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Arizona's Drinking Water, Waterways Under Threat After 50 Years of Revitalization

Key Sources of Drinking Water, Flood Protection are Threatened as the Supreme Court Could Cripple the Clean Water Act on its 50th Anniversary

Maricopa (October 18, 2022) — Thousands of square miles of wetlands and 6,381.3 miles of Arizona streams that provide drinking water to 3,254,601 people could lose critical protections as the Supreme Court this month considers severely curtailing the reach of the Clean Water Act. *Sackett v. EPA* — an already historic occasion as Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's first case — comes exactly on the 50th anniversary of the landmark law.

Passed with broad bipartisan support on October 18, 1972, few laws have been as transformative to the nation's quality of life as the Clean Water Act. Drafted in response to the post-war proliferation of untreated sewage and industrial discharge in waterways across the country, the law limits pollution, prosecutes polluters, and funds restoration efforts. A [recent report](#) details the considerable successes connected to the law.

"Over the past five decades, the Clean Water Act has revitalized and protected the most vulnerable waters and wetlands of Arizona," said Scott Garlid, Arizona Wildlife Federation's Executive Director. "These waterways are the kidneys and sponges of larger rivers and lakes, safeguarding the health and safety of millions of Arizonans. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of polluters, state and local agencies must step in to ensure our drinking water supplies, flood protection, and critical habitats are secure for future generations."

In addition to the threats to Arizona waters, on a national scale drinking water supplies for millions of Americans will be jeopardized if the Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs in *Sackett v. EPA*. In addition, roughly half the nation's streams and wetlands could lose protection.

"From undrinkable water in Jackson to the flood-prone wards of Houston, the importance of clean water and thriving wetlands has never been clearer. For 50 years, the Clean Water Act has helped communities protect streams that provide safe drinking water, wetlands that offer essential flood protection, and habitats that sustain our wildlife heritage," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "The Supreme Court should uphold the

rulings of both the 9th Circuit and the Idaho District Court and honor the intent of Congress to protect the drinking water supplies for hundreds of millions of Americans.”

The law’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program prevents 700 billion pounds of pollutants from entering our waters annually. Approximately 200,000 “point source” polluters — including sewage treatment facilities, paper mills, petroleum refineries, indoor hog farms, and certain construction sites — are currently regulated under the law.

Recent polling shows remarkably strong support across the political spectrum for clean water protection. According to a [Morning Consult poll](#) for the Walton Family Foundation, 75% of adults want more waterways protected, and four in five adults want the EPA — rather than Congress, state, or local governments — to continue taking the lead in protecting clean water.

The [Arizona Wildlife Federation](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, inspiring, and assisting individuals and organizations to value, conserve, enhance, manage, and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).