



THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA

POSITION PAPER — 2005

The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulation of responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results.

GCA SUPPORTS CLEAN WATER

The Garden Club of America recognizes that all life is dependent upon clean, uncontaminated water. We support the original objective of the 1972 Clean Water Act to “restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation’s waters.” We recognize that a watershed-based approach is an important way to achieve this goal.

Despite outstanding progress since 1972, nearly half the waters in the United States still do not meet minimum standards. Contamination from industry, agriculture, municipalities and households is growing faster than our institutional ability to set and enforce standards. The proliferation of excess nutrients and toxic substances pollutes our rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. Critical wetlands loss and urban and agricultural run-off have increased the pollution and sediment load in our waters. Water quantity is also a problem. In many parts of the country, water supply is endangered by droughts, over drafting of ground water supplies, and diversions of scarce surface water for agricultural use and for continuing commercial and residential development.

In order to protect our water resources, promote water conservation and reuse, and prevent pollution, The Garden Club of America supports the following goals:

The reduction of water pollution by:

- Reauthorization of a strengthened Clean Water Act.
- Reduction of point source pollution from industry and sewage treatment plants.
- Reduction of nonpoint source pollution from urban and agricultural run-off.
- Reduction of airborne pollutants which degrade water quality.
- Enforcement of strict water quality standards and pollution permits.
- Improvement of funding for clean water programs.

The protection of ecosystems by:

- Restoration and preservation of the nation's surface water.
- Protection of groundwater.
- Preservation and protection of wetlands, including strict standards for any method of wetland alteration.
- Education about the importance of riparian areas.
- Incentives for the creation and preservation of riparian buffer areas.
- Development of national and global policies to protect coastal waters and the world's oceans.
- Ensuring sufficient instream flows as well as natural flow patterns to sustain the overall integrity of river systems.

Nationwide availability of safe drinking water and public education concerning its content.

Protection of fresh water resources in order to ensure that an adequate supply of fresh water is available and accessible to meet the needs of the country both now and in the future.

The purpose of The Garden Club of America is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Airborne pollutants - Water contaminants which initially are emissions into the air, but which through rainfall or condensation are transferred to water bodies.

Ecosystem - A community of organisms together with their environment, functioning as a unit.

Excess nutrients - Nitrogen and phosphorus compounds found in higher than normal concentrations in water, usually associated with contamination by fertilizers, animal wastes and detergents.

Groundwater - Water sources that are below ground level, such as aquifers.

Nonpoint source pollution - Contamination of water bodies that is not generated by a single source, but rather is carried by rainwater or snowmelt from diverse sources. Examples include debris and toxic chemicals carried from streets; silt carried from construction sites; fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and animal wastes carried from agricultural operations; air pollution deposited in water bodies by rain; chemicals washed off outdoor industrial sites; and silviculture.

Point source pollution - Contamination of water bodies that can be traced to a single source, such as sewage treatment plant or industrial operation.

Riparian buffer zones - Conservation areas along the banks of natural watercourses which protect the water from the activity on the adjacent land. Conservation strips are vegetated and designed to intercept sediment and pollutants before they reach the water.

Surface water - Water sources that are above ground, such as rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs.

Toxic substances - Chemical or other substances capable of causing injury or death to living organisms.

Watershed - The entire region draining into a river, river system or other body of water.

Watershed-based approach - The management of water resources, based on regional geographic areas, recognizing all the interconnections of those resources. A watershed approach provides coordinated implementation of programs, working with state, tribal and local governments, private landowners and businesses. Watershed programs might focus on water supply, water quality, water conservation, flood protection, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.

Wetlands - Land areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands have three characteristics: 1) hydric soil (soil that is chemically changed by water), 2) hydrology (patterns of water flow), and 3) hydrophytic vegetation (plant species adapted to wet conditions).

Wetlands alteration - Any physical change to a wetland which would render it no longer functional as a wetland. These changes include not only deposition of fill into a wetland (covered by the Clean Water Act) but also excavation, drainage, clearing, flooding or constriction of water supply to the area.