# Andrew Wheeler FY21 Budget Hearing

On February 27, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler testified before the House Energy and Commerce committee with regards to the proposed FY21 budget. The budget called for a 26.5 percent cut to the EPA budget and included a proposed 11 percent reduction to the EPA workforce. Wheeler will testify before the House Committee on Appropriations on Wednesday, March 4 at 9:30 a.m. Administrator Wheeler has served as the EPA administrator in an acting role from July 9, 2018 until his confirmation before the Untied States Senate on February 28, 2019.

## Wheeler Touted Administration’s WOrk On Superfund Sites

*Wheeler: “Finally EPA is cleaning up some of the nation's largest most complex contaminated sites returning them to productive use”[House Committee on Energy and Commerce,* [*2/27/20*](https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/hearing-on-the-fiscal-year-2021-epa-budget)*]*

### Budget Proposed Superfund Cuts While Program Had Historic Backlog

**Trump FY21 budget proposed a $113 million cut to superfund program.** According to the Associated Press, “President Donald Trump called Monday for slashing funding for the Superfund hazardous waste program, even as the backlog of clean-ups has grown around the country for lack of money. The $113 million in Superfund clean-up cuts are part of Trump’s proposal for a $2.4 billion, or 26%, cut in overall funding for the Environmental Protection Agency. That’s in line with the president’s vow as a candidate to cut all but ‘little tidbits’ of the environmental agency in a push to cut regulations he sees as unnecessarily burdensome to business. Monday marked the fourth year where Trump has called for cuts nearing one-third of the environmental agency’s budget. Republicans and Democrats in Congress annually have overridden his proposal, keeping funding for the agency’s environmental and public health oversight roughly even.” [Associated Press, [2/10/20](https://apnews.com/0e7638fc7cf6c0ea165460b689677609)]

**Toxic Superfund Cleanups Decline To More Than 30-Year Low.** According to the Associated Press, “The Trump administration completed the fewest cleanups of toxic Superfund sites last year than any administration since the program’s first years in the 1980s, figures released by the Environmental Protection Agency indicated Wednesday. The federal government wrapped up cleanups at six Superfund sites around the country in the 2019 budget year, the fewest since three in 1986, EPA online records showed. The Superfund program was born out of the 1970′s disaster at Love Canal in New York, where industrial contaminants poisoned groundwater, spurred complaints of health problems and prompted presidential emergency declarations. Congress started the Superfund program in 1980, with the mission of tackling the country’s worst contaminated sites to remove the threat to surrounding residents and the environment.” [Associated Press, [2/19/20](https://apnews.com/c1d827364ac630d53848ac3ec489788d)]

**Superfund Backlog Hit Highest Level In At Least 15 Years Under The Trump Administration.** According the Associated Press, “The Trump administration has built up the biggest backlog of unfunded toxic Superfund clean-up projects in at least 15 years, nearly triple the number that were stalled for lack of money in the Obama era, according to 2019 figures quietly released by the Environmental Protection Agency over the winter holidays. The accumulation of Superfund projects that are ready to go except for money comes as the Trump administration routinely proposes funding cuts for Superfund and for the EPA in general. The four-decade-old Superfund program is meant to tackle some of the most heavily contaminated sites in the U.S. and Trump has declared it a priority even while seeking to shrink its budget.” [Associated Press, [1/3/20](https://apnews.com/a7b70f21b6c75f95210112390cc813ad)]

## Wheeler Touted Trump administration’s accomplishments and environmental progress

*Wheeler: “Today the U.S. is a global leader with respect to clean air and access to safe drinking water and we are currently cleaning up contaminated lands at the fastest pace in over a decade” [House Committee on Energy and Commerce,* [*2/27/20*](https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/hearing-on-the-fiscal-year-2021-epa-budget)*]*

### The Trump Administration Is Rolling Back A High Number Of Environmental Rules And Regulations

**The Trump Administration Has Rolled Back At Least 95 Environmental Rules And Regulations.** According to the New York Times, “President Trump has made eliminating federal regulations a priority. His administration, with help from Republicans in Congress, has often targeted environmental rules it sees as burdensome to the fossil fuel industry and other big businesses. A New York Times analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School and other sources, counts more than 90 environmental rules and regulations rolled back under Mr. Trump. Our list represents two types of policy changes: rules that were officially reversed and rollbacks still in progress.” [New York Times, [12/21/19](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks.html)]

## Andrew Wheeler Touted Importance of Career Officials at the EPA

*Wheeler: “I want to make sure we got the hiring right for the EPA of the future. Last year we hired a thousand new employees and we are stepping up our hiring of professionals” [House Committee on Energy and Commerce,* [*2/27/20*](https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/hearing-on-the-fiscal-year-2021-epa-budget)*]*

### FY21 Budget Called To Slash EPA Workforce By 11 Percent

**FY21 Budget Called For Lowest EPA Staffing Levels Since 1985.** According to Scientific American, “EPA, which is celebrating half a century of existence this year, would receive $6.7 billion for fiscal 2021—a 27% cut compared with enacted levels. It also would slash its workforce by about 11%, to the lowest levels since 1985. The administration stressed in the budget and its supporting documents that this change would return EPA to its ‘core mission’ of protecting ‘clean air, land and water, and ensuring chemical safety, while targeting emerging domestic and global environmental challenges.’ It’s unclear whether the last part of that line is a veiled reference to climate change, but the issue isn’t mentioned by name in the EPA section of the main budget document. In an informal summary provided by EPA, it appears six times—mainly in the titles of programs slated for elimination.” [Scientific American, [2/11/20](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-once-again-left-out-of-trumps-federal-budget/)]

## Wheeler Discussed The Role That Science Played In Decisionmaking Related To PFAS

*Wheeler: “We have the for most scientists in the world working on this at EPA.” [House Committee on Energy and Commerce,* [*2/27/20*](https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/hearing-on-the-fiscal-year-2021-epa-budget)*]*

### EPA Has A Track Record In The Trump Administration Of Sidelining Best Available Science

**EPA’s Scientific Advisers Warn Its Regulatory Rollbacks Clash With Established Science.** According to the Washington Post, “The Environmental Protection Agency is pushing ahead with sweeping changes to roll back environmental regulations despite sharp criticism from a panel of scientific advisers, most of whom were appointed by President Trump. The changes would weaken standards that govern waterways and wetlands across the country, as well as those that dictate gas mileage for U.S. automobiles. Another change would restrict the kinds of scientific studies that can be used when writing new environmental regulations, while a fourth would change how the EPA calculates the benefits of limiting air pollutants from coal-fired power plants. Three of the four draft reports, posted online Tuesday, suggest that the administration’s proposals conflict with established science. They were prepared by members of the EPA’s Scientific Advisory Board, a panel of experts created by Congress in 1978 to review the agency’s scientific methods.” [Washington Post, [12/31/19](https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/epas-scientific-advisers-warn-its-regulatory-rollbacks-clash-with-established-science/2019/12/31/a1994f5a-227b-11ea-a153-dce4b94e4249_story.html)]

**E.P.A. To Limit Science Used To Write Public Health Rules.** according to the New York Times, “The Trump administration is preparing to significantly limit the scientific and medical research that the government can use to determine public health regulations, overriding protests from scientists and physicians who say the new rule would undermine the scientific underpinnings of government policymaking. A new draft of the Environmental Protection Agency proposal, titled Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science, would require that scientists disclose all of their raw data, including confidential medical records, before the agency could consider an academic study’s conclusions. E.P.A. officials called the plan a step toward transparency and said the disclosure of raw data would allow conclusions to be verified independently. ‘We are committed to the highest quality science,’ Andrew Wheeler, the E.P.A. administrator, told a congressional committee in September. ‘Good science is science that can be replicated and independently validated, science that can hold up to scrutiny. That is why we’re moving forward to ensure that the science supporting agency decisions is transparent and available for evaluation by the public and stakeholders.’” [New York Times, [11/11/19](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/11/climate/epa-science-trump.html)]