

Groups Raise Fears, Set Meeting About New EPA Runoff Rule

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creasing landowner costs, and making it harder to use land than to sell it, will drive more open, farm and forestland into development, the opposite of

what Pennsylvania is striving to accomplish with ongoing preservation programs.

The groups contend that if the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule is en-

acted, EPA will regulate virtually "everywhere it rains."

In the rule, EPA reserves discretion to require permits under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System pro-

gram, currently administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in Pennsylvania. EPA says it will use its power in "limited circumstances" and "in a small number of cases." That means EPA would have unprecedented new federal discretion and authority, coalition members say.

sources, which would require landowners to go through a federal permitting process for certain activities.

With the rule, EPA sets total maximum daily loads or TMDLs. TMDLs calculate the maximum amount of pollution that a waterbody can receive to meet standards. A TMDL is the sum of all of the allowable loads of a single pollutant from all contributing sources, point and nonpoint. It contains reductions to meet water quality standards and allocated reductions among the sources in the watershed, according to the EPA.

Some Congressional legislation already has been introduced to halt or postpone the rule, which EPA plans to implement this summer.

For 30 years, forests, open land and agricultural land have been considered "non-point" sources of potential water pollution, as opposed to "point" or pipe sources. Each source has had a distinct approach, oversight and rules to improve and protect water quality. Under the new rule, EPA can redefine farm and forest activities as "point"

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