

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt :

I am writing to express my concern about the impacts of substantial cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the citizens and businesses of Pennsylvania. Slashing the EPA budget — including a potential 30% reduction in the funding we use to carry out responsibilities under federal environmental laws — would have an immediate and devastating effect on my state's ability to ensure that Pennsylvania's air is safe to breathe, our water is safe to drink, and our economy prospers. Put simply, cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency signal the Trump administration's disregard for its responsibility to protect the health and safety of American citizens.

The Pennsylvania Department Environmental Protection (DEP) relies on federal funding to administer a variety of mandated programs which protect the safety of coal miners, address lead contamination, prevent air pollution which contributes to respiratory diseases, and redevelop contaminated industrial sites. Over the past decade, DEP has worked to further its mission, even as constrained state and federal budgets have allowed for fewer inspections and created significant permitting backlogs.

A 30% cut in federal funding would significantly reduce popular, successful, bipartisan programs that protect public health and the environment, and lead to economic development. Cutting these programs will:

- **Risk safe water.** In the Safe Drinking Water program, these cuts would mean at least 30% fewer inspections at the commonwealth's 8,500 public water systems, hampering our ability to detect contaminants like lead, water-borne pathogens, and putting Pennsylvania's 10.7 million water customers at risk.
- **Diminish local water quality.** The proposed cuts to the federally funded portion of the Clean Water Bureau budget would mean cutting at least 850 inspections from the 6,144 inspections that ensure that sewage plants, industrial wastewater discharges, and construction sites are not threatening the water quality of Pennsylvanians downstream. Reductions in federal funds will also lengthen permit issuance timelines, hampering important economic development projects in Pennsylvania.
- **Abandon farmers.** Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay program — which you recently acknowledged as a model of federal/state partnerships, and is starting to show real results in curbing pollution to the Bay — would see funding completely eliminated. This

program would no longer be able to provide much-needed support to Pennsylvania small farmers and local governments to improve their local water quality.

- **Stifle job creation.** Pennsylvania's Brownfields program cleans up contaminated properties for redevelopment, promoting economic development and preserving green space. Since 1995, almost 5,000 brownfields have been cleaned up, leading to almost 100,000 jobs created or retained. A 30% cut to this program could inhibit brownfields from being returned to productive use for new and expanding business and industry in Pennsylvania.
- **Allow harmful pollutants to poison.** A 30% or more cut to the Bureau of Air Quality would limit air monitoring for harmful pollutants such as volatile organic compounds, mercury, and particulate matter, and have a negative impact on the timeline for review of air quality permits which companies need in order to start operations or expand.
- **Expose children to radon gas.** Proposed cuts included the complete elimination of funding to help protect residents from radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Pennsylvania has one of the most serious radon problems in the country and the proposed cuts would result in the elimination of public education efforts and distribution of free radon test kits for new parents.
- **Suppress environmental justice.** Proposed budget cuts would eliminate the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, which exists to ensure that Americans, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, have meaningful involvement in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies. Closing this program shows a startling disrespect for minority and economically disadvantaged Americans.

These budget cuts do not reduce any of the responsibilities that DEP has to the people of Pennsylvania, but does decrease the resources available to fulfill those responsibilities. These cuts, if enacted, would harm businesses seeking permits, and harm residents' clean water, air, and land.

In addition, I would like to address your recent comments regarding climate change. It is beyond disappointing that the nation's top environmental official would call into question the overwhelming scientific consensus and undermine progress on this critical subject. The changing climate is the most significant environmental and social threat facing the world, and emissions from the United States are a significant cause. Pennsylvania has already experienced a long-term warming of nearly two degrees over the past century, and this trend is expected to accelerate. By 2050, Pennsylvania is predicted to be an average of 5.4°F warmer than it was in 2000. In the face of this reality, foot dragging and hand wringing is not an option, we need decisive action. I urge you to take seriously your responsibility to provide leadership in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—not to spread doubt and falsehoods about the existence of the problem.

Pennsylvania has benefited from a long partnership with the federal government to address environmental concerns, which has resulted in great improvements to the health, quality of life, and economic prosperity of Pennsylvania residents. Over its nearly 50-year history, the agency you seem intent on hobbling helped save the bald eagle from extinction by regulating pesticides,

reduced corrosive and toxic acid rain, helped protect the ozone layer, and curtailed tailpipe emissions which contribute to smog. In recent weeks, you've spoken of solutions that come from federal/state relationships. We urge the Trump administration not to turn its back on those very federal-state partnerships that have produced these many benefits. We hope to continue to work with EPA to protect Pennsylvania's public health and support economic prosperity. Thank you for your consideration of our joint responsibilities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick McDonnell", written in a cursive style.

Patrick McDonnell
Acting Secretary