

# **Implications of *Sackett vs. EPA* for Ecosystem Restoration: Lanes of Response to Protect Our Waters and Wetlands**

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Clean and healthy waters and wetlands are at the foundation of ecosystem restoration efforts around the nation, supporting thriving populations of fish and wildlife as well as drinking water, climate resilience, and public health for communities around the nation. Unfortunately, after attacks in the Courts and Congress, the Clean Water Act has now been undermined to the point where it no longer offers the protections science tells we need to provide safe drinking water, safeguard communities from harms like flooding, and ensure wildlife have adequate habitat. In particular, on May 25, 2023, the United States Supreme Court decided *Sackett v. EPA*, which effectively eliminates federal protections for over half of the Nation's wetlands and likely removes protections for many streams.

This represents the largest clean water crisis in over half a century. Even before Court rollbacks, insufficient enforcement of the law itself, poor river and floodplain management decisions, outdated and inequitable water infrastructure, and an overreliance on grey infrastructure for flood protection—combined to exacerbate the pollution and development plaguing our waters today.

Nearly a year after the *Sackett v. EPA* decision, this presentation will provide the history of this issue and examine the understood impacts and implications of the court decision, including for iconic ecosystems around the nation and for restoration practitioners. We will also discuss available lanes of response at the federal, state, and grassroots levels, to work to close the gap in protections and ultimately restore clean water protections nationwide. This will include a careful look at other federal authorities and funding streams that can be deployed to protect clean water and wetlands.

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