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**EMPLOYER GROUP APPLAUDS EPA'S FINAL DECISION TO WITHDRAW
UNATTAINABLE FEDERAL STANDARDS AND APPROVE
CLEAN WATER STANDARDS DEVELOPED BY STATE OF WASHINGTON**

OLYMPIA — A coalition of employer trade groups today applauded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) decision to withdraw certain 2016 water quality standards for Washington, thereby confirming rigorous clean water standards developed by the State of Washington's Department of Ecology.

As the employer trade groups argued in a February 2017 request for reconsideration, the state adopted stringent water quality standards that provide an extremely protective approach to water quality. At the same time, certain new state standards are achievable with significant investment and effort, which was not the case with the federal mandate EPA imposed on Washington.

The employer group includes eight primary petitioners to EPA: Northwest Pulp & Paper Association; American Forest & Paper Association; Association of Washington Business; Greater Spokane Incorporated; Treated Wood Council; Western Wood Preservers Institute; Utility Water Act Group; and Washington Farm Bureau.

"This is a win-win for the people of Washington. We get the highly protective water quality standards that everyone in our state wants, but the regulated community of employers and local governments have a realistic opportunity to comply with the new standards," said **Chris McCabe**, executive director of the Northwest Pulp & Paper Association. "To be meaningful, to promote investment and real improvement, a water quality standard must be attainable. The Ecology-developed water quality standards recognize that, and EPA's decision to withdraw most of its 2016 rule and allow that state-developed rule to stand, underscores that point."

"We also greatly appreciate the work and assistance of **Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers** who was instrumental in working to help finalize this rule," he said.

"Water quality is a critical issue for agriculture, which is the backbone of our state's economy," added Washington Farm Bureau CEO **John Stuhlmiller**. "With these stringent state standards in place, the state Department of Ecology can work with our members and other stakeholders to implement the final rule. Working together with these standards, we can protect all communities across the state, including those who are most exposed to potential toxins in water and fish."

“EPA’s decision means that Washington will be subject to extremely stringent standards to protect human health for all communities,” said AF&PA President and CEO **Heidi Brock**. “We will continue to work with regulators and the entire regulated community to maintain the important balance between protection and attainability, as well as Washington’s long record of scientifically-based environmental stewardship.”

Gary Chandler, vice president of government affairs for the Association of Washington Business, said the EPA’s decision to withdraw most of the federal rule and accept most of the state rule recognizes the good work that went into its creation.

“The Department of Ecology pulled together a diverse range of interests over the four years they took to create the state rule,” he said. “Employers, local governments, tribes, environmental groups — everyone had a seat at the table. Now it’s time for all these players to focus on successfully implementing the standards.”

“The parties can work together, knowing that investments in water quality technologies will result in regulatory compliance, measurable improvement in water quality, enhanced protection of human health, and a stronger economy for all Washingtonians.”

“The state-developed standards now approved by EPA give local employers an opportunity to make water quality improvements without risk of losing family-wage jobs, and allow local governments to control costs for wastewater treatment while benefitting all ratepayers with meaningful water quality improvement,” Chandler said. “It’s the best course for Washington’s future.”