

CTA Name: Protect Minnesota's Waters: Oppose EPA's Rollback of Clean Water Act Protections

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Explainer (describe the issue):

Proposed new rules could leave many bodies of water without environmental protection. Our comments on those rules could help.

On November 20, 2025, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a proposed rule narrowing the definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act. This rule would significantly reduce protections for wetlands, some lakes and ponds and small streams — features that are central to Minnesota’s hydrology, flood safety, and drinking water systems.

Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes, but it is also home to vast networks of wetlands, headwater streams, prairie potholes, and seasonal waters that feed the Mississippi River, St. Croix River, Minnesota River Basin, Lake Superior watershed, and groundwater recharge zones.

The proposed rule would require protection of water sources only if they flow all year long. This requirement ignores the reality of Minnesota’s climate, where:

- Snowmelt is a primary driver of stream flow.
- Freeze–thaw cycles create seasonal pulses of water movement.
- Many streams flow intermittently yet directly affect lakes and rivers downstream.

Under this proposed rule, many Minnesota wetlands, lakes, ponds and tributaries that are not “relatively permanent “ and do not have a

“continuous surface connection” to “waters of the United States” would lose protection.

Why This Matters to Minnesota

- **Increased flooding:**

Minnesota’s wetlands store millions of gallons of water, protecting cities like St. Paul, Rochester, Duluth, Moorhead, and communities throughout the Minnesota River Valley from severe flooding. Losing wetlands removes a critical natural buffer.

- **Contaminated drinking water:**

Minnesota relies on interconnected systems of streams and wetlands to feed major drinking water sources, including the Mississippi River, which supplies water to **more than one million Minnesota residents**. Pollution in unprotected headwaters flows directly into these systems. Wetlands, in particular, serve an important role in filtering out pollutants in surface water before this water enters the groundwater system that millions of Minnesotans rely upon for drinking water.

- **Damaged aquatic ecosystems:**

Many lakes, trout streams, and walleye habitats depend on the quality of water flowing from smaller tributaries. Excluding these waters undermines fisheries, recreation, and wildlife.

- **Worsening climate change Impacts:**

Increased precipitation, rapid snowmelt, and extreme storms make Minnesota more vulnerable to both flooding and drought. Healthy wetlands and streams are vital climate resilience tools — and cannot be replaced once destroyed. Wetlands also provide a significant climate resilience service by naturally sequestering carbon.

The rule is open for public comment until **January 5, 2026**. This is an important chance to ensure federal officials hear from us.

Call to Action (What Are We Doing?)

1. Contact your U.S. Senators and your Congress person to request congressional oversight hearings (see script below)
2. Press the EPA to withdraw or significantly revise the rule to protect Minnesota's water, wetlands, and public health. (See the link for public comment and a proposed comment below).

Contact Info:

For Federal Actions:

U.S. Senator Tina Smith:

DC Office Phone: (202) 224-5641
MN Office Phone: (651) 221-1016

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar:

DC Office Phone: (202) 224-3244
DC Office Fax: (202) 228-2186
MN Office Phone: (612) 727-5220

U.S House Rep Ilhan Omar: (CD5)

DC Office: (202) 225-4755
MN Office: (612) 333-1272

U.S House Rep Betty McCollum: (CD4)

DC Office: (202) 225-6631
MN Office: (651) 224-9191

U.S House Rep Kelly Morrison: (CD3)

(202) 225-2871 (DC Office)

For Other Reps or for MN State Actions:

Find your rep here:

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

OR

Use [Democracy.io](https://democracy.io) to send an email to all relevant legislators at the same time.

Sample Script: Subject: Protect Minnesota's Water: Oppose EPA's WOTUS Rollback

- Speak out publicHello, my name is [NAME], and I live in [CITY, ZIP].
Optional: I am a member of Twin Cities Indivisible.
-
- *A sentence or two about why this issue matters to you. Do you live near a body of water that could be affected? Do you care about climate change, clean water,? Are you worried about flooding? Something else?*
- Please:
- y against the EPA’s proposed rule to redefine “waters of the United States”.
- Request oversight hearings.
- Urge the EPA to withdraw or revise the rule to better reflect Minnesota’s hydrology and climate realities.

The EPA’s proposed rule to redefine “waters of the United States” threatens Minnesota’s wetlands, streams, and drinking water sources. Clean water is a core Minnesota value, and we need strong federal protections.
Thank you for your leadership.

[NAME]
[CITY]

Public Comment Link:

<https://www.regulations.gov/docket/EPA-HQ-OW-2025-0322/comments>

EPA Public Comment (Docket ID: EPA-HQ-OW-2025-0322)

Submitted by: [Your Name], Minnesota

Explain why you are interested in the regulation. Is it because of the impact on Minnesota, a state you love? Are you particularly concerned about clean drinking water, flood abatement, the permanent loss of wetlands? Something Else?

I strongly oppose the proposed redefinition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS). In Minnesota, this rule would remove federal protections from many of the seasonal streams and wetlands that define our state’s water system. Because Minnesota’s hydrology is driven by snowmelt, freeze–thaw cycles, and variable precipitation, many of our headwaters flow intermittently and would no longer qualify for protection under the proposed “wet season” standard. These small waters ultimately feed major rivers, including the Mississippi, and are critical to maintaining downstream drinking water quality and providing significant flood storage capacity.

The rule would also threaten Minnesota’s nationally significant wetlands—prairie potholes, riparian wetlands, and northern peatlands—which reduce flood risk, filter pollutants, and store carbon. If the intermittent streams connected to these wetlands are excluded from jurisdiction, the wetlands will lose federal protection as well. This is especially dangerous as Minnesota faces increasing climate-driven flooding and extreme rainfall events.

Weakening WOTUS shifts costs and responsibilities to Minnesota communities, watershed districts, and taxpayers, who will bear the burden of increased pollution and higher water treatment expenses. Clean water protections should reflect how our water systems actually function. In a state defined by interconnected lakes, streams, and wetlands, the proposed rule fails to do so.

For these reasons, I urge the EPA to withdraw or substantially revise the proposal.

Thank you for considering my comment.

[Your Name]

Minnesota

Resources (include links to more information, videos, etc):

EPA Proposed Rule (Federal Register)

<https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OW-2025-0322-0092>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (importance of wetlands):

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wetlands/functions_values.html

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency — statewide water quality data:

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water>

U.S. Geological Survey — Upper Midwest hydrology & wetlands:

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/upper-midwest-water-science-center>

Text of Sackett v. EPA (2023):

https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/21-454_4g15.pdf

What makes an effective Public Comment on a federal Regulation?

<https://protectdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/What-Makes-an-Effective-Public-Comment.pdf>