

Senate Committee on Appropriations

FY 27 Budget Request for the Environmental Protection Agency

May 13, 2026

Witness: [Lee Zeldin](#), Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Highlights:

The hearing focused on a proposed EPA budget that significantly reduces funding for water infrastructure, environmental programs, and research, while emphasizing efficiency and state-led implementation. Tribal implications include heightened risk for Alaska Native and rural Tribal communities due to cuts in climate resilience, water funding, and environmental justice programs, alongside ongoing but limited support for contaminated land cleanup.

Key points:

- Major Proposed Budget Cuts
 - EPA budget request: ~\$4.2 billion (down ~\$4.6 billion from prior year)
 - Proposed changes include:
 - Deep reductions to [Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds](#) (SRFs)
 - Elimination of many state categorical grants (air, water monitoring, etc.)
 - Significant cuts to science and technology (up to ~30%+)
 - Elimination of environmental justice programs
 - Tribes could lose targeted funding, technical assistance and priority consideration in grants.
 - Zeldin explained that the rationale is that some funds remain unused at the state level and congress can still add funding through appropriations (earmarks/congressional direct spending).
- Alaska Native Communities & Tribal Lands
 - Significant discussion focused on Alaska Native communities, highlighting unique Tribal impacts from contaminated lands transferred under the [Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act \(ANCSA\)](#) that remain a major issue.
 - EPA is working on cleanup projects (~\$26 million across 11 projects) involving Alaska Native entities.
- Water Infrastructure & Public Health

- Bipartisan concern over impacts of cuts to drinking water systems, wastewater infrastructure, and lead pipe replacements.
 - Cuts to SRF programs and categorical grants could disproportionately affect Tribal drinking water and wastewater systems, as well as rural communities that rely heavily on federal support.
- Zeldin highlighted the existing unspent balances (~\$14.8 billion) in SRF programs and efforts to reallocate funds to states that use them faster.
- Regulatory and Policy Direction
 - Zeldin described actions to revise [WOTUS \(Waters of the U.S.\)](#) rules following the Sackett decision, reduce prior climate and regulatory policies, and emphasize state authority ("cooperative federalism").
 - Ongoing rulemakings discussed:
 - Air quality standards and cost-benefit methodologies
 - PFAS drinking water standards
 - Plastics and emerging contaminants
- Science and Research Capacity
 - Concerns raised about the workforce reductions (thousands of staff departures), and the reorganization of research programs.
 - Zeldin responded that staff is being redistributed across programs, and that the EPA is committed to “gold standard science” though methodology changes (e.g. valuation of health impacts) are underway.