



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CLEAN WATER ACT!

October 18, 2012

Today marks the 40th anniversary of one of the most important pieces of water legislation: the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act was passed at a time when industrial pollution was so prevalent in our nation's waterways that, in some cases, rivers actually caught on fire. The Clean Water Act was passed by a large bipartisan majority of Congress, with the stated intention to eliminate water pollution by 1985. While the Act has led to significant declines in point source pollution – contaminated water discharged at a specific location such as a pipe or outfall – it has not been as effective at addressing non-point source pollution, or more diffuse runoff from farms and city streets. Today, we honor the successes of the Clean Water Act and envision a future where the Clean Water Act's objective to “restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters” is more rigorously applied to the leading source of pollution today: non-point runoff.

Read a Case Study of how a suit under the Clean Water Act in the 1980s forced Onondaga County to address water pollution caused by combined sewer overflows – and led the Friends of Onondaga Creek to argue successfully for the county to adopt a green infrastructure to address its overflow problems. The Case Study is from the new book [*A Twenty-First Century U.S. Water Policy*](#) from the Pacific Institute, and can be downloaded free of charge at www.pacinst.org/us_water_policy/case_study.

“The Clean Water Act is one key to safeguarding our water, and failure to maintain, enforce, and update such legislation jeopardizes something crucial that most of us take for granted: affordable, reliable, and safe water,” said Dr. Juliet Christian-Smith of the Pacific Institute Water Program and lead author of the book.