Hobbling the Environmental Protection Agency would threaten Colorado's health, families, jobs and economy

Support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is essential to protecting Colorado's air, water, and land. From safeguarding waterways from dangerous runoff to cleaning up toxic sites, EPA grants provided the state with more than $295 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 Coloradans 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 Coloradans could be the losers.

Environment and public health are at risk

Fewer clean-ups and economic development at polluted properties
Program at risk: Brownfield grants. Proposed cut: 28%

Brownfield sites are properties where contamination prevents economic development and threatens public health and safety. But they have the potential – once cleaned up – to generate new jobs. Research has shown that residential property values near restored brownfield sites around the country have 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 (two to seven times more than the $12.4 million EPA contributed to cleaning up those brownfield sites). EPA brownfield grants have even greater positive impacts on communities with higher poverty rates, large minority populations, and lower than average incomes.

These cuts could hamper cleanups at more than 450 brownfield sites in Colorado. From 2012-16, Colorado received $9.2 million in EPA grants programs for assessment and cleanup of brownfield sites that have helped local counties and communities clean up polluted properties to protect people's lives and spark job-creating economic redevelopment.

More Code Red days
Program at Risk: State & Local Air Quality Management Grants | Tribal Air Quality Management Grants
Proposed cut: 33% | 30%

For decades, the Clean Air Act and EPA grants have helped states and communities make historic strides in reducing air pollution, with EPA grants covering almost 30 percent of state and local air monitoring costs. Cleaner air means more productive workers, fewer Code Red days when parents must keep kids indoors, and fewer attacks for the more than 338,000 adults and 96,000 children in Colorado already diagnosed with asthma.

Programs to monitor and cut air pollution are especially important to minority populations, who are disproportionately located in urban areas like Denver. Yet Trump and Pruitt want to abolish the environmental justice work that helps protect people in those areas. A strong EPA means less air pollution in Denver, which means better heart health and even lower rates of heart attacks and strokes.

* FY12-16 funding totals obtained from https://www.usaspending.gov/Pages/Default.aspx

More dangerous runoff in the water
Program at Risk: Nonpoint source pollution program grants. Proposed cut: Eliminated

Runoff, sometimes called "Nonpoint Source Pollution," is the leading cause of water quality problems in the United States. It comes when rainwater washes over areas containing contaminants such as industrial waste, agricultural pesticides or lawn-treatment chemicals, and gets into surface water, ground water, or soil.

From FY2012-2016, EPA provided $18.2 million to help protect Colorado's water. Colorado has more than 105,344 river miles and more than 249,787 lake acres. The state depends heavily on its rivers. According to a recent U.S Geological Survey study, more than half the flow of rivers in the upper part of the Colorado River Basin is sustained by groundwater. Protecting these water sources are vital to the health of the entire state.

Leaking underground storage tank grants, the enemy underground
Program at risk: Leaking underground storage tank categorical grants. Proposed cut: Eliminated

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

Colorado has a backlog of more than 500 underground storage tanks and, from 2012 to 2016, the state received more than $7.1 million in EPA grant funding to assist in leaking underground storage tank cleanup. EPA has supported essential programs in Colorado to monitor these tanks, detect leaks of petroleum products, address the causes of leaks, repair damage to soil or groundwater, hold parties responsible for cleanup costs, and contribute funds for cleanup if the responsible party can't be found. The Trump Administration's proposed budget would cut 48% from the overall Leaking Underground Storage Tank program.

Less money for environmental research
Program at Risk: Science to achieve results. Proposed cut: Eliminated

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. Colorado received $16 million in STAR grants from 2012 to 2016, including $7 million to the University of Colorado, $5 million to Colorado State University and $1.1 million to the National Jewish Medical & Research Center in Denver. The Trump Administration's proposed budget would eliminate the program.