



NEWS RELEASE

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Montana at Risk: New Environmental Defense Fund Report “*State of Risk*” Reveals Adverse Impact on Montana Communities & Public Health from Threatened EPA Cuts *Congress to Decide Fate of Critical Environmental Operations in Next 30 Days*

(Aug. 31, 2017) [State of Risk: Montana](#), a new report from the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), catalogues far-reaching and grave threats to air, water and land and to the people and economy of Montana if President Trump’s proposed 30 percent cut to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) budget is enacted this fall. Such cuts would move the agency funding radically backward to its lowest level since the mid-1970s.

The report provides an extensive overview of the EPA’s footprint in Montana and examines how the proposed cutback plans threaten public health as well as commerce and tourism in the Treasure State. States and local communities would face a terrible choice: stick taxpayers with the bill, drop other projects or watch their communities slide backward and become more polluted and less healthy.

The EPA has provided more than \$190 million in grants alone to Montana over five years, notes the report.

“President Trump’s plan will shut down clean-air monitoring, kill safe-water projects, and leave tracts of land in Montana polluted and undevelopable,” said Elgie Holstein, EDF’s Senior Director of Strategic Planning.

“The president seeks to roll back common-sense environmental safeguards that have protected the health and well-being of Montana for decades,” Holstein added, “This is not just an assault on an agency. It is an assault on public health and safety.”

Documenting specific local and statewide consequences of the proposed EPA cuts, the report finds that hollowing out the EPA would be disastrous for Montana. The Trump Administration and some in Congress are working to push the cuts through in the next 30 days, before the federal fiscal year ends.

“Washington is so broken right now that the Trump road map could be enacted in a blink of an eye in a backroom deal when Congress returns in September,” said Holstein.

The report provides a snapshot of the environmental needs and programs which a fully funded EPA can continue to remedy and support:

- **Water is at risk in Montana.** Outdoor recreation in Montana generates \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries, \$5.8 billion in consumer spending, \$403 million in state and local tax revenue, and supports 64,000 jobs, according to surveys conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association. With more than 3,200 lakes and 1,500 streams in Glacier National Park, private and commercial

fishing are critical to the state's economy. EPA nonpoint source pollution grant funding is essential to combating runoff pollution, which can contain harmful pesticides and industrial chemicals that make their way into streams. The Trump Administration's proposed budget would eliminate this program entirely.

- **Land is at risk in Montana.** Montana is home to 17 of the nation's most polluted "Superfund" sites, as well as more than 250 brownfield sites with potential to be restored into viable job-building commercial land. The Trump budget would cut brownfield and Superfund funding by 30 percent. Montana also has a backlog of more than 790 underground storage tanks at risk of leaking harmful chemicals into both soil and water; the administration plan eliminates one of two EPA programs to prevent and detect leaks and clean ground and groundwater – and cuts in half the second program.

"My livelihood depends on Montana's quality air and water, and it is of the utmost importance to me that our air and water quality remain free of contamination so that people continue to want to travel to Montana," said Elin Hert of Bozeman, MT, who has worked for travel company *Off the Beaten Path* for nearly 30 years. "In addition, as population expands and Montana sees unprecedented growth and development, we are more reliant than ever on quality performance by the EPA."

A U.S. House of Representatives committee's alternate budget would, if passed, partly restore some EPA programs but still leave many major programs unfunded, provide for significant staff cuts and leave other parts of the president's plan to demolish EPA unchanged.

Holstein, who formerly oversaw environment and science budgets for the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, said Montana's Congressional delegation will find in the new report hundreds of ways in which EPA has been helping the state manage risk.

"Congress can and must stop the madness of these proposed cuts," Holstein said. "Anything less than full EPA funding for 2018 would hobble the environmental protections on which Montanans and others across the United States rely as the foundation for building a better life."

State of Risk: Montana is one in a series of Environmental Defense Fund reports cataloguing the impact of president Trump's proposed cuts to EPA funding. The reports are available at www.EDF.org/EPAcuts.

Montana and EDF experts are available to provide further context and comment about the EPA budget; please contact Keith Gaby, kgaby@edf.org (202) 572-3336

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