

EPA funding cuts expected to impact Arizona air, water programs

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The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality expects reductions in grant funding from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, but a lack of specifics have impeded planning.

The Trump administration announced a reduction of \$2.6 billion in the EPA's proposed fiscal 2018 budget in March, a plan that is now making its way through Congress. One of the most significant potential cuts is a shrinking of state and tribal grants. These grants historically have made up a substantial portion of the ADEQ budget, close to 10 percent last year.

In response, the ADEQ has included a proactive \$1.2 million reduction to grant-funded air and water quality programs for its fiscal year 2019 proposed budget.

However, in the budget proposal the ADEQ asserted that it has not been made clear to them which EPA programs will be cut and by how much. Though the agency has sketched out a few potential cuts, final decisions can't be made with the current lack of information.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a public statement that the new EPA budget would support agency priorities, while respecting taxpayers. However, the cuts drew wide criticism from environmental activists and liberal politicians.

"It's very unwise for the Congress to be making such big cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency when we have



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— Sandy Bahr, spokeswoman for the Sierra Club-Grand Canyon Chapter

so many important issues to address,” said Sandy Bahr, spokeswoman for the Sierra Club-Grand Canyon Chapter.

Already on the chopping block in Arizona are a variety of grant-funded air and water quality programs. Among the highest potential reductions are a \$400,000 cut to the Surface Water Quality Improvement Planning program and a \$190,000 cut to the Facility Emissions Control program.

Other programs that were identi-

fied include Air Improvement Planning, Groundwater Protection, Surface Water Protection and Safe Drinking Water.

Many more could be at risk, according to a new report from the Environmental Defense Fund. The nonprofit says that in addition to serious reductions to air and water quality programs in Arizona, funds for several others like the Nonpoint Source Pollution Management program will be cut completely. This program addresses run-off pollution from a variety

of sources from roads to farms.

Bahr's previous concerns that the ADEQ lacks necessary funding have been compounded by the potential for a new round of cuts.

"The ADEQ primary mission is protecting public health and the environment," said Bahr. "Additional cuts will mean less protection for air and water, but also delaying action on air quality and water quality that affects our health."

ADEQ declined to elaborate. "All of this information at this time is a draft," said Caroline Oppeleman, ADEQ public information officer. "We are looking to obtain more details... which at this time is not available."

However, the agency stated in the proposed budget that EPA funding reductions could have serious consequences.

"The reductions, if enacted, will impact funding of ADEQ's labor force, our pass through funding to local government organizations and the amounts dispersed to private sector organizations who help us accomplish our mission."

Little to resign from Corp Comm for job in Trump administration

BY RACHEL LEINGANG
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Arizona Corporation Commissioner Doug Little will resign his post after taking a job with the U.S. Department of



“This is a once-in-a-lifetime deal.”

— Doug Little

Energy in Washington, D.C.

Little, who was elected in 2014, will serve as deputy assistant secretary for intergovernmental and external affairs, he told the *Arizona Capitol Times*.

Little's last day at the Corporation Commission will be September 29, and he starts at the Department of Energy on October 2.

The vacancy will give Gov. Doug Ducey a second opportunity to appoint a corporation commissioner. He appointed Andy Tobin in 2015 after Susan Bitter Smith resigned over legal concerns with her outside employment. Tobin was elected in 2016 to a full term.

While the past few years at the commission have been punctuated with scandals over dark money spending and utility influence, Little said he loved the job and wasn't leaving because of any problems with the commission.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime deal," he said.

In his new role, he will be working on energy issues with all levels of government and outside groups, from local officials to tribes to nonprofits, he said.


Little served as chairman of the commission in 2016, and he was active with national utility regulation groups. His activities at the regional and national level with industry groups helped him land his new gig, he said. He was previously being considered for a seat on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which he ultimately did not get, he said.

Little didn't want to weigh in on who should be appointed to fill his role, but said he would encourage the governor to

find someone with energy or water experience because of the complexity of the issues the commission handles.

Gov. Doug Ducey's spokesman, Patrick Ptak, said in an email the governor "will take a thoughtful approach to filling this vacancy with an individual who is qualified to do the job."

"This is an important position," Ptak said.



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