

Why We Need the EPA's Strong Rules to Protect Florida's Waters

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By David Guest, Managing Attorney, Earthjustice

The “summer slime” season is starting in Florida. Over and over, we’ll be forced to watch the places where we love to boat, swim and fish get covered with nauseating algae that can make us, our pets, and wildlife sick.

In Tallahassee and in Washington, polluter advocates are getting their politician friends to push for ineffective standards on the pollution that’s sparking these nasty toxic algae outbreaks all over the state. We’re talking about phosphorus and nitrogen, the so-called “nutrients,” which come from the sewage, manure and fertilizer that runs into our water.

Polluters basically wrote the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s ineffective rules on this pollution, and they desperately want the state to substitute their loophole-ridden bureaucratic mumbo jumbo for the clear, enforceable standards developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Gov. Rick Scott is doing his best to give the polluters what they want – these weak, substitute rules.

We need the EPA’s strong rules, because they set enforceable numeric limits on the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen allowed in our waters. The EPA’s rules are easy-to-read speed limit signs. The rules Gov. Scott is pushing are ridiculous – they would only require pollution control *after* waters have been already slimed – and that means the damage is done and taxpayers

will be forced to pay for expensive clean-up.

Now it's up to President Obama: will he back Rick Scott's proposal, or support EPA's?

So far, environmental advocates have sent more than 34,000 letters to the White House, urging Obama to enforce the EPA's standards. We have to keep the pressure up.

This heartbreaking pollution is a public health threat that hurts tourism and the most important resource we have – our drinking water.

When the EPA standards go into effect, they will spur important changes to control pollution at its source: More sustainable agriculture practices for fertilizer and pesticide use, upgrades to outdated sewage systems, and modern manure management, to name a few.

We have to fight back against the polluters – it is just not fair for them to keep using our public waters as their private sewers. We have formed a citizen's group to fight back. It is called the Florida Water Coalition, and you can learn more – and send an alert to the White House – by visiting floridawatercoalition.org.