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Beyond the Traditional Advocacy Playbook

Session 2

September 22, 2026

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From Regional Challenges to Collective Action

- Session 2 and Session 6 interconnected workshops
 - Beyond the Traditional Advocacy Playbook
 - Design a \$50M per year agInnovation Collaborative
- Goal:

Enhance the ability of agInnovation Regions to engage state and regional policymakers on pressing agricultural issues



Two Sessions, One Conversation

- Three main questions:
 1. Where are we?
How is your agInnovation region currently providing science that supports policy?
 2. Where would we like to be?
How would you like to be engaging and why?
 3. How do we get there?
How does your agInnovation region get to where it wants to be?
- Today's session: Questions 1 and 2
- Tomorrow's session: Question 3

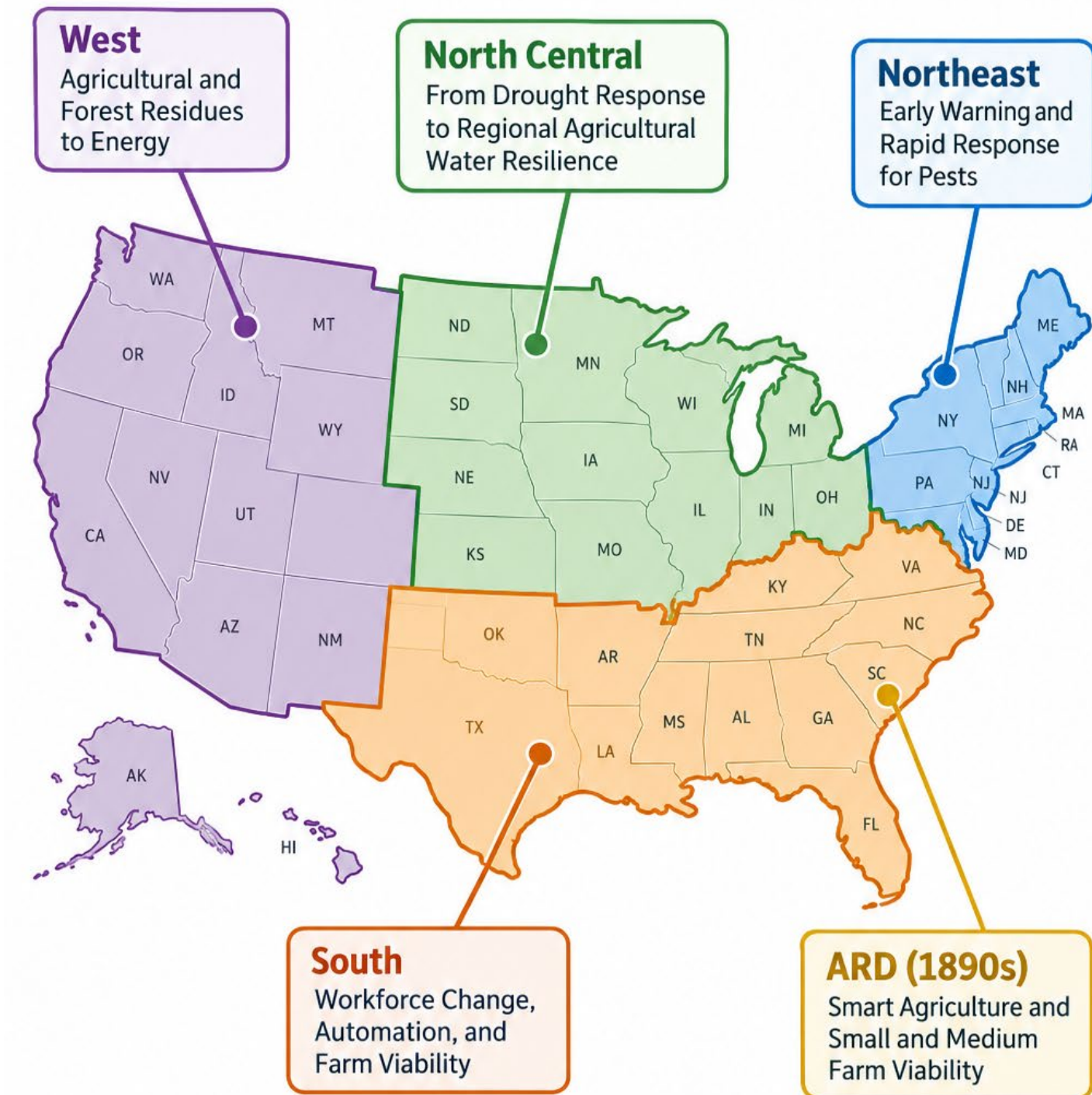
Starting point for continued work

- Not necessary to finish everything in these sessions
- We hope that you will continue this conversation and use the templates after the conference
- To assist, we will provide you the results for your hub, as well as summary of the results from the other hubs

Case study context

- The three questions will be addressed in terms of the case study
- Main selection criteria:
 - Directly rooted in the region's strategic priorities
 - Important role for science
 - Significant role for state and regional governments
 - Wicked problem
- Illustrative and would benefit from your expertise

Case Studies for agInnovation Regions of the United States



Key Background Points

- Wicked Problem Defined
- Why State and Regional Policy?
A quick recap of federalism issues
- Science-Policy-Engagement Continuum
- Four Design Levers



What is a wicked problem?

- A complex public problem in which science is essential—but scientific advancement alone cannot determine the solution because of multiple stakeholders, uncertainties, interconnectedness, and competing values.
- Batie, S. S. (2008). Wicked problems and applied economics. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 90(5), 1176–1191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8276.2008.01202.x>

WICKED PROBLEMS AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

SANDRA S. BATIE

The term “wicked problems” is found in many disciplines, including public administration, policy science, health education, ecology, forestry, and business administration, but the term is relatively unknown in applied economics. Applied economics needs to become better acquainted with wicked problems; they are pervasive, and they present challenges if applied economics is to retain its relevance in today’s world. This paper explores these challenges but is necessarily exploratory, as widespread recognition of the complexity of wicked problems is leading to new kinds of research, but these research approaches are still evolving. My basic thesis is that normal science assumptions and approaches are inadequate for addressing the complexities of wicked problems in a policy context, but that science, including social science, remains crucial for the development of alternative policies. This exploration, therefore, is about both the characteristics of postnormal science necessary to inform alternative policies designed to address wicked problems as well as their implications for policy contributions from applied economics. Because many wicked problems involve sustainability issues, I will focus mainly on sustainability problems.

Wicked vs. Tame Problems

Examples of wicked problem issue areas include terrorism, global climate change, nuclear energy, healthcare, poverty, crime, ecological health, pandemics, genetically modified food, water resource management, trade liberalization, the use of stem cells, biofuel production,

nanotechnology, gun control, air quality, sustainable development, biodiversity, environmental restoration, forest fire management, and animal welfare. Other wicked problems include the locating of not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) projects (e.g., a freeway or a half-way house); reengineering a food supply chain to address food safety problems; constructing or removing a hydroelectric project; or opening of a new mineral mine.

Wicked problems, which are sometimes called social messes or untamed problems, are dynamically complex, ill-structured, public problems. The causes and effects of the problem are extremely difficult to identify and model; wicked problems tend to be intractable and elusive because they are influenced by many dynamic social and political factors as well as biophysical complexities (Rittel and Webber 1973). Also, most wicked problems are connected to, or are symptoms of, other problems (Carroll et al. 2007). As a result, there is no consensus on what exactly the problem is. Indeed, a wicked problem is not well understood until after formulation of a potential solution, and therefore, the problem definition tends to change over time. However, because of their complex interdependences, wicked problems are never solved (Conklin 2006), but rather they become better or worse (Rittel and Webber 1973).

Wicked problems always occur in a social context, and there can be radically different views and understanding of the problem by different stakeholders, with no unique “correct” view (Horn and Weber 2007). Thus, their wicked nature stems not only from their biophysical complexity but also from multiple stakeholders’ perceptions of them and of potential trade-offs associated with problem solving. Identification of solutions becomes as much a social and political process as it is a scientific endeavor (Kreuter et al. 2004). Also, wicked problems are characterized as having high uncertainty associated with them, not only with outcomes but also with the potential causes and effects underlying the problems. In addition, there are multiple stakeholders’

Fellows Address.

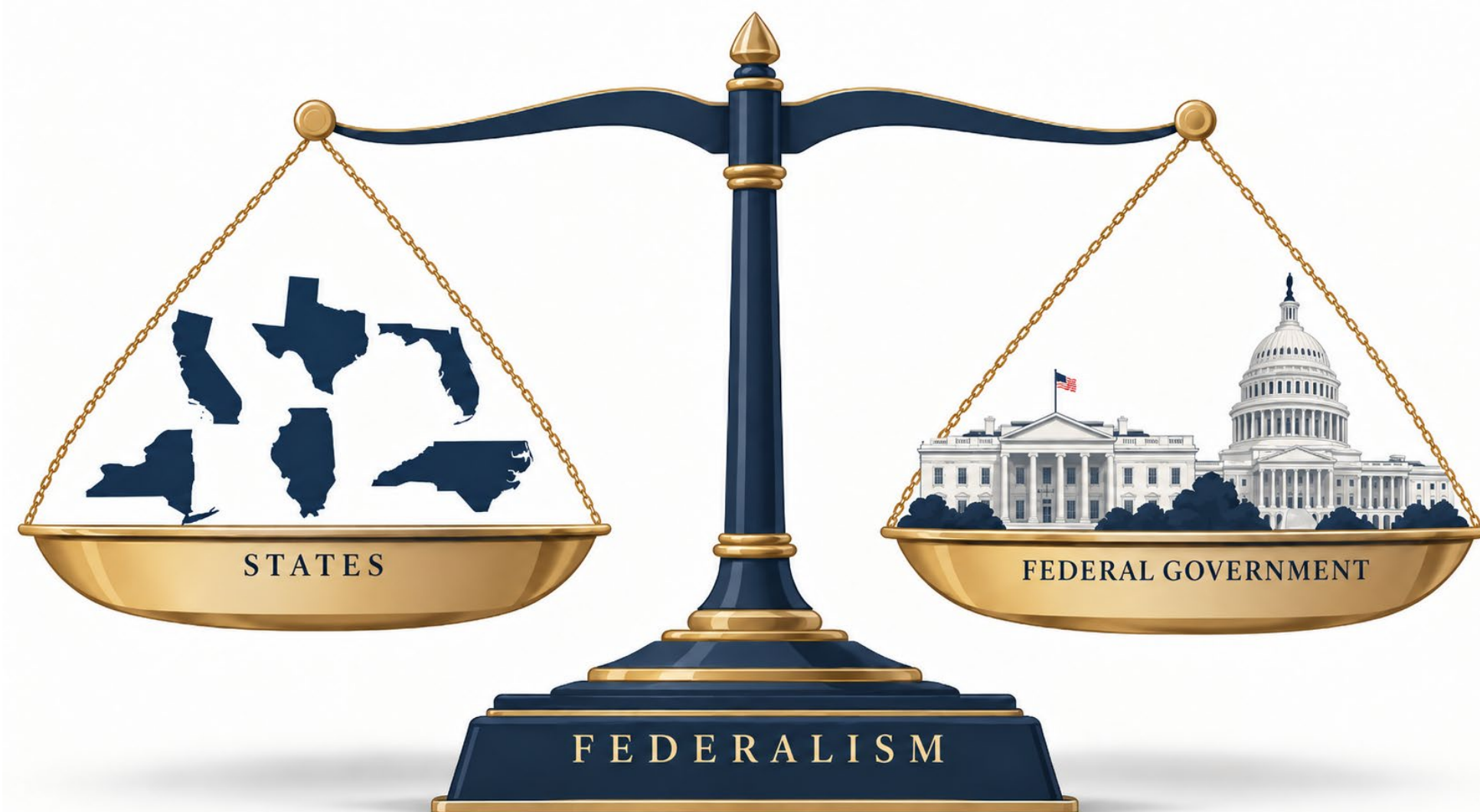
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Fellows Address was presented at the 2008 AAEA annual meeting in Orlando, FL. Invited addresses are not subjected to the journal’s standard refereeing process.

Why State and Regional Policy?

- States have substantial policy-making power over agricultural issues
- One of the most accessible places to serve the community by providing policy-relevant science
- A new era with significant expansion of state power?



Civics Reminder: Federalism

Federalism is a system of government in which **power is shared between the national government and state governments**, with each having its own responsibilities and authority.

Federal Enumerated Powers

- **Interstate commerce clause:** "To regulate Commerce . . . among the several states"
- **Tax and spend authority:** "To lay and collect Taxes" and provide "for the General Welfare of the United States"
- **Necessary and Proper Clause:** "To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying out the foregoing powers"
- **Supremacy Clause:** Where the federal government has acted within the appropriate scope of its authority, federal law is Supreme

Article. I.

Section. 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.

The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States

State retention of power

- **The 10th Amendment**
- Generally interpreted as giving plenary power to protect health and welfare of its citizens
- Regulation of land and water use lies at the core of traditional state authority
- **States can exercise power:**
 - Federal government can't constitutionally act **or**
 - Federal government has not acted



- Federalism affects all areas of life, particularly agriculture and natural resource regulation
- Roberts Court seems committed to limiting federal power and preserving/strengthening state authority

OPINION REVIEW & OUTLOOK Follow

A Clean Water Landmark for Liberty at the Supreme Court

In *Sackett v. EPA*, the Justices rebuke the agency for its land grab over ‘waters of the United States.’

By The Editorial Board
Updated May 25, 2023 6:34 pm ET

Click for Sound



at the Supreme Court, these messes will continue.

MR. WHITEHOUSE

JOURNAL EDITORIAL REPORT

Journal Editorial Report: ‘Ethics’ is the latest weapon against the Court’s independence. Images: Reuters/Getty Images Composite: Mark Kelly

Supreme Court Upholds Virginia’s Ban on Uranium Mining

Share full article



Uranium deposits being measured by a Virginia Uranium employee in Pittsylvania County, Va., in 2011. The deposit discovered there is the largest known in the United States. Travis Dove for The New York Times

The New York Times

ROE OVERTURNED

A 6-to-3 Ruling Ends 50 Years of Federal Abortion Rights



A Conservative Supermajority May Be Just Getting Started

BROOKINGS

COMMENTARY

The Supreme Court Ruling on the Affordable Care Act—A Bullet Dodged

HENRY J. BARNETT
JUNE 26, 2022



Sackett vs. EPA (2023)

- Issue: the **bounds of federal authority under the Interstate Commerce Clause** - how far can the federal government extend Clean Water Act jurisdiction over wetlands?
- Prior to this case, EPA had justified regulation of isolated wetlands and other waters (e.g., kettle ponds) based on ecological importance or that they have a cumulative effect on interstate commerce
- Substantially narrowed federal wetlands jurisdiction
- Only those wetlands indistinguishable from a relatively permanent body of water connected to a traditional interstate navigable water



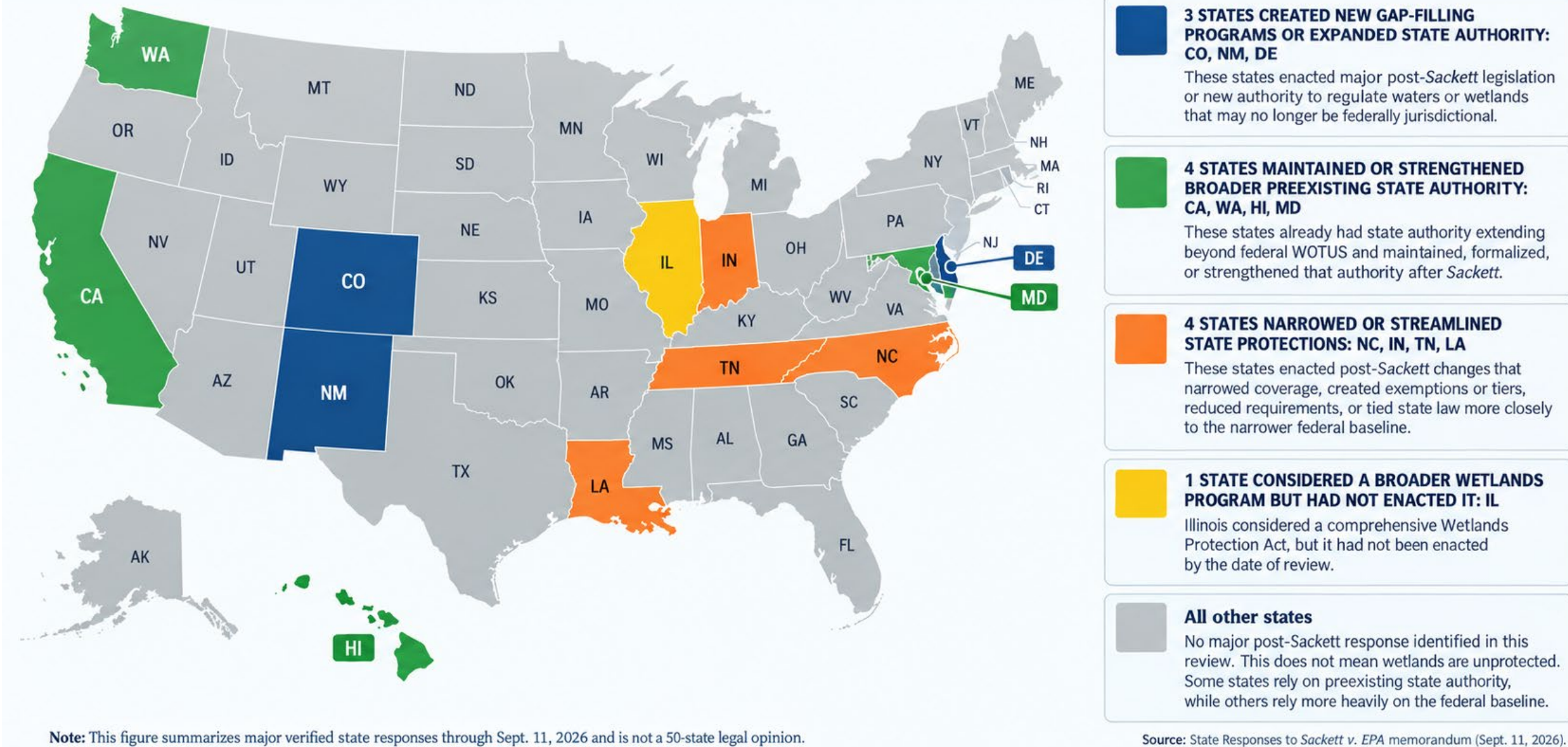
Sackett vs. EPA (2023) (Cont'd)

- “[E]xceedingly clear language” required to significantly alter the federal–state balance.
- An overly broad interpretation would impinge on the state’s traditional authority and likely be unconstitutional
- “States can and will continue to exercise their primary authority to combat water pollution by regulating land and water use”



After *Sackett v. EPA*: A State Regulatory Patchwork

Selected state responses on wetlands and state authority (major verified responses through Sept. 11, 2026)



National Pork Producers Council v. Ross (2023) (Plurality Option)

- California prohibited the in-state sale of pork produced under “cruel conditions” — even though much of that pork was produced elsewhere.
- Producers argued that California was improperly burdening interstate commerce.
- Congress had no relevant law preempting the CA law, and the law did not discriminate against interstate commerce
- Law upheld
 - **States retain substantial authority to make policy choices that have significant economic impacts outside their borders**



Absent Legitimate Federal Exercise of Authority

In a functioning democracy, policy choices like these usually belong to the people and their elected representatives.

They are entitled to weigh the relevant political and economic costs and benefits for themselves and try novel social and economic experiments if they wish. (Citations and internal quotations Omitted)

Compare Monsanto Co. v. Durnell (Supreme Court of the United States) (2026) (state tort law requiring a cancer warning is invalid where FIFRA expressly preempts state labelling laws)

The Aftermath

- Relatively untested, but potential for significant effects
- Can a state limit sale of beef to only grass-finished beef?
- Can a state limit sales of wheat to only no-till wheat?

Federal Agency Powers Limited

- Two Supreme Court cases:
 - West Virginia v. EPA (2022)
 - Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo (2024)
- Overruled ~40 years of judicial deference to federal agencies
- Now agency power is construed only for clear congressional authorization and judges interpret the law
- Effect:
 - Congress is required to legislate more explicitly
 - Where federal agencies lack authority, states can likely fill the gap

***How can agInnovation region most effectively
engage with policy makers and serve the
community in this new context?***

Science-Policy-Engagement Continuum

Engagement Approach	What It Means
1. Generate Science	Produce new knowledge and evidence.
2. Translate Science	Make findings understandable and useful beyond the research community.
3. Respond to Decision-Maker or Stakeholder Requests	Provide evidence or expertise when policymakers or other stakeholders decision-makers ask for it.
4. Advise or Convene Stakeholders	Bring scientific expertise to discussions or create trusted spaces in which different interests can work through an issue.
5. Co-produce Knowledge with Decision-Makers	Develop research questions, evidence, or decision-support information collaboratively with those who will use it.
6. Support Policy Design, Implementation, Monitoring, or Evaluation	Use scientific expertise to help design options, understand implementation, measure results, or evaluate consequences.
7. Advocacy for a Specific Policy Outcome Based on Scientific Values	Actively support a particular policy outcome based on articulated scientific or institutional values—for example, sustainability.

- Not mutually exclusive
- Not a maturity ladder
- The optimal type of engagement will depend on the specific context

Four Design Levers: The Mechanics of Achieving the Vision

Design Lever	Guiding Question
Organizational Structure	How should the regional collaborative be organized to accomplish work that individual stations cannot do alone?
Coalitions	Who needs to be at the table? What relationships need to be built, strengthened, or formalized?
Philanthropy & Resource Investment	What resources or funding models could make the work possible? Where could flexible or catalytic capital help?
Advocacy	How should the region engage decision-makers, communicate priorities, and build support while protecting the credibility of public agricultural science?

Today's Activity

- Answering the Questions:
 - Where are we on the Science-Policy-Engagement Continuum?
 - Where do we want to be and why?
- Copies of Case Study and Session 2 Worksheet (please leave at your tables)
- Facilitators at your tables
- An overarching goal is to develop an understanding of:

Right now, our hub is mostly positioned as _____ because

_____.

In the future, we want to be positioned as _____ because _____.

Table Activity

Tomorrow

- Session 6 “Designing a \$50M/year agInnovation Collaborative”
- Please go to your same tables with the same facilitators
- “How do we get to where we want to be?”
 - Session 6 Worksheet
- You will have time to revisit today’s work with the same facilitators at your table

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THANK YOU

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