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## EPA RULE WOULD LEAVE 11% OF NEBRASKA WETLANDS PROTECTED



CHRIS MACHIAN, THE WORLD-HERALD

Birds spend the afternoon on the water at Heron Haven in Omaha on Monday, Jan. 12, 2026.

MADDIE AMES  
Omaha Word-Herald

Only 11% of Nebraska's wetlands would remain federally protected if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency codifies an updated definition for Waters of the United States.

Currently, there are 1,115,765 acres listed in the National Wetlands Inventory in Nebraska. This new proposal would decrease that number to 122,793 acres.

By including a clause in the Clean Water Act under the new WOTUS rule, waters would need a "continuous surface connection" for federal protection, meaning 80% of currently defined wetlands across the U.S. would go without protection, according to the report.

The Environmental Protection Agency

and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cited the Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Sackett v. EPA* as justification for the change. The court decided current water pollution laws infringed on the Sackett family's ability to build a home on their land.

If the new rule is adopted, it would shrink the definition of protected waters, leaving farmers, developers and state legislators with more leeway when deciding what to do with water on their land.

Environmental groups like the Environmental Protection Network — a group of former EPA employees — say the rule "weakens federal safeguards," which protected wetlands across the country, while farmer organizations and lawmakers say the former rule was unclear and far

exceeded lawful congressional authority.

The Nebraska division of the Izaak Walton League of America said the "rule ignores the scientific reality that wetlands provide vital functions regardless of whether they meet such rigid criteria."

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission also said in a public comment that it is concerned with the "large quantity of wetlands and streams that would lose CWA protection if the proposed rule were implemented."

Farmers groups like the Nebraskan Farm Bureau and Colorado Farm bureau both said the new ruling promotes clarity for farmers and ranchers — something they said they've been asking for for decades.

Please see EPA, Page A3

## Ban on guns in Capitol makes headway

ANNA KLEIBER  
Lincoln Journal Star

While first-round debate on a bill prohibiting guns and other weapons from being brought into the Capitol will head into a third day, lawmakers made some headway on finding consensus by adopting two amendments.

The Executive Board, chaired by Sen. Ben Hansen of Blair, introduced a bill (LB1237) banning weapons and "hazardous materials" such as explosives, pepper spray and spray paint from being brought into the building, which Hansen said will "ensure all Nebraskans can safely enjoy the state Capitol and fully participate in the

governmental functions that take place here."

While Nebraska became a permitless state in 2023, allowing individuals 21 or older to carry a concealed handgun without a permit in most places, the bill would make the Capitol a restricted location where a permit would still be required.

Under the original bill, only law enforcement officers, off-duty officers legally carrying a concealed weapon and those who receive prior approval from the State Patrol would still be permitted to carry in the Capitol.

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ZACH WENDLING, NEBRASKA EXAMINER

Metal detectors were used for the first time at the Capitol earlier this month to screen testifiers at controversial bills to limit bathrooms in government spaces by sex assigned at birth and a total ban on puberty blockers and other hormone therapy.

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