

How hobbling the Environmental Protection Agency would threaten Alaska’s health, families, jobs and economy

Support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is essential to protecting Alaska’s air, water and land. From cleaning up toxic mine sites to supporting tribal environmental programs, EPA grants provided the state with more than \$345 million in funding from 2012 to 2016. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration and many Members of Congress are working to hollow out the EPA and cut its budget to its lowest level since the 1970s, posing threats to millions of Alaskans who depend on the agency to protect their health and the state’s tourism and business climate.

EPA’s budget will be negotiated in a backroom by a President and EPA Administrator who have laid out a roadmap to cripple the EPA, along with many Congressional leaders who have shown little interest in protecting environmental safeguards. The EPA’s budget could be bargained away in the blink of an eye, and Alaskans could be the losers.

Eliminating and Slashing EPA Programs that Protect Alaska’s Environment

The Trump Administration’s Road Map

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and the Trump Administration are championing 30 percent cuts that would hollow out the EPA and cut its budget to its lowest level since the 1970s. If enacted, these cuts would reverse decades of progress cleaning up pollution, including toxic substances, that foul our drinking water, air and soil. In addition to these broad threats, the Trump/Pruitt budgets singles out EPA Indian Environmental General Assistance Program grants that help Indian tribes establish environmental programs and develop and implement plans for handling hazardous waste. These grants are of particular importance to Alaskan tribes, which received \$123.5 million from 2012 to 2016—almost half of all money awarded nationwide under the Program.

The Trump Administration’s Road Map

Programs, Grants, and Initiatives	Purpose	Trump Budget	2012-2016 Alaska Grants
Indian Environmental Assistance	Helps tribes address environmental health hazards	Cut 30%	\$125.5 million
Performance Partnership Grants	Helps states with their priority issues	Cut 45%	\$25.8 million
Brownfield Grants	Supports cleanup and redevelopment of polluted sites	Cut 30%	\$18.5 million
State Public Water System Supervision	Helps states and tribes meet keep public drinking water clean	Cut 30%	\$11.9 million

Leaking Underground Storage Tanks grants	Protects water and soil from tanks leaking chemicals	Eliminate	\$2.4 million
Water Pollution Control Grants	Supports water quality clean up and improvement	Cut 30%	\$1.8 million

The House of Representatives

The House-passed budget includes numerous cuts that would move our nation's public health and environmental quality backwards:

- Big cuts in water quality programs: The budget would slash more than \$300 million from programs to keep water clean
- Soft on polluters: Key efforts to enforce environmental safeguards and hold polluters accountable would be cut between 5-15 percent across multiple programs—including cleanup of Superfund hazardous waste sites—which could mean less support for legal and investigative staff who gather evidence and make companies pay for cleanups.
- Reckless on homeland security: A 15 percent cut in homeland security efforts that help identify vulnerable industrial facilities and water supplies, which can be critical in natural disasters.
- A retreat on science: The House budget would make deep cuts in research and development programs that help identify the most advanced, cost-effective means of preventing, detecting, and cleaning up pollution.

The House of Representatives		
Programs, Grants, and Initiatives	Purpose	House Budget Cuts
Water Programs		\$312.3 million
Research on Safe and Sustainable Water	Develops science & technologies to keep water clean and safe	\$15.9 million
Human Health Protection	Monitor and treat drinking water	\$14.8 million
Water Quality Protection	Provide loans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects.	\$31.6 million
Clean Water SRF	Finance infrastructure projects to improve water quality and public wastewater systems	\$250 million
Enforcement Programs		\$50.4 million
Science and Technology	Provide expert scientific and technical support for environmental enforcement cases	\$2.1 million
Environmental Progs and Mgmt	Enforce civil and criminal environmental laws	\$36.1 million
Hazardous Substance Superfund	Ensure that responsible parties conduct cleanups	\$12 million
Homeland Security		\$8.5 million
Science and Technology	Research to protect water system security and deal with terrorist attacks and other disasters	\$4.9 million
Environmental Progs and Mgmt	Support EPA communications and protection of water infrastructure during a homeland security incident	\$1.5 million
Buildings and Facilities	Protection of EPA personnel and infrastructure	\$500,000
Hazardous Substance Superfund	Prepare for and respond to incident involving possible chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear agents	\$2 million

Almost 740,000 Alaskans, nearly a sixth of them Native American, depend on a safe and healthy environment to live a good life. Over the last five years, Alaska has received more than \$345 million in grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to protect the state's environment and economy. Millions more have gone to support state and local environmental and public health efforts, including assistance in the form of science and technology, legal expertise and enforcement.

But the Trump Administration and many Members of Congress are working to cut the EPA's budget by 30 percent. These historic cuts would reverse decades of progress in cleaning up the toxic substances that foul drinking water, air and soil, posing grave threats to health and safety. They would strip the EPA of decades of scientific and technical expertise that Alaska has turned to time and again to support state and local cleanups of dangerous pollution, as well as the legal support to go after polluters.

The threats are serious. Cleanup of hazardous Superfund sites could be delayed, and corroding underground storage tanks could leak more harmful chemicals into both soil and water. Alaska's drinking water and recreational rivers and streams could be more vulnerable to harmful runoff of pesticides and industrial chemicals. There would be fewer tools to address polluted air.

For every family, especially their vulnerable children and seniors, these cuts would move Alaska's environment backward to a dirtier and more dangerous era: More poisons in the soil and toxic substances in the water, and more of the cancers that follow. More asthma attacks and smog, and more "Code Red" bad-air days where kids and seniors should stay indoors. More mercury, arsenic, lead and other toxic substances that have no place in anyone's lungs or drinking water. More pesticides in food, water, and the environment. More unaddressed waste sites that threaten community health and sap economic development. And fewer investigations to make polluters pay for the costs of cleaning up their waste.

For Alaska's Native American and other minority populations, these cuts would do extra damage, in part because minorities are more likely to live near hazardous waste sites. Tribal communities would have a harder time cleaning up hazardous waste sites. The Trump Administration is even trying to shut down a modest program, EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, which has enjoyed bipartisan support for its efforts to ensure that everyone gets equal protection from environmental and health hazards.

As the Congress moves towards adopting a new budget this fall, cuts have already been proposed by both the Administration and by Appropriations Committee members in Congress. Many vital spending decisions will be made behind closed doors as members horse-trade and make deals with an administration that is eager to jettison pollution prevention and cleanup programs. Why is it so important to understand which anti-pollution programs are being targeted for deep cuts or outright elimination? So that Alaskans can weigh in with their Members of Congress to ensure that EPA funding is fully preserved.

The Threat to Alaska's Land

The Trump Administration would drastically reduce EPA funding for programs that protect Alaskans from the health and safety risks of contaminated soil and that help clean up pollution so that properties can be returned to productive economic use. The positive effects of clean soil multiply through the environment, since contaminated soil can also pollute groundwater.

The enemy underground: leaking underground storage tank grants

Program at Risk: Leaking underground storage tank grants and trust fund

Across the country, thousands of underground storage tanks and accompanying pipes—many of them made from older corroded steel—hold and carry a variety of fuels and chemicals.¹ When tanks are at risk of leaking harmful chemicals such as oil, gas, benzene and toluene into soil and ground water, drinking water is fouled, backyards and businesses become dangerous, community health is jeopardized, and economic development is crippled.

Alaska has a backlog of more than 300 leaking underground storage tanks (or LUSTs).² EPA has supported essential programs in Alaska to monitor these tanks, detect leaks of petroleum products, address the causes of leaks, repair damage to soil or groundwater, hold polluters responsible for cleanup costs, and contribute funds for cleanup if the responsible party can't be found or is no longer in business. Leaking underground storage tanks cleanups received more than \$2.3 million in EPA grant funding in Alaska from 2012 to 2016.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Leaking Underground Storage Tanks	\$2.36 Million

The Trump Administration's proposed budget would eliminate leaking underground storage tank grants and lower support for the leaking underground storage tank grants trust fund.

Fewer clean-ups and economic development at polluted properties

Program at Risk: Brownfield grants

Brownfield sites are properties where contamination prevents economic development and threatens public health and safety. Research has shown that residential property values near restored brownfield sites increased between 5 and 15 percent and can increase property values in a 1.24-mile radius of that site. A study analyzing data near 48 brownfield sites shows an estimated \$29 million to \$97 million in additional tax revenue was generated for local governments in a single year after cleanup. This is two to seven times more than the \$12.4 million EPA contributed to those brownfield sites.³

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Brownfield Grants	\$18.5 Million

Before cleanup and redevelopment can happen safely and be permitted to go forward, brownfield sites must be assessed and tested for soil contamination. The risk of hazardous substances, petroleum or asbestos being released when disturbing soil at the site or dismantling properties. To carry out this assessment work, EPA funds pay for expert tests of soil, ground water, sediment, surface water and vapors. EPA grants also help pay for the actual cleanup.

The Trump administration's proposed budget would cut brownfield restoration programs by 30 percent.

These cuts could hamper cleanups at more than 100 Brownfield sites in Alaska.⁴ From 2012-16, Alaska received \$18.5 million in EPA grants that have helped local counties and communities clean up polluted properties to protect people's lives and spark job-creating economic redevelopment.

Fewer cleanups of toxic chemicals, less accountability for polluters

Program at Risk: Superfund program, including emergency response and enforcement funds

EPA provides grants to states, tribes and local communities to deal with Superfund sites. Alaska had six hazardous waste sites on the EPA Superfund National Priorities List in mid-2017, and the state received nearly a million dollars in Superfund grants from 2012 to 2016. EPA's expertise is vital in assessing the chemical contents of waste sites and the risks they present, designing and putting measures in place to protect health and safety, and holding polluters accountable.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Superfund Grants	\$949,118

Alaska Superfund Sites



The Trump Administration’s budget would slash funding designed to deal with these hazardous sites. Hazardous substance cleanup spending through Superfund would be cut by 30 percent, include an 18 percent cut to emergency response funds, which help clean up the most urgent threats. And the Administration’s cuts would shift more cleanup costs from polluters to taxpayers, by instituting 37 percent cuts in enforcement funds that help efforts to track down polluters and make them pay to clean up sites for which they are responsible.

By cleaning up vast amounts of toxic waste, the EPA’s Superfund program has reduced severe threats to Alaskans’ health and returned contaminated

properties to job-creating productivity (or restored them as vital natural habitats). Without Superfund cleanups, toxic chemicals like lead, mercury, arsenic, and dioxin are left to render entire locations dangerous or uninhabitable, and to leak into water and soil.

The Threat to Tribal Communities

Leaving tribes more vulnerable to environmental threats

Program at Risk: Indian environmental general assistance program

Alaska tribes received \$123.5 million from 2012 to 2016 through EPA’s Indian Environmental General Assistance Program—almost half of all money awarded nationwide under the Program. Congress established the program in 1992 to help Indian tribes establish environmental programs and develop and implement plans for handling hazardous waste.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Indian Environmental General Assistance Grants	\$125.5 Million

Grants to Alaska tribes have helped them manage solid and electronics waste, research seawall upgrades, backhaul abandoned vehicles and lead acid batteries, package hazardous wastes and recyclables, research local threats, build management and response capacity, educate and organize their communities. The Trump administration’s budget would cut these grants by 30 percent.

The threat to Alaska’s water

With almost 365,000 miles of rivers, commercial fisheries that depend on healthy waterways are critical to the state’s economy. But proposed Trump Administration budgets cuts would decimate funding for programs that protect rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater across the state.

More dangerous runoff in the water

Program at Risk: water pollution control grants

EPA Water Pollution Control can support a wide variety of water pollution prevention and control programs and activities, including monitoring and assessing water quality, Developing water quality standards, identifying impaired waters and total maximum daily loads, managing national pollutant discharge elimination system permits, ensuring compliance, implementing enforcement actions, protecting source water, and managing outreach and education programs.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Water Pollution Control	\$1.8 Million

Alaska received \$1.8 million in such grants from 2012 to 2016; the Trump administration’s proposed budget would cut these grants by 30 percent.

The Threat to Alaska's Air

Alaskans have reason to be concerned about the air they breathe. According to the American Lung Association, the Fairbanks metro area is the 5th most ozone-polluted city in the United States in terms of short-term particle pollution; Anchorage ranks 14th.⁵

More code red days

Program at Risk: Clean Air Act grants

The Trump Administration budget would cut nearly one-third from programs that help states, local and tribal communities monitor air quality.

For decades, the Clean Air Act and EPA grants have helped states and communities make historic progress in reducing air pollution. Nationwide, U.S. EPA funds almost one-third of state and local programs to monitor air quality and alert residents when air quality is potentially harmful. Cleaner air means more productive workers, fewer Code Red days where parents must keep kids indoors, and fewer attacks for the more than 41,000 adults and 12,000 children in Alaska diagnosed with asthma.⁶

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Air Pollution Control Program Support	\$410,213

Alaska received \$410,213 in these grants from 2012-16.

Other Challenges

Less money for environmental research

Program at Risk: Science to achieve results

EPA's Science to Achieve Results Program, or STAR, provides funding for research projects and graduate fellowships that help address pressing scientific challenges and build the workforce of future environmental scientists. Alaska received \$888,282 in STAR grants from 2012 to 2016. The Trump administration's proposed budget would eliminate the program.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Science to Achieve Results	\$888,282

Less flexibility to pursue emerging problems

Program at Risk: Performance partnership grants

The Trump Administration has proposed a massive 44 percent reduction in EPA Performance Partnership Grants, which allow Alaska to apply EPA grant money toward its most pressing air, water and land issues.' These grants allow states to use EPA awards with greater flexibility for addressing priority environmental problems or program needs, streamline paperwork and accounting procedures to reduce administrative costs, and try cross-program initiatives and approaches that were difficult to fund under traditional category grants. Alaska received \$25.8 million in Performance Partnership Grants from 2012 to 2016.

EPA Funding to Alaska FY12-FY16	
Performance Partnership Grants	\$25.8 million

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/ust/learn-about-underground-storage-tanks-usts>

² <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/ca-16-34.pdf>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-brownfields-funding-announced-roseville-newark-norwalk-painesville-piqua-port>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/cleanups-my-community>

⁵ <http://www.lung.org/assets/documents/healthy-air/state-of-the-air/state-of-the-air-2017.pdf>, pp. 15, 17.

⁶ Ibid., p. 60.