

OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS (OARA)

Internal deliberative pre-decisional - FOR USE BY 2024 PRESIDENT-ELECT TRANSITION TEAM MEMBERS ONLY

ISSUE SUMMARY:

The Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OARA) serves as the primary liaison between rural and agricultural stakeholders and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). OARA maintains close contact with EPA's program offices and regions including robust coordination with a network of existing agriculture policy advisors located in all 10 EPA regional offices across the country. This centralized framework facilitates practical, science-based solutions that protect the environment while ensuring a vibrant and productive agricultural system.

OARA houses EPA's existing Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee (FRRCC), which provides independent policy recommendations to the Agency on environmental issues important to agriculture and rural communities. The FRRCC's charter was renewed in January 2024 and the committee will continue consideration of how EPA's programs can best advance the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

OARA, along with the Office of Water (OW), oversees the newly created Animal Agriculture and Water quality (AAWQ) FRRCC Subcommittee that will inform the Agency's decisions on EPA's permitting program to reduce nutrients and water pollutants from Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs).

OARA works with relevant federal and state partners, in addition to the Rural Partners Network, to collaborate with small, underserved towns and rural communities seeking federal investments in infrastructure upgrades and other community improvement opportunities.

KEY POINTS/ BACKGROUND:

- OARA serves as the primary liaison between rural and agricultural stakeholders and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- The Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OARA) was established as a part of the Administrator's Office reorganization, finalized in March 2024 and has received bipartisan support.

RECENT/UPCOMING MILESTONES:

- In November 2024, the agency will announce 24 new members to the Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities (FRRCC) Federal Advisory Committee
- December 2024, the Animal Agriculture and Water Quality Subcommittee (AAWQ) will hold a virtual public meeting.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> States | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Media | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Federal Agency |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Governments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public | | | |

MOVING FORWARD:

In 2025, OARA will:

- Continue engagement with internal and external stakeholders and coordinate with other federal agencies on key environmental issues which have equities to agriculture stakeholders and rural communities including pesticides, nutrient management, water policies, PFAS, biofuels , and climate change.
- Continue to provide internal support on rulemakings, science policy, and risk assessments.
- Increase coordination and develop framework to support rural equities within EPA.