



## News for Immediate Release

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## Sportsmen Commend Introduction of House Clean Water Bill

*New legislation would restore Clean Water Act protections,  
conserve fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities*

WASHINGTON – The nation’s leading sportsmen-conservation groups today commended the introduction of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would restore critical Clean Water Act protections for streams, lakes, wetlands and other important waters. The America’s Commitment to Clean Water Act would help sustain the healthy habitat, robust fish and wildlife populations and range of economic benefits that rely on America’s waterways and wetlands and would reverse recent Supreme Court decisions that jeopardize the nation’s water resources.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Wildlife Federation and Trout Unlimited have been vocal proponents of legislation that reinstates safeguards previously in place via the Clean Water Act. The bill introduced by Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota responds to these groups’ calls for congressional action that strengthens conservation measures for water and wetland ecosystems essential to American hunting and fishing traditions.

“America’s waterways and wetlands form the cornerstone of our fish and wildlife populations and our continued ability to enjoy the outdoors,” said Tom Franklin, TRCP director of policy and government relations “and so the nation’s sportsmen speak together in commending Congressman Oberstar’s leadership in introducing the America’s Commitment to Clean Water Act – and urging his House colleagues to exercise similar sound judgment in supporting this crucial legislation’s speedy passage into law this spring.”

The bill represents a new approach to addressing threats posed by the Supreme Court’s *SWANCC* and *Rapanos* decisions by including

- provisions that reinforce that the bill’s purpose simply is to restore Clean Water Act protections to waters protected prior to the *SWANCC* decision;

- a more specific definition of “waters of the United States” that closely follows the definition the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have used for decades;
- new exemptions for prior converted cropland and certain waste treatment systems;
- specific references to Congress’s constitutional authority to conserve and restore the nation’s waters.

The legislation also deletes the term “navigable” from the Clean Water Act to clarify that congressional intent was to protect U.S. waters from pollution rather than to sustain navigation.

“America’s Commitment to Clean Water Act is a new bill that would ensure the Clean Water Act protects streams, lakes, wetlands and other waters,” said Scott Kovarovics, conservation director with the Izaak Walton League. “It’s a balanced, common-sense solution that the House should quickly approve.”

The threats to America’s water resources caused by the Supreme Court decisions radiate across the landscape:

- **Safe drinking water:** The EPA estimates that more than 117 million Americans receive drinking water from public water systems supplied by streams most at risk of losing Clean Water Act protection.
- **Fish and wildlife habitat:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that America’s Prairie Pothole Region produces 50 percent of the nation’s duck breeding population. These and other wetlands are at risk because they are seasonal and may not support boating or otherwise be “navigable.”
- **Economic growth:** Fishing, waterfowl hunting, boating and other outdoor activities depend on clean water and wetlands and are fundamental components of the U.S. economy. In 2006, 1.3 million waterfowl hunters generated \$2.3 billion in economic activity; in 2007, recreational boating generated \$100 billion.

“Congressman Oberstar’s important legislation underscores the threats facing clean water and habitat,” said Steve Moyer, Trout Unlimited vice president of government affairs, “yet it also presents a clear path forward for enabling our leaders to right the deficiencies of current law. American sportsmen offer the congressman our thanks for responding to our repeated requests for such forward-thinking measures and look forward to working with him and his House colleagues to advance this bill into law.”

“The America’s Commitment to Clean Water Act reflects Representative Oberstar’s commitment to listen to a wide spectrum of interests when developing legislation for Congress to consider,” said Jan Goldman-Carter, wetlands and water resources counsel with the National Wildlife Federation. “The EPA and state agencies are finding enforcement of the Clean Water Act increasingly difficult under current law. By acting now, the House of Representatives can conserve drinking water, irreplaceable fish and wildlife habitat and our nation’s sporting legacy.”

More than half of the estimated 221 million acres of wetlands originally existent in the United States have been lost. More than 90,000 Americans recently signaled their support of restoring federal protections for wetlands and clean water by signing the We Are Wetlands petition, launched by the TRCP. The petition far exceeded its goal of 80,000 names – one for each acre of natural wetlands that our country loses each year – and calls for a legislative fix restoring the integrity of the Clean Water Act.