

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 15, 2020  
**Contact:** Wesley Cocozello | [wcocozello@columban.org](mailto:wcocozello@columban.org)

## **Faith-based Coalition Condemns Trump Administration's Rollback of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Provisions**

Washington, DC - As a coalition of diverse faith traditions, we are united across theological lines by our commitment to be stewards of the Earth and our call to accompany vulnerable communities. We have come together out of a deep concern for the environment and for people who suffer most from the effects of pollution, climate change, and the destruction of our natural world.

**Today's announcement from the administration finalizing the rollback of important provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) expressly ignores the central purposes of this bedrock environmental protection. Among those purposes are two that people of faith hold especially dear: that the government should be a trustee of the Earth and its natural resources for the benefit of future generations, and that it should enable meaningful participation in government decisions by communities most affected by federal agency action.**

Vulnerable communities struggling with poverty and racism, and now disproportionately affected by COVID -19, often bear the brunt of health problems caused by or contributed to by poorly-planned federal projects. As people of faith, we cannot sit by silently as this regulation change reduces opportunities for their voices to be heard.

On July 14th, [people of faith](#) across the country joined a virtual rally calling for a "Faithful and Just Recovery" in this time of pandemic. The United States has a responsibility in this moment to build a sustainable future that promotes a healthy environment, builds resilience to new crises, and prioritizes justice and equity.

The Trump Administration's proposed changes to NEPA, which would sacrifice the health of our communities and our ecosystems in favor of short-term gain, could not be more contrary to these values. As people of faith, we condemn these changes to NEPA and call for stronger protections for our sacred air, water, and soil.

**Our original comment on the proposed changes to NEPA can be [found here](#). Quotes from our some of our coalition's members are below.**

## Quotes from Coalition Members

"CWS condemns today's announcement by the Trump Administration to roll back the National Environmental Policy Act. Since 1969, NEPA has been U.S. policy, requiring federal agencies to address common concerns and to give communities across America the opportunity to express how proposed environmental policy would impact them. The changes announced today will reduce public participation and fast track federal infrastructure projects, potentially impacting the environment in devastating ways. This is sadly yet another attack on environmental protections by the Trump Administration, one that will reduce safeguards and protections for clean air, water and regulation of toxic chemicals. Communities who will be the most impacted by today's action have already been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; to further marginalize them by eliminating the most basic of environmental safeguards is not only an act of malfeasance, but of cruelty."

*-Maurice Bloem, Executive In Charge, Church World Service*

"As people of faith, we believe that God's creation is sacred and that human beings are called to responsibly steward its gifts. That's why the United States has a moral responsibility to take bold action towards a sustainable future. But today's shortsighted decision does the opposite. Everyone will suffer from the consequences of our government's inability to prophetically address environmental degradation, and particularly those least responsible for them, including those living in poverty, people of color, and indigenous communities."

*-Scott Wright, Director, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach*

"These environmental rollbacks are just a political ploy. They utterly gut protections for the environment but do nothing for jobs, nothing for the economy. Shame on this administration! Franciscans call for compassionate care for the earth and all its beauty. Reverse this affront to God's Creation!"

*-Stephen Schneck, Ph.D., Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network*

"It is disgraceful that the administration is pushing ahead its plan to weaken NEPA protections in the midst of a public health crisis and one we know is fueled in part by environmental racism. Decades of treatment of majority Black, Brown, and Indigenous areas as environmental "sacrifice zones" for toxic and polluting industries has long placed members of these communities at disproportionate risk from respiratory illness. The foreseeable result has been higher rates of death and morbidity from COVID-19 among historically oppressed communities. To weaken crucial environmental safeguards in this moment of crisis is moving entirely in the wrong direction. Our elected officials should be doing everything in their power to ensure all members of our society enjoy their human right to safe, clean air and water, not rolling back the few crucial legislative protections we already have in place."

*-Joshua Leach, MDiv, Policy Analyst, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee*

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