



THE GARDEN CLUB *of* AMERICA

THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA POSITION PAPER

The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulating responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results. The Garden Club of America is a nonpartisan, issue-oriented advocate for a beautiful, healthy planet.

CLEAN WATER

The Garden Club of America recognizes that plant life, and indeed all life is dependent upon the availability of clean, uncontaminated water. We support the objective of the 1972 Clean Water Act: to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters.

Trees, plants, and grasses play a critical role in improving water quality. They have an inherent capacity to clean and conserve water efficiently and to cool the atmosphere in aquatic systems. On land and in coastal areas, our forests, wetlands, buffers, living shorelines, seagrasses, salt marshes, and coastal vegetation all contribute to the health of the water cycle. In aquatic systems, plants produce critical oxygen, absorb nutrients, and filter or process bacteria, metals, and chemicals.

The nation is seeing crisis-level disruptions of the water cycle and systemic water-related damage from copious rainfalls, extraordinary heat, and storms exacerbated by climate change. Water scarcity, flooding, stormwater runoff, erosion, sediment load, and water contamination form a cluster of major water problems for which emergency funding is often inadequate. Many U.S. surface and groundwater systems are critically impaired from overuse and pollution. According to the National Water Quality Inventory Report of 2017, some three-quarters of lakes, reservoirs, ponds, bays, and estuaries and more than half of rivers and streams assessed in the United States are impaired by pollution and do not meet minimum water quality standards. Agriculture, timbering, extractive industries, impervious surfaces, poor road design, overdevelopment of the nation's shorelines, and failing water infrastructure systems are significant causes of impairment.

The Garden Club of America supports federal, state, and local legislation, policy, and individual action that address the following:

WATER POLLUTION REDUCTION

- Ensure an effective Clean Water Act that protects streams, rivers, and wetlands.
- Promote the use of low-impact development practices including planting of trees and plants to act as buffers that will improve water quality, prevent erosion, and facilitate stormwater management.
- Reduce point-source pollution from industry and sewage treatment.
- Reduce nonpoint-source pollution from urban, suburban, highway and agricultural runoff.
- Reduce airborne pollutants that degrade water quality.
- Enforce strict water quality standards and pollution permits.
- Provide adequate funding for clean water programs, including infrastructure modernization.

ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION

- Restore and preserve the nation's surface water and related habitat, in part through increasing vegetative cover to remove nutrients, sediments, pesticides, pathogens, and other contaminants.
- Protect watersheds to filter harmful pollutants and allow for recharge; preserve and plant more trees and native flora to absorb precipitation; and discourage excessive water use.
- Preserve and protect existing wetlands and provide incentives to create additional wetlands to improve water

quality.

- Provide incentives to create and preserve effective riparian buffers.
- Develop national policies to protect coastal waters and oceans.
- Ensure sufficient instream flows and natural flow patterns to sustain the integrity of river systems.

HUMAN HEALTH

- Monitor and protect America's drinking water and educate the public regarding its quality.
- Support infrastructure improvements that ensure access to safe drinking water.