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August 14, 2019

Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Re: Data Limitations

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) has been honored to work with the Environmental Protection Agency to provide direction regarding compliance with Executive Order 12898 for over 20 years. We salute the great strides that have been made to protect human health and the environment in that time. We also have a continuing desire to make sure the communities we represent have the appropriate tools and resources needed to do their own due diligence so that they can continue to protect and improve their health and safety.

Over the past few years, it has come to our attention that the EPA does a very good job providing additional tools for the public to utilize in investigating various potential impacts within their communities. However, the tools themselves, while well-intentioned, lack completeness depending on where the person resides. For example, the EJSCREEN and EnviroAtlas tools do not cover all the areas of the United States, its territories, or all federally recognized tribal lands; these resources have very limited data for those areas.

These deficiencies place thousands of people who could utilize these tools at a severe disadvantage as they investigate surrounding industries or hazards being proposed within their communities. Areas which were recently excluded within EnviroAtlas¹ include Hawaii, Alaska, Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In speaking to tribal representatives, they were not sure if they would be included in the EnviroAtlas tool even though many are within the contiguous 48 states. This exclusion includes two states that have been part of the United States since 1959.

We encourage the EPA, as it continues to support the public's efforts to understand their rights and responsibilities in evaluating projects that could impact their health and welfare, to ensure that any tools developed and introduced are inclusive and available to all of our communities.

The NEJAC appreciates the opportunity to provide guidance to the EPA on advancing environmental justice for the health and well-being of overburdened and underserved populations. We look forward to working with EPA staff on enhancing communications, tools, and resources as part of our shared goal of ensuring meaningful access for all communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard Moore, Chair

cc: NEJAC Members
Anne Idsal, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation
Alexandra Dapolito Dunn, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution
Chad McIntosh, Assistant Administrator for the Office of International and Tribal Affairs
Peter Wright, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management
Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development
Dave Ross, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water
Brittany Bolen, Associate Administrator for the Office of Policy
Matthew Tejada, Director for the Office of Environmental Justice
Karen L. Martin, Designated Federal Officer and NEJAC Program Manager

