



The Headwaters Protection Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho)

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America's National Forests supply drinking water for nearly 1 in 5 Americans – making them the single most important source of water in the country. Yet many of our watersheds that begin in our forests are considered “impaired” or “at risk.”

To ensure clean drinking water for communities, the United States Forest Service (USFS) has two key authorities to manage our forests for watershed health: the Water Source Protection Program (WSPP) and the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF).

The WSPP invests in projects that prevent water pollution at the source by encouraging agricultural producers, water utilities, cities, and the Forest Service to work in partnership to restore forest health and impaired watersheds. The WCF establishes a consistent process at the USFS to evaluate the health of our watersheds and ensure investments benefit downstream communities.

As growing populations and climate change place additional stress on our forests and watersheds, it is critical that Congress invest in the WSPP and WCF. The Headwaters Protection Act improves the WSPP by increasing its funding, expanding access to it, and directing the program to prioritize local, collaborative partnerships to protect forests and watersheds. It also creates dedicated funding for WCF and makes a technical change to the program to ensure management activities in our National Forests do not lead to the long-term degradation of our watersheds.

Specifically, the Headwaters Protection Act would:

- Reauthorize the WSPP and increase the authorization of appropriations for the program from \$10 million per year to \$30 million per year;
- Broaden the range of water users, including historically disadvantaged communities, who can participate in and benefit from the WSPP;
- Reduce financial barriers for water users to participate in the WSPP;
- Prioritize WSPP projects that benefit drinking water quality and improve resilience to wildfire and climate change;
- Make a technical change to the WCF to ensure healthy watersheds do not become degraded; and
- Authorize \$30 million in new appropriations per year for the WCF.