



LINCOLN CHAFEE

U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

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CHAFEE APPLAUDS PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW WETLANDS INITIATIVE, ASKS FOR CLARIFICATION OF FEDERAL DIRECTIVES

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee yesterday joined in writing a letter to President George W. Bush, applauding a recent announcement by his Administration of a new Wetlands Initiative reaffirming his commitment to a policy of “no net loss” to wetlands across America. Also included in the letter was a request that the President direct his agencies to withdraw a policy directive issued in 2003, which runs contradictory to the President’s recent announcement. Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Arlen Specter (R-PA) joined Senator Chafee in praising the policy’s goal of creating, improving, and protecting three million acres of wetlands over the next five years as well as supporting the clarification of policy directives to show consistency with the Administration’s recent announcement.

“I support wholeheartedly an environmental policy that protects our nation’s wetlands, as well as our waterways, fishing industries, and overall water quality,” Senator Chafee said. “I am pleased with this announcement by President Bush and sincerely implore him to withdraw any directives by agencies that may be seen as contradictory,” he continued.

The four Senators commended the Administration’s recent decision to abandon a proposed rule that would have weakened federal protections under the clean water act and notably reduced the number of lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands protected by law. The authors specifically expressed concern that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers have not articulated a policy directive that supports the protection of our nation’s waterways. Citing the joint policy directive issued by the two agencies in 2003 that supports a policy ignoring long-standing law and

existing Clean Water Act regulations, the Senators expressed concern that the result would be the elimination of federal protection for as many as 20 million wetlands across the country. They went on to declare that not following through with policy directives that support the President's decisions will ultimately affect habitats for millions of migratory birds and other wildlife, as well as damaging the nation's fishing industries, and water quality deterioration.

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