



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

October 4, 2017

**MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT:** Project Notification:  
Controls Over EPA's Citizen Science Efforts  
Project No. OPE-FY18-0002

**FROM:** Patrick Gilbride, Director /s/  
Environmental Research Program Evaluations  
Office of Program Evaluation

**TO:** Robert J. Kavlock, Acting Assistant Administrator  
Office of Research and Development

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to begin preliminary research on the EPA's citizen science efforts. According to the EPA, "citizen science is the involvement of the public in scientific research – whether community-driven research or global investigations. Citizen science mobilizes the public to participate in the scientific process to address problems. This can include identifying research questions, collecting and analyzing data, making new discoveries, and developing technologies and applications."<sup>1</sup>

Our objective is to determine whether the EPA has developed controls to manage the use of citizen science results to meet the EPA's mission. This work will address the EPA's draft strategic objective to increase and provide additional platforms for public participation and engagement and how the use of citizen science results enables the EPA to meet this strategic objective. The review will include citizen science efforts that have received direct EPA funding as well as those where no direct EPA funding was provided but where the EPA has received data or information as a result of the effort.

We plan to conduct work with the Office of Research and Development and other applicable program offices and regions, to be identified during our preliminary research. Applicable generally accepted government auditing standards will be used in conducting our project. The anticipated benefits of this project include a greater understanding of the EPA's use of citizen science and the controls in place for managing use of data or information generated through citizen science efforts.

We will contact you to arrange a mutually agreeable time to discuss our objective and the purpose of the preliminary research phase of our project. We would also be particularly interested in any areas of concern that you may have. We will answer any of your questions about the project process, reporting procedures, methods used to gather and analyze data, and what we should expect of each other during

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. EPA Internet Site: <https://www.epa.gov/citizen-science/what-citizen-science>, accessed October 2, 2017.

the course of the project. Throughout the project, we will provide updates to your designated points of contact on a regular basis via monthly email and/or meetings.

To expedite our review, we request that you please provide us with the following information, if available, before or at the kickoff meeting.

1. For all projects listed on the agency's citizen science website (<https://www.epa.gov/citizen-science/citizen-science-projects-supported-epa>), please provide the agency's:
  - a. Program office overseeing the project.
  - b. Point of contact and/or project lead.
  - c. Resource investment (funding, staff).
2. A list of instances where citizen science data has contributed to the EPA's work. If possible, identify the EPA program and the type of work the data supported (e.g., community engagement, condition indicator, research, management or regulatory decisions, regulatory standard setting, and enforcement).
3. Any guidance documents on the use of citizen science-generated data (aside from materials we can access via <https://www.epa.gov/citizen-science>).

We respectfully note that the OIG is authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978 to have timely access to personnel and all materials necessary to complete its objectives. We will request your resolution if an agency employee or contractor refuses to provide requested records to the OIG, or otherwise fails to cooperate with the OIG. We may report unresolved access matters to the Administrator and include the incident in the Semiannual Report to Congress.

I will supervise this project and Erin Barnes-Weaver will be the Project Manager. Any information related to the project should be addressed to me at (303) 312-6969 or [Gilbride.patrick@epa.gov](mailto:Gilbride.patrick@epa.gov), or Erin Barnes-Weaver at (303) 312-6871 or [barnes-weaver.erin@epa.gov](mailto:barnes-weaver.erin@epa.gov).

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