# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Budget Request for FY2021

<https://appropriations.house.gov/events/hearings/us-environmental-protection-agency-budget-request-for-fy2021>

Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 - 9:30am

Location: 2359 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Budget Request for FY2021

Subcommittees: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (116th Congress) Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

## Witnesses

***David Bloom***, Acting CFO, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

***The Honorable Andrew Wheeler***, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

116th Congress

Wheeler Opening Statement: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP06/20200304/110614/HHRG-116-AP06-Wstate-WheelerA-20200304.pdf>

Wheeler Committee bio: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP06/20200304/110614/HHRG-116-AP06-Bio-WheelerA-20200304.pdf>

Bloom Committee Bio: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP06/20200304/110614/HHRG-116-AP06-Bio-BloomD-20200304.pdf>

**Betty McCollum (Minnesota D-4) Opening Statement:**

It’s a 27% cut below 2020. Seeks to undo progress from bipartisan basis. Mentions PFAS. Climate and clean energy funding. Water infrastructure. Air monitoring. Brownfields. PFAS cuts would be truly devastating. This budget wont be enacted, just like the last three years. I plan to focus on how agency will implement 2020 funding. Discussed staffing levels being below target. Agency has been confrontational with union. Enforcement process and policy, there has been a decline. Mentioned cars costing billions of dollars. Rigged science to set health standards. Need to get back to where we used to be.

**David P. Joyce Ohio (R-14) Opening Remarks**:

50th anniversary of EPA. Implemented landmark legislation. Under Wheeler EPA continued to uphold mission. Discussed deletion of Superfund as largest in 2 decades. Pollutants declined. Thrilled to see administration recognize Great Lakes. Budget accelerates cleanup of Superfunds. I join colleagues of opposing some cuts in this budget. Agency needs necessary tools. Rural water, beaches, several other important grants.

**Andrew Wheeler Opening Statement**:

Trump is proving protection and growth go hand in hand. Enviro issues impact children and minorities and we are taking strong actions. Lead and school initiative. First time in 20 plus years we issued new standards for dust, and firs time in 30 years we revised lead and copper rule. Budget request additional resources for PFAS. Aging water infrastructure for states. When it comes to air pollution EPA is improving process and reducing SIP backlog. Re-designating areas around the country to attainment, lifting regulatory burdens. Protects health and spurs economic growth. EPA is significantly increase compliance to air pollution. Deterring noncompliance by stepping up criminal. Increased in all track categories for first time since 2011. Highest fines in last decade. Cleaning up most complex contaminated sites. Deleted 27 superfund sites, largest since 2001. Budget requests for brownfield and opportunity zones. We can proudly say Americans have significantlycleaner air and water on EPA’s 50th anniversary.

**Mike Quigley Illinois (D-05):**

Asked for breakdown for Region 5 breakdown. Your staff said it wasn’t available. Can CFO’s generate this date?

**Bloom**: We’ll look into it.

Quigley and the two went back and forth on how to get this information.

Quigley: Wheeler spent millions on travel and IG found ethical issues. Has money been recovered?

**Wheeler**: No there are number of errors in that report. IG told me it was a rough estimate. Ignored that protective detail was required to fly with Administrator. That number should be cut in half. No authority to recoup money. Plus there was a security risk. This all predated me. Number of errors in report. Counsel found there was no justification.

Quigley: Who can go after that if you can’t?

**Wheeler**: Our office of CFO reviewed every expense and recommended no amount should be recovered from former administrator.

Quigley: So can you cheat the American public?

**Wheeler**: No the IG erred in whether or not he (Pruitt) abused travel.

Quigley: If nothing was wrong why put in corrective action?

**Wheeler**: To ensure there is no misuse of funds. There was no justifiable finding that it was misused.

*EPA tweeted response:* [*https://twitter.com/EPA/status/1235217552143519744*](https://twitter.com/EPA/status/1235217552143519744)

**Chris Stewart Utah R-2**:

Thank you for WOTUS. Rolling back regs that had enormous impact out west. Water is life. We are grateful. Mentioned RINS. Small refineries. Can you give me hope on that?

**Wheeler**: They’ve gone up because of 10th Circuit Court decision. Working through issues. We might appeal.

Stewart asked about pesticides and bio-pesticides. Wheeler said they are working with USDA.

**Bonnie Watson Coleman New Jersey D-12:**

We increased environmental justice funds last year, we don’t know if you used them. I’d like an accounting on how those funds were used. Asked about clean car rules. There is a draft that’s nearly done. Allegations that professionals in department are being discourage to add concerns, fear of retaliation. IG was asked to investigate. Will you commit to ensure all comments are included and no retaliation?

**Wheeler**: Happy to provide you EJ information. We elevated it to administrator’s office. On CAFE, nobody will be retaliated at all for any issues. Important to note last time Obama did it the EPA had the lead, this time NHTSA has the primary lead. Some people feel like they have a second seat and it’s not as prominent. We are taking all comments. In inter agency review, inappropriate to send every comment. Sometimes they contradict. Won’t be retaliated.

Coleman asked about MATS, will you complete analysis.

Wheeler: We don’t believe there will be any change in equipment. We analyzed regulation. No reduction in mercury control installed at power plants. *Will there be more mercury?* No we don’t believe there will be at all. Technologies in place need to stay in place. We don’t believe anything will be turned off. (McCollum, you believe or you know?) That’s what our analysis says.

**Chellie Pingree Maine D-1**:

Asked about PFAS. Bio solids.

**Wheeler**: Looking at PFAS at all levels, including bio solids.

Pingree asked about Wastewater. Industrial discharge under CWA. Will EPA add PFAS?

Wheeler: We are taking data on where chemicals are produced and used. Telling communities if they might have issues. Submit for record PFAS action plan update.

**David P. Joyce Ohio (R-14)**:

Asked about Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. What economic and enviro benefits will we see?

**Wheeler**: Still believe I am the only EPA admin to swim in the Great Lakes. No longer using a hammer like we did in the past. Great Lakes are incredible resource. Making tremendous progress in cleaning up. Mentioned success of Chesapeake Bay program.

*Joyce*: Will EPA expand new programs like trash free water?

**Wheeler**: Yes.

Joyce asked about coastal erosion. How is EPA working to help communities?

**Wheeler**: Multi agency approach to looking at water issues.

**Derek Kilmer Washington D-6:**

Asked about Puget sound recovery. Sustainable natural resources. Why do you support funding for Wisconsin Ohio and Florida but not other states like Maryland and Wahsington?

**Wheeler**: It’s budgetary. We can address other areas with existing funds.

**Mark E. Amodei Nevada R-2:**

Made joke about swimming in lake then yielded back.

**Ranking Member Joyce:**

Asked again about PFAS and drinking water. Concerned EPA politics will influence standard. Usually set for white middle age males, not children or women or minorities.

**Wheeler**: Foremost researchers in the world working on this at EPA. They’re looking at children, pregnant women,. We don’t just look at white men, that are not accurate. Mentions lead and copper rule.

Joyce asked about draft risk assessment for TCE. Ignoring science and fetal heart defects.

**Wheeler**: Will have peer review and comment. It hasn’t been finalized. Will have public comment. We take it very seriously. Will have opportunity to address issues you raised.

**Brenda L. Lawrence Michigan D-14:**

Trump proposed cuts every year. Clean water and drinking funds included in cuts. Almost daily there is a new report of contaminates. How do you justify cuts to clean and safe drinking water?

**Wheeler**: to avoid Flint we proposed update to lead and copper rule. Replace lead pipes. I don’t believe cut will affect us. SRF funds will be used. Requested other grant programs like AWEA wind grants. Will require water testing in schools for first time (Lawrence: I want to commend you for that )

Lawrence asked about staff cuts at regional offices. We can’t do our job without staff and if we aren’t funded.

**Wheeler**: Hired a thousand new employees and lost 900 to attrition. 40% is eligible to retire soon.

**Ranking Member Joyce**:

Asked about algal blooms. HABS. How can we respond to HABS?

**Wheeler**: Done more research on HABS.

**McCollum**:

I want to talk about children’s health again. Mentioned MATS. Insecticides and pesticides. Children’s health research.

**Wheeler**: Looking at way to do work while NIH redirects funds.

Asked about national Academy reviews

**Wheeler**: Just added a supplemental proposal.

**Michael K. Simpson Idaho R-2:**

Thank you for WOTUS. What are navigable waters? Farmers and ranchers have been concerned. Are states prepared to regulate these waters?

**Wheeler**: Property owners should be able to tell themselves what the rules are. States also need to protect waterways if it isn’t federally protected. Need a reg that would stand test of time and be upheld by courts. States under CWA have programs, same for safe drinking water. All states can go further than federal standards.

Asked about Carbon neutral biomass

Wheeler: Very important. We want comments from everyone and hope to fonalze by end of yer.

**McCollum**:

Region 6 relocation. How much did you plan on spending on relocation and preparing new Oklahoma site?

**Wheeler**: It’s a co-location and cost is 8-10 million. We spent 170,000 in 2019. This year we spend $500,000. Operating under 2016 law directing reduction of leased spaces. Ada Oklahoma could accommodate Houston lab. Saved taxpayers a lot of money and still in region 6.

*McCollum asked about GAO compliance recommendation*.

**Wheeler**: we are following through on recommendations.

McCollum: We will submit questions on staffing. Questions on staff retention. Will submit for record.

HEARING ADJOURNED.

# CLIPS

McCollum Opening Statement: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=1523>

Wheeler Opening Statement: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=2226>

Watson Coleman Questions: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=3199>

Pingree Questions: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=3520>

Kilmer Questions: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=4145>

Lawrence Questions: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=5019>

Simpson Questions: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=5863>

McCollum on MATS: <https://youtu.be/yalwVIVBzsg?t=5584>