

EPA

Alums slam strategic plan

Kevin Bogardus, E&E News reporter

Published: Tuesday, October 31, 2017



Former U.S. EPA staffers are criticizing the agency's draft strategic plan. Claudine Hellmuth/E&E News

Former employees of U.S. EPA are blasting Administrator Scott Pruitt's plan for the agency in the coming years.

EPA is accepting public comments on its [draft strategic plan](#) for fiscal 2018 through 2022. The document is heavy on many of Pruitt's themes during his tenure so far at EPA, such as "cooperative federalism" and adherence to the rule of law and process, but makes no mention of climate change ([E&E News PM](#), Oct. 4).

That has angered groups of EPA alums who believe Pruitt is taking the agency off track from its mission of protecting public health and the environment.

"The current draft plan deficiently is silent on significant threats to people's health and the environment — climate change, indoor air, radon, municipal solid waste, geographic-specific water-quality programs, and makes only passing references to wetlands protection and air toxics regulation. It is the wrong blueprint for EPA's next four

years," said the Environmental Protection Network, a nonprofit network made up of former EPA officials and employees, in its [comment](#).

Save EPA, an organization for retired and ex-EPA employees, said in its own [comment](#) that it had "grave concerns" about the draft plan.

"In general, it is so lacking in detail as to be almost meaningless. There are few if any measurable goals to which EPA can be held accountable to the public or even gauge internally whether it has achieved success," said the group.

Save EPA also took note of President Trump's deep budget cuts proposed for EPA, which would slash about \$2 billion or 30 percent of funding, resulting in 3,800 fewer jobs at the agency. The House has proposed its own cuts for EPA, though not nearly as large as the White House proposal.

"The budget cuts proposed by the Administration seed doubt that even the few items left in the plan can be accomplished adequately. In summary, the draft plan does not even nominally describe a path to EPA's core mission to protect public health and the environment," said Save EPA.

Under the proposed strategic plan, the agency touts its moves to streamline operations and reduce waste by adhering to a management philosophy known as "Lean."

"Lean is a set of principles and tools designed to identify and eliminate waste from processes while maximizing customer value and return on taxpayer investment. Under Administrator Scott Pruitt's leadership, EPA will become a Lean organization," said the plan.

Henry Darwin, EPA's chief operating officer, told E&E News in an interview that the Lean system is not a pretext for downsizing at EPA. Hundreds of employees have already left the agency in a buyout round for fiscal 2017, and union officials expect another round will be offered again in fiscal 2018.

"It's about becoming more efficient and being able to perform the work that you do better," Darwin said, "not necessarily with less people" ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 6).

Others were not pleased with the strategic plan.

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a watchdog group for government employees working in the environmental field, went so far as to call the draft plan "fraudulent" in its own [comment](#).

"The Plan is fraudulent and disregards both science and common sense. As such, we request that EPA withdraw this fatally flawed draft Strategic Plan, and re-issue one that complies with [the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act], congressional intent, and also truly protects the air, water, land, and human health in this nation," PEER said.

EPA's strategic plan is required under GPRMA. The agency is taking comments on its plan through today, and its final version will be sent to Congress in February.

Several other public comments filed on the plan lamented the absence of climate change in the document. EPA has taken a markedly different tack on the issue under the Trump administration, including rolling back its Clean Power Plan to curb power plants' carbon emissions.

"I urge the EPA to grow up and address the greatest environmental threat of our time; climate change. To not do so is irresponsible," said one [comment](#).

[Want to read more stories like this?](#)

[Click here](#) to start a free trial to E&E -- the best way to track policy and markets.

ABOUT GREENWIRE – THE LEADER IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Greenwire is written and produced by the staff of E&E News. The one-stop source for those who need to stay on top of all of today's major energy and environmental action with an average of more than 20 stories a day, Greenwire covers the complete spectrum, from electricity industry restructuring to Clean Air Act litigation to public lands management. Greenwire publishes daily at 1 p.m.

The logo for E&E NEWS, featuring the letters 'E&E' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, followed by 'NEWS' in a lighter blue, sans-serif font.

E&E News
122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-628-6500 Fax: 202-737-5299
www.eenews.net

All content is copyrighted and may not be reproduced or retransmitted without the express consent of Environment & Energy Publishing, LLC.
[Click here](#) to view our privacy policy.