

EPN “All Hands” Call, Friday, April 26, 2019

This month’s all-hands call provided an introduction to [Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility \(PEER\)](#) and a review of the recent “[EPA and the Future on Environmental Protection](#)” conference hosted by American University and the Alumni Association.

Presenters

Tim Whitehouse, Executive Director of PEER and former attorney at EPA

John Reeder, who most recently served as Deputy Chief of Staff at EPA and is currently on IPA at American University’s Center for Environmental Policy

PEER Introduction

PEER began in the 1990s as a spin-off from the Government Accountability Project to specialize in environmental concerns. They represent First Amendment and civil service actions that underscore environmental concerns they are facing. Current or former employees may work with PEER to bring issues into the public domain through official channels. PEER and EPN are similar in that both of their work streams are intake driven, they both submit formal comments on policy proposals, and both organizations are bipartisan. Some specific policy issues that PEER and EPN have both worked on are PFAS, WOTUS, and scientific integrity.

EPA and the Future on Environmental Protection Conference

American University, the Alumni Association, and the Environmental Law Institute partnered to host the “[EPA and the Future on Environmental Protection](#)” conference on April 23rd and 24th. John provided a summary of key takeaways and stimulated discussion on possible next steps. At least 300 guests with a variety of expertise attended the conference and there were representatives from the public and private sector, industry, and 8-10 press organizations. Two major questions were raised at the conference and reiterated by John and Derry Allen, fellow conference organizer, Board Member of the Alumni Association, and former Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Environmental Data:

1. How should EPA prepare to move forward as an institution? What issues need to be tackled and how?
2. How does the momentum of the conference stay fueled and lead to a meaningful product?

John provided personal takeaways but would like to leave conclusions broad and open, recognizing that many ideas may be better than fewer more narrow ones. John is in the process of collecting and summarizing takeaways from the conference as well as input on how to move forward. If you have thoughts you would like to contribute, please send them to reeder@american.edu or sebastian.irby@environmentalprotectionnetwork.org.

If you were unable to attend, you can find the agenda [here](#) and a stream to the first day [here](#). The conference was also reported in the press.

Following John’s presentation, we opened the line for questions and suggestions. Some of the ideas that came up were as follows: greater state involvement and collaborations; the importance of voting in 2020 and educating the public; success of nostalgia as a tool and a reminder of successes of the past, for example, “give a hoot, don’t pollute”; remaking the image of EPA; disseminating the message of EPA to wide audiences, from a diverse set of voices, and through a diverse set of platforms; thinking about the international implications of EPA; how EPA may function better with a larger budget; the need for EPA to adapt its messaging overtime; the need to reach young people; and frontline communities.