State of Risk: Nevada

How Hobbling the Environmental Protection Agency Would Threaten Nevada's Health, Families, Jobs and Economy



Introduction

Hollowing out the EPA would be a disaster for Nevada's health and tourist economy. Dear Reader:

Decisions are being made in Washington, DC that could move Nevada's environment, public health and economy backward in the next few months and for years to come. The Trump Administration and many Members of Congress are working to weaken the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and cut its budget to its lowest level since the 1970s.

Hollowing out the EPA would be a disaster for Nevada's health and tourist economy. Millions of Nevadans could be at risk of exposure to dangerous or even toxic pollution in the air they breath and the water they drink, and natural landmarks that draw tourist revenue could be fouled. Superfund cleanups like the Carson River Mercury Site could be moved to the back burner. Homeowners could face more exposure to lead paint and poisonous radon gas. Local tribes would have a harder time cleaning up hazardous waste sites.

This report, *State of Risk: How Hobbling* the Environmental Protection Agency Would Threaten Nevada's Health, Families, Jobs and Economy, shows how shrinking the EPA and its programs could imperil a generation of environmental safeguards across the state.

For nearly three million residents who depend on a safe and healthy environment to live a good life and support good jobs, and for more than 55 million tourists who visit each year, undermining EPA's work would move Nevada backward to a dirtier and more dangerous era.

The Environmental Defense Fund works to solve the most critical environmental problems facing the planet. We are guided by science and economics to find practical and lasting solutions to our most serious environmental problems. We work in concert with other organizations, business, government and communities to preserve natural systems.

I invite you to read the report and see how EPA budget cuts and the elimination of environmental safeguards would harm the health of our children and families. I hope you'll join us in protecting our environment for our children and the generations who will follow us.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth B. Thompson, Vice President U.S. Climate and Political Affairs

Elizabeth B. Thompson

Acknowledgments

This is one in a series of Environmental Defense Fund reports cataloguing the impact of President Trump's proposed cuts to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funding that protects public health and the environment in communities across America. The report was written and researched by Elgie Holstein, Senior Director for Strategic Planning and former Associate Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget. Special thanks to Ben Schneider, Senior Communications Manager, for managing the project and for overseeing the production and release of this series.

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State of risk: Nevada

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

The Trump
Administration cuts
would move Nevada's
environment backward
to a dangerous and
dirtier era.

Nearly 3 million Nevadans, a quarter of them Latino, depend on a safe and healthy environment to live a good life. They need clean water, air and soil to raise healthy children, to be successful ranchers and farmers, and to grow a range of businesses from tourism to logistics to technology. Nevada's waters at Lake Tahoe and Lake Mead, its rock formations and desert landscapes draw millions of visitors every year. Indeed, a large portion of the 55 million annual visitors to Nevada said they are drawn by not just the casinos and entertainment in Las Vegas and Reno but also by the state's amazing state parks, mountains, deserts and scenic drives.1 The American Dream, and Nevada's future, rest on an environment that fosters healthy residents and good jobs while attracting millions of visitors.

Nevada's environmental health depends on strong partnerships with the federal government. Over the last five years, Nevada has received more than \$83 million in grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect the state's environment and economy. Additional EPA dollars have gone straight to local and regional projects. Millions more have been spent to ensure that states such as Nevada have the benefit of the best environmental protection and cleanup science and technology. EPA support is critical, since the state's Department of Environmental Protection receives no money from the state's general tax fund, according to the Environmental Council of the States.2

But 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. These historic cuts would reverse decades of progress in cleaning up the toxic substances that foul our drinking water, air and soil, posing grave threats to our health and safety. They would strip the EPA of decades of scientific and technical expertise that Nevada has turned to time and again to support state and local cleanups of toxic pollution, as well as the legal support to go after polluters.

For Nevada's minority populations, these cuts would do extra damage. For example, the EPA indicates that 156 million people, including 62 percent of all minorities in the United States, live within three miles of a Superfund, brownfield or solid and hazardous waste "corrective action" site.³ But the Trump Administration is proposing to cut 100 percent of the funding for the EPA's environmental justice work under the Superfund cleanup program, along with a 37 percent cut in funding to notify communities everywhere about what chemicals are being stored and used at industrial locations.⁴

The Trump Administration is also 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. The Environmental Justice Small Grants Program, for instance, has made large impacts with low-dollar amounts, providing more than \$24 million in funding to more than 1,400 projects nationwide since 1994.5

These cuts would imperil generations of

environmental and economic progress in Nevada. There would be fewer tools to clean up the state's air, already among the nation's dirtiest. Drinking water in the Las Vegas Valley, where almost a third of the population is Latino, could be jeopardized. Superfund cleanups like the Carson River Mercury Site could be further delayed. Homeowners could face more exposure to lead paint and poisonous radon gas. Local tribes would have a harder time cleaning up hazardous waste sites.

For every family, especially their vulnerable children and seniors, these cuts will move Nevada's environment backward to a dirtier and more dangerous era: More poisons in our soil and toxic substances in our 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.

As Congress moves toward 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 weaken EPA and jettison pollution prevention and cleanup programs.

That's why it's so important to understand which antipollution programs are being targeted for elimination or deep reductions: so that Nevadans can weigh in with their Members of Congress to ensure that EPA funding is fully preserved.

"Latinos and communities of color are more likely to live, go to school and work amid pollution levels that no family should have to endure. We need effective EPA programs to ensure that everyone has access to the necessary resources to live healthy and productive lives with access to clean air, water, and land."

Brent Wilkes, Chief Executive Officer, League of United Latin American Citizens

The Trump Administration's road map: Eliminating and slashing EPA programs that protect Nevada's environment

Programs, grants and initiatives	Purpose	Trump Proposal	2012-2016 Grants
Indoor Radon Grant Program	Reduces radon in homes, schools and buildings	Eliminate	\$1.9 million
Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program (Section 319 grants)	Fights runoff pollution from roads, parking lots and excessive fertilizer	Eliminate	\$7.8 million
Leaking Underground Storage Tanks	Protects water and soil from	Eliminate	\$1.9 million
Trust Fund monies to address Backlog of Hazardous Tanks	tanks leaking chemicals	Cut 48%	\$2.8 million
Performance Partnership Grants	Helps states with their priority environmental and health issues	Cut 45%	\$15.4 million
Indian Environmental Assistance	Helps tribes address environmental health hazards	Cut 30%	\$11.3 million
Water Pollution Control (Section 106 grants)	Supports water quality cleanup and improvement	Cut 30%	\$9.0 million
Brownfield Grants	Supports cleanup and redevelopment of polluted sites	Cut 30%	\$6.5 million
Air Pollution Control	Reduces "Code Red & Orange" days	Cut 30%	\$8.0 million

The threat to Nevada's waters

Clean water is essential to sustaining life, health and prosperity in arid Nevada. From the shores of Lake Mead to the forests overlooking Lake Tahoe, clean water is an essential element of sustaining life, health and prosperity in arid Nevada. In a state where less than one percent of the surface area is covered by water, few resources are as precious. EPA grants have played an essential role in helping control pollution and protect drinking water for Nevadans, but if cuts proposed by the Trump Administration take effect, Nevada's waters will be in danger.

For example, EPA provided Native American communities with \$6 million to help protect waters impacting Native American communities in FY 2016, under a program that would be eliminated by the Trump Administration's budget. Tribal water systems average about 60 percent more water quality violations than other water systems, 6 and Native Americans are more likely to have health problems from water contamination because they use the land and water for subsistence and cultural practices. 7

More toxic runoff in our water

PROGRAM AT RISK:

Nonpoint source pollution program grants; water quality grants

The Trump Administration would eliminate EPA grants to Nevada that have totaled \$7.8 million over the last five years, helping to control pollutants carried by rainfall runoff into the state's drinking water, rivers and lakes.

Polluted runoff, sometimes called "nonpoint source pollution," is the number one source of water pollution in the United States today. In contrast to "point-source" pollution, which can be traced to a single location such as a factory waste pipe, "nonpoint source" pollution seeps off broad areas such as parking lots and roads, construction sites, agricultural lands, etc. Stormwater can threaten our water with animal waste laden with harmful pathogens, sewage, industrial waste, pesticides, abandoned mine runoff and oil and gas from roadways.



EPA nonpoint source pollution grants to Nevada

Year	Nonpoint source grants
2012	\$1.5 million
2013	\$1.7 million
2014	\$1.5 million
2015	\$1.6 million
2016	\$1.5 million
Total	\$7.8 million

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.⁸

Another major source of EPA funds for water quality is the agency's Water Pollution Control Grant program, which provides support to states for a variety of tactics that protect human health and safety from contaminated water. The Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and several tribal governments in the state received more than \$9 million in these grants from 2012 to 2016. The Trump Administration budget would cut those grants by 30 percent. Similarly, EPA grants to support public water systems provided \$4 million in funding to the state's water systems from 2012 to 2016. Those grants would also be slashed by 30 percent under the Trump budget.

"Nevadans, particularly low income and communities of color, shoulder the burden of pollution, polluters and climate change.
Environmental regulations, and a strong EPA to enforce them, are essential to leveling the playing field so that our communities are healthy and can thrive."

Rudy Zamora Chispa Nevada program director



The threat to Nevada's land

The Trump Administration would drastically reduce EPA funding for programs that protect Nevadans from the health and safety risks of contaminated soil and that help clean up pollution so that contaminated 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.

Fewer cleanups of toxic chemicals, less accountability for polluters

PROGRAM AT RISK: Superfund program, including emergency response and enforcement funds

Under the Trump Administration's budget, hazardous substance cleanup spending through Superfund would be cut by 30 percent. EPA's expertise is vital in assessing chemical contents and the risks they present, designing and putting measures in place to

protect health and safety, and holding polluters accountable. The cuts 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 to enforcement efforts tracking down polluters and making them pay to clean up sites for which they are responsible.

Cuts like these could impair one of the most significant ongoing Superfund projects in the nation, the Carson River Mercury Site project. During the 1800s, mining operations used mercury to separate precious metals from raw ore, releasing 14 million pounds of mercury into the Carson habitat and its surroundings. Mercury is highly toxic, and can kill humans and threaten wildlife. That's why the state posts signs warning visitors to avoid eating fish because of mercury contamination. The Carson River site was added to EPA's National Priorities List in August 1990; with the responsible mining companies no longer in existence, EPA shouldered the bulk of the cleanup cost and managed cleanup efforts iointly with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.9

Indeed, Nevada has 22,835 open and abandoned mine land sites on federal land alone, by far the most of any state in the nation. ¹⁰ Experts say many of these sites are likely to be contaminated with toxic chemicals like mercury and could pose a significant threat to Nevada's ranching and farming interests and to parts of the state's drinking water supplies. EPA is in the process of evaluating the environmental and health risks from these sites, and the vast majority of them still need to be surveyed.

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Fewer cleanups 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 around the country have increased between 5 and 15 percent and cleanup 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). ¹¹ EPA brownfield grants have even greater positive impacts on

communities with higher poverty rates, large minority populations and lower than average incomes. 12

More than 124,000 jobs and \$24 billion of public and private funding have been leveraged thanks to pollution assessment and other EPA brownfield grants. On average, \$16.11 was leveraged for each EPA brownfields dollar spent and 8.5 jobs leveraged per \$100,000 of EPA brownfield funds expended on assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund cooperative agreements, according to the EPA.¹³

Before redevelopment can happen safely and be permitted to go forward, brownfield sites must be assessed and tested for soil contamination, and the risk of hazardous substances, petroleum or asbestos being released when digging around land 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 brownfield grants to Nevada

Year	Grants	
2012	\$615,120	
2013	\$1.6 million	
2014	\$1.9 million	
2015	\$1.2 million	
2016	\$1.2 million	
Total	\$6.5 million	

The Trump Administration's budget would cut brownfield restoration grants by 30 percent.

These 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.

For example, grant funding and assistance from EPA's southwest regional office helped the Ely Shoshone Tribe assess and clean up environmental contamination of a former landfill on tribal land in White Pine County, freeing the area up for possible use as a recreation area. The Reno Events Center, a 7,000-seat multipurpose arena that hosts entertainment and sporting events and is home to the Reno Bighorns of the National Basketball Association's G League, is built on a former brownfield site that was prepared for development with EPA assessment and cleanup grants. 15

The enemy underground: leaking storage tank grants

PROGRAM AT RISK: Leaking underground storage tank grants and trust fund for backlog

Across the country, thousands of underground storage tanks and accompanying pipes — many of them made from older corrosive, corroding steel — hold and carry a variety of fuels and chemicals. When leaking tanks are at risk of leaking harmful chemicals such as oil, gas, benzene and toluene into soil



and ground water, drinking water and soil are fouled, backyards and businesses become dangerous, community health is jeopardized, and economic development is crippled.

Nevada has a backlog of more than 150 leaking underground tanks needing cleanup, according to state and federal data.¹⁶

EPA has supported essential programs in Nevada to monitor underground storage 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.

The Trump Administration's proposed EPA budget would cut or curtail leaking tank assistance to states. Nevada's \$4.7 million in aid over the last five years came from two federal sources. The first — Prevention, Detection and Compliance Grants, which totaled nearly \$2 million over the last five years — would be eliminated entirely. The second — a trust fund paid for by a one-cent federal fuel tax, which has provided \$2.8 million to Nevada for monitoring and cleanup assistance — would be cut in half.

EPA leaking underground storage tank grants to Nevada

Year	Leaking Underground Storage Tank Prevention Program	Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund
2012	\$281,000	\$580,000
2013	\$507,532	\$662,000
2014	\$354,000	\$624,000
2015	\$345,000	\$471,000
2016	\$440,000	\$471,000
Total	\$1.9 million	\$2.8 million

"Slashing the EPA's budget is bad for Nevada's health. It means more smog and cancer-forming pollution. Latinos are disproportionately at risk as higher rates of poverty and limited access to health care contribute to the devastating effects on their health and well-being."

Elena V. Rios President & CEO, National Hispanic Medical Association

The threat to Nevada's air

The dangerous truth is that 92 percent of Nevadans live in counties receiving an "F" on an air quality measure from the American Lung Association.

Nevada conjures up images of indoor casinos and vast open lands. Yet 92 percent of the state's population lives in areas where outdoor air quality raises health concerns. Clark (Las Vegas), Washoe (Reno) and Douglas (Tahoe) counties, along with Carson City, all scored failing "F" grades in one or more categories in the American Lung Association's State of the Air 2017 report. As Boulder City family physician Joanne Leovy says, "Many of my urban patients work outdoors and walk for transportation. For them, clean air can be the difference between productive work or expensive illness." 18

Programs to monitor and cut air pollution are especially important to minority populations, which are disproportionately located in urban areas like Las Vegas (where 54 percent of the population is minorities). ¹⁹ Air pollution can affect heart health and even trigger heart attacks and strokes. Across the country, African-American and Latino children are more likely to suffer from asthma than whites, ²⁰ and nearly three-fourths of African-Americans live in counties that don't meet federal air quality standards. More than 1.8 million Latinos live

within a half mile of oil and gas facilities that often emit harmful pollution, fueling more than 150,000 asthma attacks among children and resulting in 112,000 lost school days each year.²¹

F's for air quality

PROGRAM AT RISK: Clean Air Act grants

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

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.



Recipient	Grants
Clark County	\$4.4 million
Washoe County	\$3.6 million
Total	\$8 million

Among Nevada's biggest sources of EPA funding is the agency's air pollution control program grants. From 2012 to 2016, EPA provided \$8 million in grants to support clean



"Americans' lung health is far better protected today than it was before the Clean Air Act health protections began nearly five decades ago. As we move into an ever-warmer climate, cleaning up these pollutants will become ever more challenging, highlighting the critical importance of protecting the Clean Air Act."

Harold P. Wimmer
National President and CEO
of the American Lung Association

air programs in the state. Those grants went to local agencies in Clark and Washoe counties, where nearly a third of the population is Latino, to support clean air efforts in metropolitan areas where air quality problems can be the most severe.

The dangerous truth is that 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 in its State of the Air 2017 report: 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.²²

Clark (Las Vegas area) and Washoe (Reno area) counties both received a failing grade for ozone in the State of the Air report; White Pine County scored a "D," while Lyon ranked a

"C" and Carson City and Churchill scored "B." Parts of Nevada struggle with particle pollution, too: Carson City, Douglas and Washoe scored "F," while Clark eked out a "D." The other 13 counties in the state did not count particle pollution numbers.²³

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 insure 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. More than 39,000 Nevada children and more than 179,000 adults have been diagnosed with asthma. Nearly 150,000 have been diagnosed with chronic pulmonary diseases including emphysema and chronic bronchitis.²⁴

Weakening flexible response to other problems

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 Nevada to apply EPA grant money to their most pressing air, water and land issues. These grants allow recipients 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. Nevada received more than \$15.4 million in Performance Partnership Grants from 2012 to 2016.

Less support for tribes dealing with hazardous waste

PROGRAM AT RISK: Indian environmental general assistance program

Nevada tribal authorities received \$11.4 million from 2012 to 2016 though 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 30 percent.

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Nevada EPA Grants, FY2012-2016

Recipient	Grants
NV Department of Conservation and Natural Resources	\$125,694,996
Clark County Department of Air Quality	\$4,998,969
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe	\$3,874,970
Washoe County Dist Health Dept	\$3,824,579
Washoe Tribe of NV & CA	\$2,870,715
Walker River Paiute Tribe	\$2,475,887
Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley	\$2,070,786
Nye County	\$1,999,999
NV Dept of Agriculture	\$1,861,997
Yerington Paiute Tribe	\$1,588,340
Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe	\$1,391,642
Nevada Department of Health and Human Services	\$1,233,230
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	\$1,191,241
Board of Regents — UNR	\$1,035,708
National Association for Hispanic Elderly	\$931,917
Yomba Shoshone Tribe	\$893,855
Moapa Band of Paiutes	\$862,804
Elko Band Council	\$846,674
South Fork Band Council	\$843,105
Battle Mountain Band Council	\$825,083
Reno Sparks Indian Colony	\$823,169
Ely Shoshone Tribe	\$765,381
Board of Regents NSHE University of NV Reno	\$731,611

Recipient	Grants
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency	\$669,000
Nevada Tahoe Conservation District	\$660,000
Wells Band Council	\$637,262
Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	\$627,024
Northern Nevada Development Authority	\$600,000
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	\$576,900
City of Henderson	\$550,000
Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada Inc.	\$542,025
Clark County Government	\$500,000
Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California	\$437,500
Clark County Department of Air Quality & Environment Management	\$428,275
Board of Regents NV System — Desert Research Institute	\$425,000
Multiple Recipients	\$419,224
Board of Regents NSHE — UNLV	\$329,650
City of Fernley	\$291,000
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe	\$110,000
Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of	\$73,750
Aquatic Science Center	\$68,035
Lovelock Paiute Tribe	\$65,000
Great Basin Institute	\$63,957
International Society of Exposure Science	\$10,000

Notes

Unless otherwise indicated, all data in this report are current as of July 2017 and figures for government spending and grants are drawn from www.usaspending.gov, and from official federal government budget documents. Additional information is drawn from state budget sources.

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