

NCBA still battling Clean Water Restoration Act

October 21, 2009 by [Ken Anderson](#)

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) is keeping a very close eye on legislation known as the Clean Water Restoration Act (CWRA).

NCBA chief environmental counsel Tamara Thies says the bill would, for the first time, give the federal government broad power to regulate all waters, including ponds, small streams, creek beds and even mud holes. She says it would represent an unprecedented expansion of federal authority.

"The federal government could require landowners to get permits to 'affect the water,'" says Thies, "and who knows what the term 'activities' means, if they want to regulate activities affecting those waters. Is cattle walking in a puddle, is that an activity affecting the water? They don't define it and it's a very scary thing."

NCBA argues that the CWRA would actually hamper the government's ability to maintain clean waters. Thies says EPA is already struggling to handle a backlog of 15- to 20-thousand permit requests under the original Clean Water Act. So far, she says, NCBA and other groups have been successful in keeping the CWRA from reaching the Senate floor.

"An amended version of the bill was passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and a hold was placed on it to require 60 votes," Thies says, "and we are fighting very hard to defeat the effort in the Senate and hopefully not have it be brought up on the floor."

Thies says similar efforts are taking place in the House. "So far we have been successful in working with the coalition of interested folks to defeat and not even allow the bill to come up for a vote in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which is where the bill's jurisdiction lies."

Meanwhile, EPA administrator Lisa Jackson says her agency is going to step up its efforts to enforce Clean Water Act rules already in place. And at a recent congressional hearing, Jackson cited concentrated animal feeding operations—CAFO's—as one of the biggest threats to water quality.

[AUDIO: Tamara Thies \(7 min MP3\)](#)