



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

Support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is essential to protecting Nevada's air, water, and land. From cleaning up toxic sites to reducing toxic air pollution, EPA grants provided the state with more than \$173 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 Nevadans 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 Nevadans could be the losers.

Environment and public health are at risk

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.

Dozens of Nevada projects have relied on EPA grant money to combat nonpoint source pollution. Water testing in 2002, for instance, showed potentially harmful levels of lead and sediments in the Las Vegas Wash, which carries water from the 1,600-square mile Las Vegas Valley into Lake Mead, the source of drinking water for millions in Nevada and nearby states. The problem stemmed in part from rising population and land development, leading to an increase in hard surfaces such as parking lots and rooftops that in turn caused higher levels of rainwater flowing into the Wash. Aided by EPA Nonpoint Source Pollution Control grants, state and local officials launched a major effort to address water quality, through rebuilding stream banks, restoring vegetation and wildlife habitat, and removing invasive plant species.

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. Preventing and addressing spills from these backlogs is a major environmental priority.

Nevada has a backlog of more than 150 leaking underground tanks needing cleanup, according to state and federal data. EPA has supported essential programs in Nevada to monitor underground storage tanks, detect leaks of petroleum products, address the causes, repair any damage to soil or groundwater and hold polluters accountable for paying their fair share of cleanup costs.

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

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 fewer Code Red and other alert days when parents must keep kids indoors, fewer attacks for more than one million Nevadans with asthma, and fewer health threats to workers. Currently, 92 percent of Nevadans live in counties receiving an “F” on an air quality measure from the American Lung Association. Nevada’s two most populous regions ranked among the top 10 worst in the nation: Las Vegas/Henderson was rated 10th most polluted for ozone, while Reno-Carson City-Fernley ranked 10th worst in the United States for short-term particle pollution.

In Nevada, as in all states, EPA grant funding has helped support the air quality monitoring that helped detect those numbers. It has also helped ensure that the public is warned when the concentration of ozone or pollutants in the air could be harmful to all or to especially vulnerable populations like children, the elderly or people with health conditions. Services like this are critical in a state where 39,000 children and more than 179,000 adults have been diagnosed with asthma.

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 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. 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 proposed cuts could hamper cleanup at more than 200 brownfield sites in Nevada. From 2012 to 2016, the state received \$6.5 million in EPA grants that have helped local counties and communities clean up polluted properties to protect people’s health and spark job-creating economic redevelopment.

Less support for tribes dealing with hazardous waste

Program at Risk: Tribal general assistance program. Proposed cut: 32%

Nevada tribal authorities received \$11.4 million from 2012 to 2016 through EPA’s Indian Environmental General Assistance Program. Congress established the program in 1992 to help Indian tribes establish environmental protection programs and develop and implement plans for handling hazardous waste. Grants to Nevada tribes have helped them establish programs to mitigate the effects of climate change, clean up hazardous waste sites and train their own environmental protection staff. The Trump Administration’s proposed budget would cut these tribal assistance grants by 32 percent.