



NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Keith Gaby, kgaby@edf.org, 202-572-3336

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

(August 31, 2017) [State of Risk: West Virginia](#), 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 West Virginia 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 West Virginia and examines how the proposed cutback plans threaten public health as well as commerce and tourism in the Mountain 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 \$230 million in grants alone to West Virginia over five years, notes the report.

“The Administration’s plan endangers public health efforts to make the air and water clean and to clean up tracts of land in West Virginia that are 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 West Virginia 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 West Virginia. The 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 this radical 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 West Virginia.** EPA grant funding is essential to combating runoff pollution, which can contain harmful pesticides and industrial chemicals that make their way into streams.

West Virginia received \$9 million in EPA grants from 2012 to 2016 for nonpoint source pollution efforts; the administration's proposed budget would eliminate this program entirely.

- **Breathing is at risk in West Virginia.** According to the American Lung Association, Weirton, WV is the 8th most polluted city by long-term particle pollution and the 17th most polluted by short-term particle pollution. The administration's proposed budget would cut grants to state and local governments help communities address harmful air pollution such as soot and smog by 30 percent.
- **Land is at risk in West Virginia.** West Virginia is home to 220 brownfield sites with potential to be restored into viable job-building commercial land. The administration's proposed budget would cut brownfield and Superfund funding by 30 percent. West Virginia also has a backlog of more than 600 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.

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 West Virginia'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 West Virginians and others across the United States rely as the foundation for building a better life."

State of Risk: West Virginia 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.

West Virginia 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

##

Environmental Defense Fund (edf.org), a leading international nonprofit organization, creates transformational solutions to the most serious environmental problems. EDF links science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships. Connect with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and our [Energy Exchange blog](#).