

Reform Wetlands Policies

Wetlands regulations do a poor job of protecting wetlands habitat. Much federal regulation focuses on preventing development on lands that are dry most days of the year and that do not provide useful habitat for wildlife. In contrast, private initiatives have successfully ensured the protection, restoration, and creation of vital wetlands habitat around the nation. Yet federal wetlands regulations have seriously impeded such private wetlands protection initiatives, and even have forced some parties to abandon attempts to provide such habitat. Policies that can better ensure private wetlands protection, while eliminating destructive and needless red tape, include the following.

- Congress should replace the Section 404 regulatory program, which regulates the

dredging and filling of lands, with a non-coercive, incentive-based program.

- At a minimum, the federal government should provide financial compensation to property owners who lose the use of their land due to wetlands regulations.
- State efforts, non-regulatory federal programs, and private conservation would do a better job of protecting ecologically significant wetlands than could the existing federal regulatory approach. These steps would enhance the protection of wetlands and private property without increasing the costs of conservation to taxpayers or to landowners.

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