

**TESTIMONY OF  
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**BEFORE THE**

**THE HOUSE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE  
OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2015**

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed FY 2016 budget. I'm joined by the agency's Acting Chief Financial Officer, David Bloom.

The EPA's budget request of \$8.592 billion in discretionary funding for the 2016 fiscal year starting October 1, 2015 provides the resources vital to protecting human health and the environment while building a solid path for sustainable economic growth. Since the EPA was founded in 1970, we have seen over and over again that a safe environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. In the last 45 years, we have cut air pollution 70 percent and cleaned up half of our nation's polluted waterways. Meanwhile, the U.S. GDP has tripled, which shows that investments in public health and environmental protection are consistent with strong economic growth. Economic prosperity and quality of life depends on public health protection that ensures clean air; clean water; and safe, healthy land.

This budget will let us continue that trend. It funds essential work to address climate change, improve air quality, protect our water, safeguard the public from toxic chemicals, support communities' environmental health, maintain core enforcement strength and work toward a sustainable future for all Americans. Central to this work is supporting our state, local, and tribal partners, working with them to deliver on our environmental and health improvements as a shared responsibility. We are doing this while supporting a strong workforce at the EPA with the tools necessary to ensure effective use of the public funds provided to us.

**Making a Visible Difference in Communities Across the Country**

We are focused on continuing our work with partners to make a visible difference in communities and across the country—especially in areas overburdened by pollution—including low-income neighborhoods, rural communities, and communities of color.

This budget proposes a multifaceted effort to enable communities of all sizes, rural and urban, to find needed assistance and support for capacity building, planning, and implementation of environmental protection programs. In FY 2016, EPA will support this effort by providing targeted funding and regional coordinators to help communities find the best programs to address local environmental priorities. This budget also provides for a network of "circuit riders" to provide on-the-ground assistance to communities to build and strengthen the adaptive capacity and resilience to

climate change. EPA will also support community revitalization and economic redevelopment by investing \$110 million dollars, an increase of \$30 million from last year, to plan, assess, clean up and reuse brownfields.

This request also includes an additional investment of \$16.2 million over our current resources to help local communities improve safety and security at chemical facilities, and to prevent and prepare for oil spills. This investment will improve compliance outreach to industry, emergency planning assistance to local communities, updates to existing guidance and regulations, and enhancements to software used by emergency responders.

The EPA will also work to limit public exposure to uncontrolled releases of hazardous substances and make previously contaminated properties available for reuse by communities through a request of close to \$540 million in the Superfund Remedial program and another \$191 million in the Superfund Emergency Response and Removal program, which is an increase of \$48 million across the two programs.

### **Addressing Climate Change and Improving Air Quality**

The fiscal year 2016 budget request for the agency's work to address climate change and to improve air quality is \$1.1 billion. These resources will help protect those most vulnerable to climate impacts and the harmful health effects of air pollution through commonsense standards, guidelines, and partnership programs.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change is not just an environmental challenge, it is a threat to public health, to our domestic and global economy, and to our national and international security. The U.S. has already and will continue to shift the international discussion on climate change from one that focuses on mitigation costs to one that embraces new investment opportunities. If done right, we can cut the carbon pollution that is fueling climate change and position the business community, its entrepreneurs, and its innovators to lead the world in a global effort while at the same time, expanding the economy. States and businesses across the country are already working to build renewable energy infrastructure, increase energy efficiency, and cut carbon pollution—creating sustainable, middle class jobs and displaying the kind of innovation that has enabled this country to overcome so many challenges.

This request supports the President's Climate Action Plan and makes climate action a priority. In particular, the Clean Power Plan, which establishes carbon pollution standards for power plants, is a top priority for the EPA and will help spur innovation and economic growth while creating a clean energy economy. The Plan gives states the flexibility they need to design and implement plans that reduce their carbon pollution while meeting the needs of their residents and businesses. The budget request includes an increase of \$25 million in direct grant support to states to establish the programmatic infrastructure necessary for effective implementation as well as resources for EPA to provide critical support to the states through technical assistance, developing guidance, modeling, and other tools.

In addition, the President's Budget calls for a \$4 billion Clean Power State Incentive Fund to be administered through a mandatory spending account to support state efforts to accelerate carbon

pollution reductions in the power sector. This funding will enable states to invest in a range of activities that complement and advance the Clean Power Plan, including but not limited to direct investments and financing for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs; funding for low-income communities to address disproportionate impacts from environmental pollution; and assistance and incentives for businesses to expand infrastructure for innovative projects that reduce carbon pollution.

The President's Climate Action Plan also calls for greenhouse gas reductions from the transportation sector by increasing fuel economy standards. With input from industry and stakeholders, the EPA, working with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, expects to finalize Phase II greenhouse gas and fuel efficiency standards for heavy-duty vehicles. These standards will deliver significant savings at the pump, reduce carbon pollution, and reduce fuel costs for businesses while improving the efficiency of moving goods across the United States.

### **Protecting the Nation's Waters**

Protecting the nation's waters remains a top priority for the EPA. We will continue to build upon decades of efforts to ensure our waterways are clean and our drinking water is safe. Water pollution endangers wildlife, compromises the safety and reliability of our drinking water sources and treatment plants, and threatens the waters where we swim and fish. In FY 2016, we will begin implementation of the Clean Water Rule, which will clarify types of waters covered under the Clean Water Act and foster more certain and efficient business decisions to protect the nation's waters.

Aging systems and the increasing impacts of climate change create opportunities for innovation and new approaches for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Building on the strong funding level of \$2.3 billion provided through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, \$50 million is included for technical assistance, training, and other efforts to enhance the capacity of communities and states to plan and finance drinking water and wastewater infrastructure improvements. The EPA will work with states and communities to promote innovative practices that advance water system and community resiliency and sustainability. Dedicated funding through the Clean Water SRF will advance green infrastructure design and practices such as incorporating permeable permanent natural structures, green roofs, and wetlands which can help cost-effectively meet Clean Water Act requirements and protect and restore the nation's water resources.

In January 2015, the agency launched a key component of this expanded effort, the Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center. We will work with our partners to help communities across the country by focusing on issues such as financial planning for future public infrastructure investments and expanded efforts with states to identify financing opportunities for resilient drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. We will enhance our partnership and collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on training, technical assistance, and funding opportunities in rural areas. The Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance center is part of the Build America investment initiative, a government-wide effort to increase infrastructure investment and promote economic growth by creating opportunities for state and local governments and the private sector to collaborate on infrastructure development.

Separately, EPA will continue efforts to protect and restore ecosystems through its geographic programs. EPA and its federal partners are making steady progress on reducing unexpended balances of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding, and will continue and strengthen efforts to further reduce these balances and examine potential ways to increase expenditure rates in future years.

## **Protecting Our Land**

The EPA strives to protect and restore land to create a safer environment for all Americans by cleaning up hazardous and non-hazardous wastes that can migrate to air, groundwater and surface water, contaminating drinking water supplies, causing acute illnesses and chronic diseases, and threatening healthy ecosystems. We preserve, restore, and protect our land, for both current and future generations by cleaning up contaminated sites and returning them to communities for reuse. Our funds will assist communities in using existing infrastructure and planning for more efficient and livable communities, and encouraging the minimization of environmental impacts throughout the full life cycle of materials.

In FY 2016, we will increase the Superfund Remedial program by \$39 million to accelerate the pace of cleanups, supporting states, local communities, and tribes in their efforts to assess and cleanup sites and return them to productive reuse, and encourage renewable energy development on formerly hazardous sites when appropriate. We will expand the successful Brownfields program, providing grants, and supporting area-wide planning and technical assistance to maximize the benefits to the communities. In FY 2016, the EPA is investing \$110 million in funding for Brownfields Project grants to local communities, an additional \$30 million over the FY 2015 Enacted Budget, increasing the number of grants for assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites. This investment builds on the program's successful community-driven approach to revitalizing contaminated land and further supports the agency's efforts to make a visible difference in communities.

## **Taking Steps to Improve Chemical Facility Safety**

In support of the White House Executive Order 13650 on Improving Chemical Facility Safety and Security, the EPA is requesting \$27.8 million for the State and Local Prevention and Preparedness program, an increase of \$12 million above the FY 2015 enacted level. This increase will allow the EPA to continue to improve the safety and security of chemical facilities and reduce the risks of hazardous chemicals to facility workers and operators, communities, and responders.

These efforts represent a shared commitment among those with a stake in chemical facility safety and security: facility owners and operators; federal, state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments; regional entities; nonprofit organizations; facility workers; first responders; environmental justice and local environmental organizations; and communities. In FY 2016, we are implementing actions to strengthen community planning and preparedness, enhance federal operational coordination, improve data management, modernize policies and regulation, and incorporate stakeholder feedback and best practices.

## **Continuing EPA's Commitment to Innovative Research & Development**

In building environmental policy, scientific research continues to be the foundation of EPA's work. Environmental issues in the 21st century are complex because of the interplay between air quality, climate change, water quality, healthy communities, and chemical safety. Today's complex issues require different thinking and different solutions than those used in the past. In FY 2016, we are requesting \$528 million for research and development to evaluate and predict potential environmental and human health impacts including impacts related to air pollution, water quality, climate change and biofuels. This will allow all decision makers at all levels of government to have the science needed to develop and implement environmental policies and strategies. This request will also support expanding the EPA's computational toxicology effort—which is letting us study chemical risks and exposure exponentially faster and more affordably than ever before. We are also providing support tools for community health, investigating the unique properties of emerging materials, such as nanomaterials, and research to support the nation's range of growing water-use and ecological requirements.

### **Supporting State and Tribal Partners**

Effective environmental protection is a joint effort of EPA, states and our tribal partners, and we are setting a high bar for continuing our partnership efforts. That's why the largest part of our budget, \$3.6 billion dollars or 42 percent, is provided directly to our state and tribal partners. In FY 2016, we are requesting an increase of \$108 million in funding for State and Tribal Assistance categorical grants. The increase for State and Tribal assistance includes an additional \$31 million over the FY 2015 enacted level for the Tribal General Assistance Program, supporting Tribes in the development of sustainable and robust environmental regulatory programs for Indian country.

As one example of our efforts, we are also including opportunities for closer collaboration and targeted joint planning and governance processes. One example is the E-Enterprise approach, a transformative 21<sup>st</sup> century strategy to modernize the way in which government agencies deliver environmental protection. With our co-regulatory partners, we are working collaboratively to streamline, reform, and integrate our shared business processes and related systems. These changes, including a shift to electronic reporting, will improve environmental results, reduce burden, and enhance services to the regulated community and the public by making government more efficient and effective. State-EPA-Tribal joint governance serves to organize the E-Enterprise partnership to elevate its visibility, boost coordination capacity, and ensure the inclusiveness and effectiveness of shared processes, management improvements, and future coordinated projects. Projects following the E-Enterprise approach will yield the benefits of increased transparency, efficiency, and burden reduction for communities, businesses, and government agencies when implemented.

### **Maintaining a Forward Looking and Adaptive EPA**

The EPA has strategically evaluated its workforce and facility needs and will continue the comprehensive effort to modernize its workforce. By implementing creative, flexible, cost-effective, and sustainable strategies to protect public health and safeguard the environment, the EPA will target resources toward development of a workforce and infrastructure that can address current challenges and priorities.

We are requesting funding in this budget to help us fast-track efforts to save taxpayer dollars by optimizing and renovating critical agency space. That includes our laboratory buildings across the country, where we conduct critical scientific research on behalf of the American public. In the past three years, the EPA realized \$8.3 million in rent avoidance by releasing over 225 thousand square feet of space nationwide. We've taken a careful look at our workforce and facility needs so we can continue to optimize and update our physical footprint in FY 2016. We'll also target resources to prepare our outstanding agency workforce for the future, and continue our E-Enterprise effort with states to improve and modernize joint business processes—for instance, replacing outdated paper processes for regulated companies with electronic submissions.

The EPA continues to examine its programs to find those that have served their purpose and accomplished their mission. The FY 2016 President's Budget also eliminates some mature programs where state and local governments can provide greater capacity. Those grant programs are the Beaches Protection categorical grants, the State Indoor Air and Radon grants, the Targeted Airshed grants and the Water Quality Research and Support grants, totaling \$44.6 million.

The EPA's fiscal year 2016 budget request will let us continue to make a real and visible difference to communities every day. It will give us a foundation to revitalize the economy and improve infrastructure across the country. And it will sustain state, Tribal, and federal environmental efforts across all our programs.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. While my testimony reflects only some of the highlights of the EPA's FY 2016 budget request, I look forward to answering your questions.