

Issued: Feb 24, 2022 (1:02pm EST)

EPA and Army Select 10 Roundtables to Highlight Regional Implications of WOTUS

WASHINGTON (Feb. 24, 2022) – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of the Army (the agencies) announced the selection of ten geographically varied roundtables with participants representing diverse perspectives. The agencies will work with each selected roundtable to facilitate discussion on implementation of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS), while highlighting regional differences.

“EPA and Army are committed to listening to all sides and working to foster a common-ground approach to WOTUS that protects our environment and is informed by the experience of those who steward our waters day-in and day-out,” said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox. “Through these regional roundtables, we will work toward a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities to enhance WOTUS implementation to support public health, environmental protection, agricultural activity, and economic growth.”

“The Department of the Army, together with the EPA, is committed to gaining a better understanding of the various regional perspectives through these roundtables to develop an implementation approach that accounts for these diverse voices and regional variations,” said Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Michael L. Connor. “In addition, the Army hopes to identify implementation considerations and tools that could assist in effective, consistent, and efficient implementation across the nation.”

EPA and Army are announcing the selection of ten roundtables that highlight geographic differences and a range of perspectives—including agriculture, conservation groups, developers, drinking water and wastewater managers, environmental organizations, communities with environmental justice concerns, industry, Tribal nations, and state and local governments. The ten selected roundtables are:

- [Amigos Bravos \(Southwest\)](#)
- Arizona Farm Bureau (Southwest)
- Cahaba Brewing (Southeast)
- California Farm Bureau (West)
- Kansas Livestock Association (Midwest)
- Natural Resources Defense Council (Northeast)
- National Parks Conservation Association (Midwest)
- North Carolina Farm Bureau (Southeast)
- Regenerative Agriculture Foundation (Midwest)
- Wyoming County Commissioners Association / Montana Association of Counties / Idaho Association of Counties (West)

These regional roundtables are one important mechanism for the agencies to consider the regional variation in implementation of WOTUS, given the diverse water quality and quantity conditions in diverse parts of the United States. The regional roundtables will provide opportunities to discuss geographic similarities and differences, particular water resources that are characteristic of or unique to each region, and site-specific feedback about the ongoing implementation of WOTUS by the agencies. The agencies anticipate hosting these regional roundtables virtually over the spring and summer.

The agencies most recently concluded a public comment period on the proposed rule to re-establish the pre-2015 definition of WOTUS that had been in place for decades, updated to reflect consideration of Supreme Court decisions. The agencies also hosted public hearings on the proposed rule. Prior to proposal, the agencies requested written comments, hosted listening sessions, and conducted Federalism consultation with state and local governments. In addition, the agencies participated in a roundtable organized by the Small Business Administration.

For more information visit: www.epa.gov/wotus.

Background

The Clean Water Act prohibits the discharge of pollutants from a point source to navigable waters unless otherwise authorized under the Act. Navigable waters are defined in the Act as “the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas.” Thus, “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) is a threshold term establishing the geographic scope of federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act. The term “waters of the United States” is not defined by the Act but has been defined by EPA and the Army in regulations since the 1970s and jointly implemented in the agencies’ respective programmatic activities.

On July 30, 2021, the agencies announced stakeholder engagement opportunities, including the agencies’ intent to host ten regionally focused roundtables. On October 13, 2021, EPA and Army announced a process for stakeholders to submit nomination letters for a slate of nominees to potentially be selected for one of these geographically focused roundtables. In response to robust interest in these regional roundtables, the agencies extended the deadline for submissions to December 1, 2021.