

Tehama supervisors oppose fed's proposed waterway definition

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RED BLUFF >> The Tehama County Board of Supervisors is joining with other rural counties in strongly opposing a new definition being proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to define its oversight over drinking water.

The EPA says the new rule to define "Waters of the United States" clarifies language under the Clean Water Act to protect streams and wetlands.

However critics see the language as vague especially in what will be defined as a tributary or "adjacent waters."

The Rural County Representatives of California along with Tehama County say the new rule could have significant impacts on local roads, flood control and storm water ditches, which they believe could fall under the EPA's oversight with the new rule.

The Board of Supervisors authorized Chairman Steve Chamblin to sign a formal letter addressed to the EPA opposing the proposal Tuesday.

"The changes to the definition of 'Waters of the U.S.' triggers new unfunded mandates on local governments by expanding federal jurisdiction," the letter reads.

The letter stats water delivery systems including the Tehama-Colusa Canal and Corning Canal could fall under the new definition.

"Water conveyance systems for flood control purposes may also fall under the new definitions, which could ultimately hinder Tehama County from ensuring public safety in extreme storm events," the letter states.

On its website the EPA says the new rule "does not protect any new types of waters that have not historically been covered under the Clean Water Act."