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Lawsuit Seeks to Protect South Platte River From Colorado Slaughterhouse Pollution

DENVER— The Center for Biological Diversity and Food & Water Watch filed [a lawsuit](#) in federal court today against the JBS-Swift Beef Company to stop illegal discharges of slaughterhouse pollution into Colorado’s South Platte River.

The Lone Tree Wastewater Treatment Plant in Greeley receives up to 4 million gallons of wastewater each year from two slaughterhouses along the Front Range near the confluence of the South Platte and Cache la Poudre Rivers. For years the plant has been violating its Clean Water Act pollution discharge permit by discharging waste that violates toxicity standards into the Lone Tree Creek, a tributary of the South Platte River.

“JBS has been knowingly violating the terms of its permit for years, exposing people and wildlife to dangerous slaughterhouse waste,” said Hannah Connor, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “Rather than continuing its business-as-usual polluting practices, the company should have taken timely action to avoid these toxicity violations.”

The Lone Tree Plant receives wastewater from lamb and beef slaughterhouses that slaughter between 5,500 and 8,500 animals each day. The waste products generated by the plants include animal fat, blood, meat, dangerous bacteria, ammonia and excrement. The beef plant also processes and preserves animal hides, creating waste loaded with salt. These pollutants can harm human health and kill fish and other aquatic life.

“JBS is not above the law and we cannot let it get away with violating federal laws that protect Colorado waterways,” said Jason Harrison, Colorado organizer with Food & Water Watch. “At the same time this multinational corporation is profiting off of contaminating our waterways illegally, it is reaping the rewards of industry’s control over farmers and cozy relationships with regulators by [profiting off of a USDA program](#) meant to cushion the effects of Trump’s trade deal on U.S. farmers.”

The Clean Water Act prohibits the discharge of any pollutant from “point sources,” like the slaughterhouses’ wastewater treatment plant, into waterways unless allowed by a permit. Permit violations are enforceable under the Act’s citizen suit provision. Today’s suit is being filed in the U. S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

“The lawsuit provides an opportunity to fix something that has been broken for over five years,” said Neil Levine, attorney at Public Justice and counsel for the plaintiffs. “Citizen suits like this one empower the public to protect their natural resources, calling on the courts to help hold JBS accountable for its illegal actions.”

The suit seeks an injunction prohibiting JBS-Swift Beef Company from continuing to violate the terms of the Lone Tree Plant’s Clean Water Act permit and requiring that the companies take all necessary measures to prevent future violations.

The organizations are represented by Public Justice, a nonprofit legal advocacy organization and in-house counsel.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Food & Water Watch mobilizes regular people to build political power to move bold and uncompromised solutions to the most pressing food, water, and climate problems of our time. We work to protect people’s health, communities, and democracy from the growing destructive power of the most powerful economic interests.

Public Justice pursues high impact lawsuits to combat social and economic injustice, protect the Earth’s sustainability, and challenge predatory corporate conduct and government abuses.