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PRESS RELEASE

Trump Administration Guts Environmental and Public Health Protections While COVID Crisis Deepens

Atlanta, Georgia – At a press conference this afternoon, President Trump announced the finalization of revisions to the National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) implementing regulations. The White House has fast-tracked an effort to undercut environmental and public health protections with a change in rules that a network of grassroots organizations say guts the nation's bedrock environmental law.

NEPA requires federal agencies to engage in a review process to identify any significant environmental, economic, cultural, social, or health impacts a project may have before decisions are made and construction begins or resources are committed. The changes finalized today would limit the scope, depth, and timeline of reviews of major federal actions.

"The Trump Administration's gutting of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will take a serious toll on the health and safety of those of us in the rural West, at a time when millions of us are sacrificing dearly to protect our health," said Barbara Vasquez, Oil and Gas Team Chair of the Western Organization of Resource Councils, from Cowdrey, Colorado. "The administration's priorities are crystal clear--rubber stamp polluting projects and pump toxins into the air and water while a crisis rages unchecked. We need the protection of thorough environmental and public health review now more than ever."

"Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities bear the disproportionate burden of toxic pollution in their neighborhoods, and as a result, are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates," said Lisa DeVille, Vice-Chair of Fort Berthold Protectors of Water and Earth Rights, from Mandaree, North Dakota. "My family and I live on my ancestral land in the center of the Bakken oil field, and the last thing my family needs right now is even less protection from the dangerous impacts of this development. NEPA is one of the few laws that require environmental analysis on the reservation and consideration of the disproportionate impacts of development on Indigenous people. We all deserve to breathe clean air but the Trump Administration is proposing to eliminate protections against environmental racism that occurs from oil and gas development near my home."

"After decades of working as a hydrogeologist to remediate the destruction left behind by loose mining laws and unscrupulous industry, I know that the NEPA rule released today will result in even more environmental and health damages, minimal public participation, and unchecked dangerous projects," said Shannon Ansley, an Idaho Organization of Resource Councils member from Pocatello, Idaho. "The rule makes it clear that President Trump does not care about us, our families, or our communities--including his own supporters. Every one of us will suffer the consequences, even those who may not realize it yet."

The National Environmental Policy Act is sometimes called the "Magna Carta" of environmental protections. Congress passed the Act nearly unanimously, and it was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on Jan. 1, 1970. The law has served as the model for conducting environmental reviews for more than 100 countries and dozens of U.S. states and localities.

Data shows that NEPA has worked well. Over 99% of federal projects are cleared with minimal environmental assessment. In total, the federal government undertakes approximately 50,000 actions every year that are subject to NEPA review, but only 500 draft Environmental Impact Statements are prepared annually, according to the [Government Accountability Office](#).

Under the Trump Administration's rules, government agencies could ignore the landscape-scale or global impacts of a project, such as climate change; public participation would be reduced to the lowest legal amount, and complex environmental reviews would be subject to arbitrary time and page limits. The proposal also explicitly allows a project applicant to prepare its own environmental impact statement and removes the prohibition on hiring contractors that have conflicts of interest, such as financial ties to the applicant.

Read more about the proposed NEPA revisions here:

<http://www.worc.org/proposed-changes-to-the-national-environmental-policy-act-nepa-threaten-to-silence-public-input/>

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[The Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of grassroots organizations in seven Western states, with 15,000 members. Many WORC members live on lands overlying and neighboring federal, tribal, state and privately owned mineral deposits, and experience numerous impacts due to federal mineral production and other federal projects. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.

The Idaho Organization of Resource Councils is an Idaho-based grassroots nonprofit that empowers people to improve the well-being of their communities, sustain family farms and ranches, transform local food systems, promote clean energy, and advocate for responsible stewardship of Idaho's natural resources.

Dakota Resource Council's mission is to promote sustainable use of North Dakota's natural resources and family-owned and operated agriculture by building member-led local groups that empower people to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.