

Trump-Wheeler EPA Budget Would Reduce Human Health Protection

The massive cuts to EPA's budget proposed by the administration are directed at an agency whose resources are already at a long-term low point after years of declining funding, reduced staffing and flat resources, coupled with rising costs and increased responsibilities. Indeed, the proposed funding of \$6.068 billion, [adjusted](#) for inflation, would be the lowest since the 1970s when the agency was founded, even though the needs have been growing and EPA's increased congressionally mandated responsibilities have significantly expanded the agency's role in protecting public health and the environment.

Needless to say, the environmental challenges that EPA is responsible for addressing have not shrunk over this same period of time. To use just two rough indicators, since 2000, the population has grown by 15% and Gross Domestic Product has gone up 75%.

State agencies, which depend on EPA assistance for roughly 27% of their operating budgets, are in similar straits; with EPA support flat and state budgets in substantial decline, the states have been "doing more with less" for over a decade. Even so, EPA is proposing to expand the role states play in protecting public health as EPA's partners in environmental management, while cutting nearly half a billion (that's "billion" with a "b") dollars from categorical grants to support state programs:

- \$88 million (34%) for air and radiation
- \$300 million (56%) for clean and safe water
- \$51 million (34%) for hazardous waste
- \$27 million (55%) for pesticides and toxics
- \$29 million (33%) for multimedia grants, primarily to assist Indian tribes in developing environmental programs to protect air, water and land

These cuts will be doubly harmful, reducing support for work in critical areas while also weakening the environmental programs of states that depend on EPA funding. The massive cuts in support for state programs provide an important backdrop for understanding the real impact of the proposed cuts for EPA programs. EPA claims that it wants to promote cooperative federalism and "rebalance the power between Washington and the States." The budget will surely do that: the massive cuts in support for state programs will significantly weaken state environmental protection programs, and thus reduce state power. In sum, the budget is a massive cut to federal and state resources and capacity at a time when most objective indicators suggest that EPA and state agencies need additional resources to simply carry out their essential public health protection functions.

Cuts Would Devastate EPA's Core Programs

Although the Trump/Wheeler Administration professes to be emphasizing "basics," [traditional core programs](#) such as clean air and water, the budget cuts funds for implementing the public health laws that have served as the backbone of the nation's environmental protection system. These are the programs that protect air, water and drinking water; address the harmful effects of pesticides, chemicals and hazardous waste; enforce environmental rules and regulations; advise on the legality of agency decisions; and many other functions.

These cuts threaten to reverse the remarkable progress EPA and the states have made over decades. Today it is easy to forget the visible and lethal air pollution, the lakes “dead” from algal blooms and fish kills, and the burning rivers that led to the creation of EPA in 1970. Yet the nation still faces serious public health and environmental challenges from air and water pollution, lead and other contaminants in drinking water, and chemical contamination of our environment.

Reduced Support for Clean Air (40%)

EPA claims that one of its key priorities is to “improve air quality,” but by its own count, it proposes to cut support for that goal by 46%, from \$789 million to \$425 million. This includes 40% in proposed cuts to the air and radiation program from \$425 million to \$254 million.

Everyone breathes the air, and dirty air is unhealthy and contributes to serious, sometimes fatal health problems such as heart attacks, lung and heart disease, asthma attacks and other respiratory conditions, and even premature births. Using the regulatory tools Congress gave the agency, EPA develops policies, [programs](#) and regulations to protect human health, improve air quality and reduce exposure to radiation.

These include measures to address industrial air pollution, pollution from vehicles and engines, [indoor air quality](#), radon, [radiation hazards](#), acid rain and climate change. Among the tools are pollution prevention and energy efficiency, two particular targets of the Trump budget. The proposed cuts could slow or reverse progress in cleaning the air adults and especially children breathe, and addressing harmful pollutants that cause serious health effects. Specific cuts outlined in the budget include:

- [Federal vehicle and fuel standards and certification programs](#) that have reduced emissions by millions of tons and helped states meet health-based air quality standards would be cut by \$16 million, from \$94 million to \$78 million (17%).
- **Support for federal air quality management** would be cut by \$24 million (18%) from \$135 to \$111 million.
- **Two programs to protect the stratospheric ozone layer** that would save millions of American lives from skin cancer, avoid hundreds of millions of non-fatal skin cancers and tens of millions of cases of eye cataracts would be cut by 71% to \$3.9 million.
- **The budget slashes \$23 million from radon and indoor air protection programs** that protect the public from radon, which causes about 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year, and educate the public about indoor air pollution threats by 84%, from \$27.6 million to \$4.53 million.

The budget proposes another \$105 million (87%) in cuts to programs that protect air quality by providing grants to retrofit highly polluting diesel engines and for targeted airshed grants to the five areas most seriously in violation of air quality standards..

Cuts to Water Protection (19%)

[Clean Water Act water pollution control programs](#) would be cut by \$48 million (19%), from \$258 million to \$210 million. More than 215 million people live within two miles of a polluted lake, river, stream, or coastal area, and nearly half a million square miles of our nation’s surface waters are classified as “impaired” because they do not meet one or more standards for water quality. And the list is growing each year. Specific cuts outlined in the budget include:

- **Clean Water Act programs to protect surface water quality** and address harmful pollutants in rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters would be cut by \$22 million, from \$210 million to \$188 million (11%). These cuts include elimination of [marine pollution](#) funding to support work on ocean discharges of dredged material.
- [National estuaries and coastal waterways activities](#) that help states address harmful pollutants in rivers, streams, lakes and coastal waters would be cut to zero from \$26.7 million.

And despite the fact that Administrator Wheeler identifies safe drinking water as our greatest environmental challenge--more pressing than climate change--the budget actually *cuts* funding for EPA drinking water programs by \$8 million (8%), from \$102 million to \$94 million.

Cuts to Superfund, Brownfields and Hazardous Waste

Funding for the Superfund hazardous waste cleanup program, supposedly a high-priority area, would be cut by \$116 million (15%) from \$785 million to \$668 million.

Cuts in underground storage tank cleanups and brownfields development (45%)

- **Brownfields Revitalization** – Funding for the EPA brownfields program for cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties cut by 35%, from \$26 million to \$17 million. These cuts will affect jobs and redevelopment, and leave contaminated sites for future generations.
- **The Leaking Underground Storage Tank program** that enables EPA to address underground petroleum storage tanks that have seriously contaminated groundwater in many places would be cut 48%, from \$92 million to \$48 million.

Cutbacks in [hazardous waste management programs](#) of \$29 million, from \$109 million to \$80 million (27%). EPA helps ensure that hazardous waste is managed safely from production to disposal.

Cuts in Toxic Chemical Risk and Prevention Programs (28%)

The FY2020 budget deeply cuts funding for EPA and state programs to prevent and reduce toxic chemical risks. The federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) requires reporting, record-keeping and testing; restrictions on chemical substances in commerce that pose risks; and re-evaluation of the risks of existing chemicals. EPA has significant new responsibilities under major 2016 TSCA amendments, but instead of providing new funding to carry out those responsibilities, the budget reduces TSCA funding, eliminating the:

- pollution prevention program (\$11.2 million)
- lead risk reduction program (\$12.6 million)
- Endocrine disruptors screening program to evaluate chemicals that can interfere with the body's endocrine systems and damage human reproductive capacity growth and development (\$7.6 million)

The budget also cuts funding for the **Right to Know (Toxic Release Inventory)** program, which collects and releases data from over 20,000 facilities on toxic chemical releases and waste generation for hundreds of toxic chemical by 39%, to \$7.8 million.

Cuts in Programs Protecting the Public From Pesticides (22%)

EPA protects the public from the effects of toxic chemicals and pesticides using sound science to evaluate risks to human health and the environment, reevaluating pesticides and assessing the risks of emerging technologies such as genetically modified crops and nanotechnology, and working to prevent or reduce pollution before it is created. The Pesticide Licensing program would be cut by \$23.7 million, from \$109.4 million to \$85.7 million.

Deep Cuts in EPA Scientific Research (45%)

Far from being theoretical, sound science is at the core of almost everything EPA does to protect the American public from harm. Many forms of science, from toxicology to engineering, are interwoven into standard setting, reviews of new chemicals, disaster relief and Superfund cleanups. EPA scientists conduct, assess and fund studies that provide the scientific and technological information needed for developing effective pollution standards, measuring and monitoring pollution, and identifying new threats to public health and the environment. Sound science and technology are essential to meeting the agency's legal duty to ensure that solid evidence supports and informs its actions in such critical areas as addressing clean air; clean water; safe drinking water; safe use of pesticides, toxics and hazardous waste; and safe waste disposal. EPA funds and operates laboratories and networks to support compliance monitoring, emergency response and public health research.

Total cuts to research across the agency are a draconian 45%, from \$483 million to \$232 million, and the agency's climate change research is eliminated. Cuts to science make a mockery of EPA's purported "goal" to "prioritize robust science." The proposed cuts would weaken EPA's capacity to protect people's health and the environment and would also be felt by state and local governments, where science is an essential component of their decisions, which often rely on federal research.

Even without cuts in EPA science funding, the agency has been waging a virtual war on science, replacing independent scientists with energy industry employees on science review bodies, ignoring science findings in shaping rules, and even proposing a rule requiring EPA to ignore some scientific evidence in rulemaking.

Specific cuts to scientific research programs include:

- **65% cut in the Air and Energy** research (formerly Air, Climate and Energy) program, which works to understand the effects of air pollution, which pollutants to control and at what levels, and to prepare for responses to changes in climate and air quality, is cut by \$60 million, from \$92 million to \$32 million.
- **34% cut in the Safe and Sustainable Water** research program, which uses science to ensure safe drinking water and restoration of surface-water resources, is cut \$36 million, from \$106 million to \$70 million.
- **60% cut in the Sustainable and Healthy Communities** research program, which provides data and tools to help communities understand the benefits, including children's health benefits, of the "ecosystem services" that wetlands, urban tree cover, pollinators and green spaces provide. These include natural flood control, cleaner air and water, protection from heat and economic benefits. The program is cut by \$80 million, from \$134 million to \$54 million.
- **32% cut in the Chemical Safety and Sustainability** research program that evaluates the potential

impacts on human health and the environment of thousands of chemicals in existence and under development to create the scientific knowledge, tools and models needed to conduct integrated, timely and efficient chemical evaluations. The program is cut by \$40 million, from \$127 million to \$87 million.

- **38% cut in the Human Health Risk Assessment** research program, by \$14 million, from \$37 million to \$23 million. The program provides funding for EPA and state and local governments to assess the impacts of individual chemicals and chemical mixtures on human health. These assessments are needed to support priority risk management decisions.

Among other impacts, these cuts would:

- Impede the development of standards and the use of science in developing standards and science-based regulations;
- Delay site-specific assessments used for cleaning up hazardous waste;
- Reduce EPA's ability to fund and leverage outside research across the country to identify new environmental technologies and better ways to protect the environment;
- Reduce EPA's ability to address complex environmental problems such as nonpoint source pollution, chemical interactions or emerging risk sources such as nanoparticles, chemical weapons, select agents and toxins; and
- Reduce funding for the Science Advisory Board, a panel of external experts that provides independent advice to the agency.