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<http://www.beyondtoxics.org/resources/press-kit/>

Text of the Letter: <https://www.beyondtoxics.org/sign-on-letter-to-governor-brown-regarding-epa-rollbacks-individuals/>

Press Kit: <https://www.beyondtoxics.org/resources/press-kit/>



News Release – April 2, 2020

Environmental Groups Urge Oregon Action in the Face of Federal Regulation Roll-Backs

Oregon’s Environmental Protection Act can trump US EPA’s pass for polluters

Eugene, ORE. – In response to an open-ended freeze on federal environmental regulations called for by the Trump Administration, dozens of top Oregon environmental advocacy groups are asking Governor Brown and state legislators to uphold Oregon’s Environmental Protection Act. Introduced and passed as HB 2250 during the 2019 legislative session, the Act protects the standards of environmental and human health protections under Oregon State law as they stood enforced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on January 19, 2017.

On Thursday, March 26, the US EPA announced a rollback of environmental regulations under cover of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this new order, manufacturers, power plants and other major polluters will decide--on their own--whether or not they have to meet legal requirements to manage hazardous waste, control emissions into air and prevent discharges into water. The EPA will not be fining companies for violating certain requirements on limiting pollution. This rule has no end date and will remain in place indefinitely.

The goal of the Oregon Environmental Protection Act is to maintain environmental and human health protections in a scenario where the federal government undermines or nullifies our nation’s bedrock of environmental regulations. Such a scenario has arrived in the form of EPA’s announcement that the federal agency has suspended seeking penalties for violations of routine compliance monitoring, integrity testing, sampling, laboratory analysis, training, and reporting or certification obligations if the Agency believes that the regulatory lapse is related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Last year, at the time of adoption, Governor Brown made the following observation. “As we sign the Oregon EPA into law, we send a signal to Washington, D.C. that rolling back federal environmental laws only creates uncertainty. By working together with other states, we can take a leadership role in preventing the erosion of core laws that protect our environment.”

The letter urges the Governor to use an environmental justice framework to consider and protect vulnerable communities already struggling to pay bills, remain employed, and keep their families healthy. “Exposure to air toxics and particle pollution, so detrimental to health, can affect people who are already health-impaired just at this time when respiratory and immune system strength is what we all need to survive a coronavirus infection.”

Beyond Toxics promotes environmental justice engagement and community-based environmental grassroots organizing to ensure environmental protection and health for all communities.