



Progress for a Stronger Future

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**



**DECEMBER 2020
WASHINGTON D.C.**

LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

America's environment today is cleaner than it's been in our lifetimes. President Richard M. Nixon charted this course by creating the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 — guiding 50 years of progress towards a stronger future.

It is an honor to serve as EPA's 15th Administrator, to celebrate this extraordinary milestone for our agency, and to look forward to even greater success in the next 50 years.

Since the moment of its founding, EPA's mission has been to protect human health and the environment, and in 1970, there was an enormous amount of work to do.

Across America, an environmental crisis was unfolding. Smog was at unhealthy levels in many cities across the country, lead was still in common use in many products, and water pollution threatened the drinking water supplies of millions of Americans.

When the first EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus was appointed to lead the agency, environmental programs were scattered throughout the federal government and didn't properly support states, leaving enormous gaps in protections necessary to complete EPA's new mission.

EPA's task, as the country's environmental enforcement agency, was to "clean up America," a herculean job, if ever there was one.

And the agency, through cooperation with states and the incredible dedication of tens of thousands of EPA employees, delivered on this difficult mission.

Chemicals and compounds that were once thought to be harmless and commonplace have been banned, replaced and cleaned up.

In the 50 years between 1970 and 2020, air pollution has fallen an incredible 77 percent, even as the economy grew by 285 percent.

Before EPA was established, more than 40 percent of our nation's drinking water systems failed to meet even the most basic health standards.

But now, more than 92 percent of community water systems in this country meet all health-based standards all the time.

And the Superfund program — which was founded in 1980 — has led to the cleanup and removal of more than 400 of the nation's worst hazardous waste sites from the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL).

In doing these things, EPA ensures that Americans of all walks of life can breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live, work and play on land free from pollution.

As we look forward to the next 50 years, we should pause for a moment and consider ways that EPA can better itself, and by doing so, better the nation's environment in the 21st Century.

EPA under the Trump Administration has worked hard to tear down the silos between programs within the agency to be more effective in addressing the environmental burdens that communities face.

Communities that deal with the worst pollution in this country—and that tend to be low-income and minority—face multiple environmental problems that need solving.

By focusing on communities where past industrial pollution has had a negative impact on the well-being of people and local economies, this agency will transform itself into a much better version of government, with benefits that will last for many administrations.

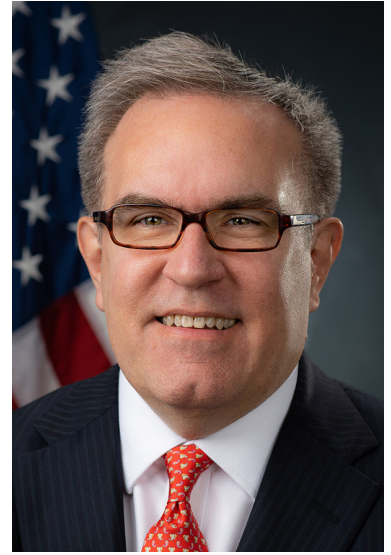
Cleaning up these communities more quickly and leveraging new private investment opportunities through Brownfields grants, WIFIA loans, state revolving funds, and targeted airshed grants can help solve America's environmental problems that have remained unresolved for decades.

EPA has accomplished a lot over the last four years and has laid the groundwork for future agency success.

We have implemented five structural changes—five pillars—that have transformed the way the agency operates today.

We created a cost-benefit rule for the Clean Air Act because the American public deserves to know what the costs and benefits are for its air rules.

We created a science transparency rule that can be applied consistently because the American public has a right to know the scientific justification behind a regulation.



We have published new guidance policy procedures that brings all of our guidance documents to light in a searchable database for the entire public to read for the first time ever.

We have reorganized our regional offices so that all 10 of our regional offices mirror our headquarters structure.

And we have implemented a lean management system — also known as the Toyota system — throughout the agency to improve the way we operate.

America is home to some of the most exceptional natural and environmental gifts on the planet, and EPA has spent five decades improving the health of these gifts.

It's been my experience that EPA employees have an uncommon allegiance to the mission of the agency, a devotion you don't find in many other places — and we can see this devotion in the fact that EPA has seven charter employees still working at the agency.

These seven charter employees have been working for EPA since it was founded a half century ago and are representative of the dedication that has made America's environment what it is today — the cleanest on record.

Fifty years ago, the environmental challenges before us were very large and difficult to overcome. But many of these challenges have been overcome, and even conquered.

And as hard as the agency has worked, the environmental challenges before us in the coming 50 years will surely be difficult. But if we do the work before us, with transparency and fairness, we can protect the places we love and bring back the places that have been hurt by pollution — and make them better than they were before.

I hope everyone can support our agency as we continue to work on delivering this vision of a great environmental future for all Americans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Wheeler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Wheeler
Administrator

EPA ADMINISTRATORS



William D. Ruckelshaus
EPA Administrator
12/4/70 – 4/30/73



Russell E. Train
EPA Administrator
9/13/73 – 1/20/77



Douglas M. Costle
EPA Administrator
3/7/77 – 1/20/81



Anne M. Gorsuch (Burford)
EPA Administrator
5/20/81 – 3/9/83



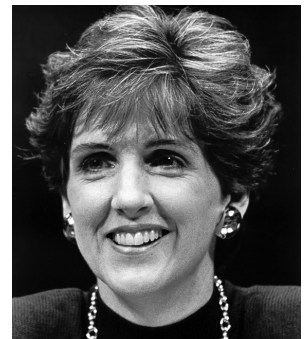
William D. Ruckelshaus
EPA Administrator
5/18/83 – 1/4/85



Lee M. Thomas
EPA Administrator
2/8/85 – 1/20/89



William K. Reilly
EPA Administrator
2/6/89 – 1/20/93



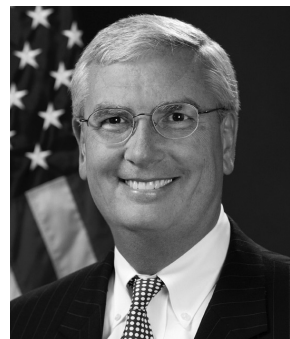
Carol M. Browner
EPA Administrator
1/22/93 – 1/19/01



Christine Todd Whitman
EPA Administrator
1/31/01 – 6/27/03



Michael O. Leavitt
EPA Administrator
11/6/03 – 1/25/05



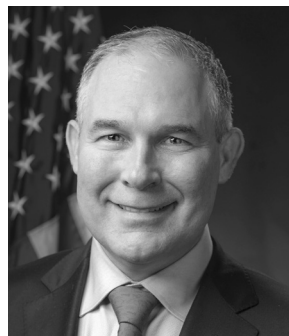
Stephen L. Johnson
EPA Administrator
5/2/05 – 1/20/09



Lisa P. Jackson
EPA Administrator
1/26/09 – 2/14/13



Gina McCarthy
EPA Administrator
1/19/13 – 1/20/17



Scott Pruitt
EPA Administrator
2/17/17 – 7/6/18



Andrew Wheeler
EPA Administrator
2/28/19 – Present

50TH ANNIVERSARY LAPEL PIN

Thank you for your commitment
to cleaning up America

*50 years of protecting human
health and the environment*

Andrew R. Kibul



AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
IN PUBLIC SERVICE

**PROGRESS FOR A
STRONGER FUTURE**

50TH ANNIVERSARY THEMES



JANUARY



FEBRUARY



MAY



JUNE



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER

50TH ANNIVERSARY THEMES



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

Chemical Safety

MARCH



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

50 Years of Earth Day

APRIL



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

Cleaning Up the Nation's Land

JULY



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

Research for a Healthier Environment

AUGUST



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

Ensuring Environmental Compliance

NOVEMBER



50 EPA at
Progress for a Stronger Future

Inspiring the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

DECEMBER

50 YEAR ENVIRONMENTAL TIMELINE

1970

Twenty million people celebrate the first Earth Day.



1970

President Richard Nixon creates EPA with a mission to protect the environment and public health.



1970

Congress amends the Clean Air Act to set national air quality, auto emission, and anti-pollution standards.



1971

Congress restricts use of lead-based paint in residences and on cribs and toys.

1972

EPA bans DDT, a cancer-causing pesticide, and requires extensive review of all pesticides.

1972

The United States and Canada agree to clean up the Great Lakes, which contain 95 percent of America's fresh water and supply drinking water for 25 million people.

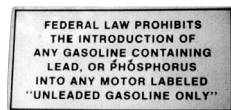


1972

Congress passes the Clean Water Act, limiting raw sewage and other pollutants flowing into rivers, lakes, and streams.

1973

EPA begins phasing out leaded gasoline.



1973

OPEC oil embargo triggers energy crisis, stimulating conservation and research on alternative energy sources.



1973

EPA issues its first permit limiting a factory's polluted discharges into waterways.

1974

Congress passes the Safe Drinking Water Act, allowing EPA to regulate the quality of public drinking water.

1975

Congress establishes fuel economy standards and sets tail-pipe emission standards for cars, resulting in the introduction of catalytic converters.

1976

Congress passes the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, regulating hazardous waste from its production to its disposal.

1976

President Gerald Ford signs the Toxic Substances Control Act to reduce environmental and human health risks.



1976

EPA begins phase-out of cancer-causing PCB production and use.

1977

President Jimmy Carter signs the Clean Air Act Amendments to strengthen air quality standards and protect human health.

1978

Residents discover that Love Canal, New York, is contaminated by buried leaking chemical containers.



1978

The federal government bans chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as propellants in aerosol cans because CFCs destroy the ozone layer, which protects the earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation.

1979

EPA demonstrates scrubber technology for removing air pollution from coal-fired power plants. This technology is widely adopted in the 1980s.



1979

Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, increases awareness and discussion about nuclear power safety. EPA and other agencies monitor radioactive fallout.



1980

Congress creates Superfund to clean up hazardous waste sites. Polluters are made responsible for cleaning up the most hazardous sites.

1981

National Research Council report finds acid rain intensifying in the northeastern United States and Canada.



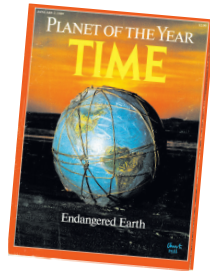
50 YEAR ENVIRONMENTAL TIMELINE

1982

Congress enacts laws for safe disposal of nuclear waste.

1982

Dioxin contamination forces the government to purchase homes in Times Beach, Missouri. The federal government and the responsible polluters share the cleanup costs.



1982

A PCB landfill protest in North Carolina begins the environmental justice movement.



1983

Cleanup actions begin to rid the Chesapeake Bay of pollution stemming from sewage treatment plants, urban runoff, and farm waste.

1983

EPA encourages homeowners to test for radon gas, which causes lung cancer.



WARNING: RADON IS DEADLY IN THIS AREA.

1985

Scientists report that a giant hole in the earth's ozone layer opens each spring over Antarctica.

1986

Congress declares the public has a right to know when toxic chemicals are released into air, land, and water.

1987

The United States signs the Montreal Protocol, pledging to phase-out production of CFCs.

1987

Medical and other waste washes up on shores, closing beaches in New York and New Jersey.

1987

EPA's "Unfinished Business" report compares relative risks of environmental challenges for the first time.

1988

Congress bans ocean dumping of sewage sludge and industrial waste.

1989

Exxon Valdez spills 11 million gallons of crude oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound.



1990

Congress passes the Clean Air Act Amendments, requiring states to demonstrate progress in improving air quality.

1990

EPA's Toxic Release Inventory tells the public which pollutants are being released from specific facilities in their communities.



1990

President George Bush signs the Pollution Prevention Act, emphasizing the importance of preventing—not just correcting—environmental damage.

1990

President George Bush signs the National Environmental Education Act, signifying the importance of educating the public to ensure scientifically sound, balanced, and responsible decisions about the environment.

1991

Federal agencies begin using recycled content products.



1991

EPA launches voluntary industry partnership programs for energy-efficient lighting and for reducing toxic chemical emissions.

1992

EPA launches the ENERGY STAR® Program to help consumers identify energy-efficient products.



1993

EPA reports secondhand smoke contaminates indoor air, posing serious health risks to nonsmokers.

1993

A cryptosporidium outbreak in Milwaukee, Wisconsin's drinking water sickens 400,000 people and kills more than 100.

1993

President Bill Clinton directs the federal government to use its \$200 billion annual purchasing power to buy recycled and environmentally preferable products.



1994

EPA launches its Brownfields Program to clean up abandoned, contaminated sites to return them to productive community use.



1994

EPA issues new standards for chemical plants that will reduce toxic air pollution by more than half a million tons each year—the equivalent of taking 38 million vehicles off the road annually.

1995

EPA launches an incentive-based acid rain program to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions.

1995

EPA requires municipal incinerators to reduce toxic emissions by 90 percent from 1990 levels.

1996

Public drinking water suppliers are required to inform customers about chemicals and microbes in their water, and funding is made available to upgrade water treatment plants.



1996

EPA requires that home buyers and renters be informed about lead-based paint hazards.

1996

President Bill Clinton signs the Food Quality Protection Act to tighten standards for pesticides used to grow food, with special protections to ensure that foods are safe for children to eat.



1997

An Executive Order is issued to protect children from environmental health risks, including childhood asthma and lead poisoning.

1997

EPA issues tough new air quality standards for smog and soot, an action that would improve air quality for 125 million Americans.

1998

President Bill Clinton announces the Clean Water Action Plan to continue making America's waterways safe for fishing and swimming.

1999

President Bill Clinton announces new emissions standards for cars, sport utility vehicles, minivans and trucks, requiring them to be 77 to 95 percent cleaner than in 1999.



1999

EPA announces new requirements to improve air quality in national parks and wilderness areas.

2000

EPA establishes regulations requiring more than 90 percent cleaner heavy duty highway diesel engines and fuel.

2000

National Performance Track program is launched to recognize facilities that exceed legal requirements to make measurable environmental progress.

2002

President George W. Bush signs the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act to reclaim and restore thousands of abandoned properties.

2003

EPA provides funds for more than 4,000 school buses to be retrofitted through the Clean School Bus USA program, removing 200,000 pounds of particulate matter from the air over the next 10 years.



2004

New, more protective, 8-hour ozone and fine particulate standards go into effect across the country.

2004

EPA requires cleaner fuels and engines for off-road diesel machinery such as farm or construction equipment.



2005

EPA issues the Clean Air Act Interstate Rule to achieve the largest reduction in air pollution in more than a decade, by permanently capping SO₂ and NO_x emissions in the Eastern United States.

2006

EPA launches the WaterSense program to help families and businesses identify water-efficient products.



2007

Diesel trucks and buses are as much as 95 percent cleaner than in 2006.



2007

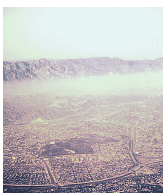
President George W. Bush signs the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, increasing the national fuel economy standard to 35 miles per gallon by 2020 and requiring fuel producers to use at least 36 billion gallons of biofuel in 2022.

2008

National Performance Track program reaches over 500 members.

2008

EPA issues the most health-protective standards for smog in our nation's history.



2008

EPA issues new diesel locomotives and marine engine standards to cut emissions of particulate matter by 90 percent and nitrogen oxides by 80 percent.

2009

Initiative to Monitor Toxic Air Pollutants Near Schools - EPA and its state partners begin to monitor schools for more extensive air quality analysis.

2010

The BP-operated Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico explodes leading to the largest oil spill in American history. EPA joins the emergency response, environmental data collection and analysis, and cleanups.



2011

Fukushima Nuclear Reactor Damaged - An earthquake and the resulting tsunami damage Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant, releasing radiation into the air. EPA responds with radiation monitors.

2012

First Carbon Pollution Standard for New Power Plants Proposed - The rule creates opportunities for new technologies at future facilities to burn coal, while emitting less carbon pollution.

2014

New Rules for Cleaner Fuels and Cars - The "Tier 3" standards sets new vehicle emissions standards and lowers the sulfur content of gasoline beginning in 2017.

2016

Drinking Water Action Plan - The Plan outlines how government, utilities, community organizations, and other stakeholders can increase the safety and reliability of drinking water.



2016

President Obama signs the Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act which amends the Toxic Substances Control Act, the nation's primary chemicals management law, requiring EPA to evaluate existing chemicals with clear and enforceable deadlines.

2016

Paris Climate Accord - 196 nations negotiated the Accord to mitigate emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming and climate change.

2017

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt establishes the Superfund Task Force to provide recommendations for improving and expediting cleanup and promoting redevelopment.



2017

Agency announces actions to support local communities and increase research on PFOA, PFOS and other Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

2019

Administrator Wheeler Signs Memo to Reduce Animal Testing - The memo calls for EPA to reduce mammal study requests and funding by 30% by 2025 and eliminate them by 2035.



2019

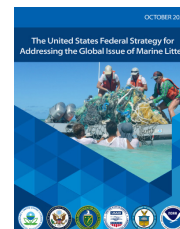
EPA announces plans to establish national recycling goals.

2020

National Water Reuse Action Plan - The Action Plan supports water reuse technology to ensure the viability of our water economy.

2020

Federal Strategy for Addressing Global Marine Litter - EPA, USAID and NOAA implements innovative programs and finance initiatives to address marine litter.





www.epa.gov/50

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