at: <http://admin.naco.org/legislation/Pages/WOUS.aspx>.

### **General op-ed guidance**

An opinion column written in your own words for publication in your local newspaper can be a very effective communications tool. Less rigid than a news release, an opinion column – also known as an “op-ed” because it is often placed opposite of the editorial page in a newspaper – can frame issues and messages precisely the way you want. Here are some points on writing a compelling op-ed.

- An effective op-ed will make a clear and effective argument supported by facts and examples. It will be informative, focused, persuasive and interesting.
- Op-eds are commonly written in a conversational style less formal than a news release or fact sheet.
- Connecting your position to a specific or timely issue of local importance will make it more likely that a newspaper will publish your piece.
- Typically, op-eds have 500-750 words. Newspapers often publish specific requirements and instructions for submission on their websites.
- In most cases, a newspaper will only publish your piece if it does not or will not appear in another newspaper.

More information on writing op-eds and leveraging media relations effectively is available at:  
[http://www.naco.org/newsroom/Documents/NACO\\_MediaGuide2013.pdf](http://www.naco.org/newsroom/Documents/NACO_MediaGuide2013.pdf)

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