

**American Fisheries Society * American Sportfishing Association * Backcountry
Hunters and Anglers * B.A.S.S, LLC * Ducks Unlimited * Federation of Fly Fishers
* Izaak Walton League of America * National Wildlife Federation * Theodore
Roosevelt Conservation Partnership * Trout Unlimited * The Wildlife Society *
Wildlife Management Institute**

December 14, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The sportsman-conservation organizations listed above, representing millions of hunters and anglers nationwide, urge your administration to expeditiously initiate rulemaking to clarify the waters protected by the Clean Water Act. Restoring protections for streams, wetlands, and other waters is a priority that you share with sportsmen and women across the country.

Sportsmen rely on clean water to ensure the opportunity to enjoy hunting, angling, and other outdoor-based recreation (and business) in the great outdoors. When wetlands are destroyed and streams are polluted, sportsmen are often the first to be directly impacted. Consequently, hunters and anglers have consistently advocated for the conservation of our nation's waters and wetlands.

Since 2001, U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *SWANCC* (2001) and *Rapanos* (2006) and agency guidance that is inconsistent with those decisions and the related science have combined to erode long-standing Clean Water Act safeguards for headwater streams and critical wetlands. At-risk wetlands and tributaries provide clean water for iconic systems such as the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes, recharge aquifers like the Ogallala, help retain floodwaters in areas such as the Prairie Pothole region and Missouri River Basin, and provide important fish and wildlife habitat throughout the nation. As these waters are polluted and diminished, their tremendous ecological and public health benefits are lost, as well.

As we all work to create jobs and support economic recovery, the economic benefits of hunting and angling are worth noting. In 2006, hunters and anglers spent \$86.1 billion including trip-related expenses (\$25.7 billion), equipment costs (\$47.4 billion) and other expenditures (\$13.0 billion). In addition, wildlife watchers spent \$51.3 billion including trip-related expenses (\$14.5 billion), equipment costs (\$26.1 billion) and other costs (\$10.8 billion). Altogether, they spent over \$137 billion in 2006 alone, breathing life into rural communities and supporting millions of jobs across the country.

The economic base supported by hunting, angling, and other wildlife-dependent recreation is broad and diversified. These activities support jobs in small businesses nationwide from local coffee shops and restaurants to guide services and hotels. They

also underpin domestic manufacturing in areas as varied as firearms and ammunition, boating, and apparel.

In order to effectively safeguard key components of our economy, the sports and traditions that millions of Americans enjoy, and the health and integrity of some of our most important natural resources, it is essential to act now to begin restoring lost Clean Water Act protections as consistent with existing law and science. We commend your administration for taking a very positive first step this spring by proposing new guidance for the Army Corps of Engineers and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to follow in determining Clean Water Act jurisdiction. The draft guidance, which garnered broad support from hundreds of thousands of people during the public comment period, is science-based and clearly respects the Supreme Court's decisions. To complete this process, we urge the Corps and EPA to finalize and begin following the guidance at the earliest possible date.

Although issuing final guidance is valuable, it is even more important to initiate the rulemaking process as the Corps and EPA described in the preamble to the proposed guidance. Through rulemaking, the Corps and EPA can clarify and strengthen their regulatory definitions of "waters of the United States." As you know, formal rulemaking provides a rigorous, well-defined, and transparent process in which stakeholders on all sides of the issue can participate. There is widespread agreement among groups across the spectrum about the inherent value of rulemaking to address critical aspects of this issue. A successful process can provide clarity about the specific waters covered by the Act – clarity that is badly needed by land owners, developers, conservationists, and state and federal agencies alike.

In closing, our organizations and members across the country strongly urge you to commence rulemaking in early 2012. We applaud the steps taken by your administration this year, and we are committed to actively supporting the essential next step.

Respectfully,

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