

June 14, 2017



The Honorable E. Scott Pruitt
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt,



New England comprises a diverse and unique area with a history of innovation and valuable natural resources that spans six states. Our states have worked closely with Region 1 of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a variety of important issues, including maintenance of our environmental infrastructure and partnering with organizations that monitor and regulate the environment. This collaboration and the environmental innovation that it fosters are jeopardized by the Administration's proposed 31% cut to EPA's budget, which includes a 44% cut to EPA's grant funding to states. As the top environmental officials for Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont, we work together as members of the Northeast Committee on the Environment (NECOE). This collaboration aligns directly with the long-standing, strong partnerships that we have enjoyed with EPA Region 1. We ask you to support critical federal funding for the STAG and state-oriented grants.



Our state budgets rely on EPA's technical and financial support. On average, our state environmental agencies receive 29% of their funding from EPA. The State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) program in particular is a vital source of funding for state and regional programs that support EPA's core mission of protecting air, water and land. These funds help test water quality, monitor air quality, cleanup brownfields and are distributed to towns for remediation efforts and reduction of non-point source pollution. Your Senior Advisor, Ken Wagner, confirmed that these items are a high priority for you during a constructive conversation with him at a May 25th meeting with NECOE. This state-oriented grant funding is essential for all state environmental agencies within the region, our towns, and our core multi-state partners such as the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC), Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA), and Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM).



The proposed budget reductions would require layoffs at our state agencies, cause significant setbacks to towns that count on federal funding for redevelopment support, and eliminate environmental programs that support EPA's core mission of protecting the air, water, and land. The budget proposal is at odds with the Administration's focus on states meeting federal requirements, because the proposed budget would eliminate EPA Region 1 personnel who work collaboratively with our state and municipal teams to achieve our public health and environmental goals, while supporting economic development.

Our states are connected by natural resources and shared watersheds, air quality, trade, tourism, and agricultural production. The proposed budget cuts will affect all states in our region because of the natural proximity and strong environmental and economic partnerships we have already established. For instance, if the EPA cuts federal funding related to the Connecticut River – which is the longest running river in the New England region that rises at the U.S. border with Quebec, Canada and discharges to Long Island Sound – Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut would all be impacted, because these states share natural, cultural and industrial resources that are tied together efficiently and profitably throughout this watershed. For another example, there are a number of Brownfield and Superfund sites throughout New England that require funding for cleanup and restoration for productive use.

We have many of the oldest communities and industries in the country, and with that comes challenges and opportunities. In New England, one can find historical rural communities and agricultural prosperity, sustainable urban innovation, diverse and clean water bodies, and stunning coastlines – all within a short distance from one another. Many small rural towns depend on federal funding to maintain their conservation and agricultural lands, to remediate the remaining aftermath of devastating storms, to recover and revitalize old contaminated properties and abandoned buildings, and to address antiquated drinking water and waste water piping that will cost millions of dollars to update. Region 1 has strong, efficient, collaborative programs to protect our natural resources while maintaining growth and economic development. Adequate federal funding is crucial to promoting prosperity and sustainability of our rural towns and urban centers.

In sum, the proposed cuts to EPA's budget will not support environmental quality and public health in New England and will curtail our ability to continue our region's economic growth. Further, these proposed cuts will severely undermine the positive partnership between EPA and our states, which has been a key to our progress in protecting public health and the environment in our region for more than four decades. We ask you to support critical federal funding for the STAG and state-oriented grants.

Sincerely,



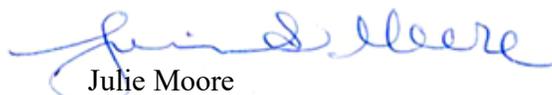
Robert Klee
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Energy and
Environmental Protection



Martin Suuberg
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Environmental
Protection



Janet Coit
Director
Rhode Island Department of Environmental
Management



Julie Moore
Secretary
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

cc: Chairman Ken Calvert and Ranking Member Betty McCollum, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Ryan Jackson, Chief of Staff, United States Environmental Protection Agency
Kenneth Wagner, Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Regional and State Affairs, U.S. EPA
Deb Szaro, Acting Regional Administrator, EPA Region 1