

# COMMON SENSE NEBRASKA

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CONTACT:

Craig Head, Vice President/Issue Management, Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation 402-432-4723

## **Rural, Urban Interests Unite Against EPA Water Rule 'Common Sense Nebraska' expands partners**

LINCOLN, NEB. – A proposal by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to vastly expand the federal agency's powers under the Clean Water Act (CWA) has prompted a number of Nebraska organizations and entities to join forces under the coalition of 'Common Sense Nebraska.' Nebraska agriculture organizations initially formed the coalition in June to push back against the EPA measure. Numerous non-farm interests have now joined the cause.

“This rule would be extremely harmful to Nebraska's farm and ranch families forcing many to obtain CWA permits for the most basic farming and ranching practices. It also has ramifications for virtually anyone who puts a spade in the ground to turn the soil. We knew others would be affected and we're pleased to have so many other groups who represent Nebraskans be a part of this effort,” said Steve Nelson, Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation president.

The announcement of new 'Common Sense Nebraska' partners was made Thur. Aug. 7 at an event where U.S. Senator Mike Johanns, U.S. Senator Deb Fischer, Congressman Lee Terry and Congressman Adrian Smith joined coalition members in expressing concerns with EPA's efforts to regulate water features beyond the scope given them by Congress under the CWA.

New organizations and entities announcing their partnership with 'Common Sense Nebraska' include:

AKSARBEN Club Managers Association  
Association of General Contractors - NE Chapter  
Golf Course Builders Association  
Nebraska Association of County Officials  
Nebraska Association of Resource Districts  
Nebraska Bankers Association  
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Nebraska Corn Board  
Nebraska Golf Course Superintendents Association  
Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers Association  
Nebraska Rural Electric Association  
Nebraska State Home Builders Association  
Nebraska Water Resources Association

Founding members of the coalition include Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Corn Growers Association, Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Nebraska Poultry Industries, Nebraska Soybean Association and the Nebraska State Dairy Association.

The proposed rule would have broad reaching impacts on numerous Nebraska interests.

“As a small business owner this rule creates unpredictability and that’s never good for businesses looking to comply with regulations. Construction projects rely on efficient timely and consistent permitting and review processes under Clean Water Act programs. If the rule is finalized the ability to sell, build, expand or retrofit structures or properties will suffer notable setbacks, including added costs and delays. Those costs and delay don’t just get felt by builders, but also by end consumers” said Allen Barber, immediate past president of the Nebraska State Home Builders Association.

“Nebraska already has laws and local regulations in place to protect water quality and quantity. We commend the Nebraska citizens’ efforts to work with local Natural Resources Districts and various state agencies to protect water in Nebraska. The federal proposal is far reaching and adds costly burdens on those that rely on water for personal and economic survival and are contrary to the local management efforts,” said Dean Edson, executive director of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts.

“It’s our understanding the rule proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers would erase the distinction between bodies of water — such as streams and lakes — and ditches on the side of a road. We believe this would mean counties would be required to obtain federal permits to do routine maintenance work on a roadside ditch or storm-water drain. This would increase budgets, project timelines and impact public safety while placing more pressure on Nebraska’s reliance on property taxes,” said Larry Dix, executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials. “We need a common sense approach of working together to ensure clean and safe water for future generations.”

EPA is currently accepting public comments on the proposed rule through Oct. 20.

Common Sense Nebraska is a Nebraska-based coalition consisting of organizations and entities that have come together in response to EPA’s “Waters of the U.S.” Rule; a regulatory proposal that would harm both rural and urban Nebraskans through expansion of EPA’s powers and authorities under the federal Clean Water Act. The coalition’s purpose is to build awareness and understanding of the EPA proposal and the impacts it would have to Nebraskans.

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