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# America First

## A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again



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GUEST COMMENTARY

## Mark Hague: EPA funding reductions will affect U.S.

BY MARK HAGUE  
*Special to The Star*

March 27, 2017 08:30 PM

Updated March 27, 2017 07:46 PM

As I read reports on proposals about unprecedented reductions to the Environmental Protection Agency budget, it's easy to see how those cuts will impact us in the heartland. The funding and staffing reductions under consideration for the EPA will undermine cleaner air, water and land, gains the EPA and the states have worked hard to achieve.

In creating the EPA, President Richard Nixon established a system that relied on the federal government and states to carry out environmental laws enacted by Congress. That system supports environmental programs to set standards to protect us from harmful

pollutants in our air, unregulated discharge of pollution into our rivers and streams, and contamination of our land. Currently, President Donald Trump's administration is considering reducing funding that the EPA gives to states to implement their environmental programs. The funding the EPA provides is essential for maintaining state environmental programs. To expect states to absorb those reductions is unrealistic. We need only look at the challenges Kansas and Missouri now face to fund basic services and education to see that covering any reduction in EPA funding is unlikely.

The proposed budget cuts do more than simply weaken support to state environmental programs. Cuts to personnel and funding will hamper the EPA's capacity to provide scientific and technical assistance to states and localities. EPA scientists provided support to Kansas City and Omaha to demonstrate the effectiveness of using green infrastructure to reduce combined sewer overflow. Green infrastructure can be a cost effective way to reduce the amount of rainwater that enters our sewer systems. The EPA provides valuable expertise and resources to assist states and localities responding to emergencies. The EPA provided critical support to state emergency responders dealing with record level flooding in the St. Louis area and the chemical plant explosion and fire in Neodesha, Kan. That critical response capacity ensured timely removal of flood debris and ensured that drinking water systems around Neodesha could resume using the Verdigris River as a drinking water source.

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Funding for climate change research and the regulation of greenhouse gases will be reduced or eliminated. Efforts to weaken or eliminate regulation of carbon and methane emissions are expected. Funding to help communities plan for the impacts of a changing climate and build resiliency is also in jeopardy. Attempts to roll back historic efforts to deal with climate change will have lasting consequences.


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The EPA helps communities redevelop abandoned and contaminated properties. Its brownfields programs have benefited many communities across the region. The program helped clear the way for development of a much-needed grocery store in the Kansas City, Kan., Argentine neighborhood. The size of reductions being discussed will also affect other the EPA programs that clean up contamination in communities.

The cuts proposed would likely impact all EPA programs. In the Kansas City area, the EPA staff help address lead contamination in homes and provide education and training for parents to help them reduce risks from lead paint and other environmental contaminants that can be asthma triggers. Many of those efforts by EPA staff working with community partners occur in areas where individuals are disproportionately exposed to environmental contaminants and more likely to experience health consequences.

If cuts being proposed by the Trump administration are supported by Congress, we need to understand those actions will impact us all. Together, the EPA and the states have made great progress in cleaning up our air, water and land. That job, however, is far from



finished.

*Mark Hague worked 37 years at the EPA, retiring as regional administrator.*

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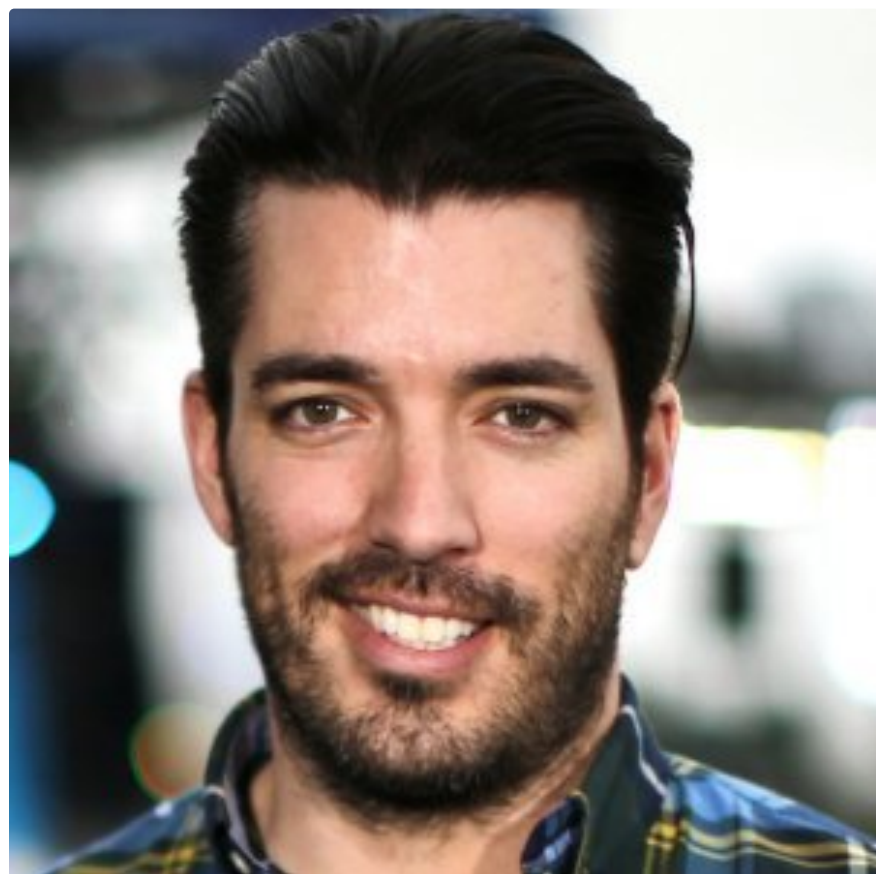
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