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Contact: Bill Becker
(202) 624-7864

EPA Cuts State and Local Air Quality Grants by \$20.5 Million in FY 2007 Operating Plan

EPA plans to cut state and local air quality grants by \$20.5 million in FY 2007, according to the agency's Operating Plan, which was submitted to Congress on March 15, 2007. The plan calls for air quality grants to be reduced from \$220.3 million in FY 2006 to \$199.8 million in FY 2007.

"This reduction would cause extreme hardship to state and local clean air programs, which are responsible for improving and maintaining healthful air across the nation. State and local air quality agencies, which are already underfunded, are faced with additional responsibilities to protect public health and air quality, such as developing new state implementation plans for both ozone and fine particulate matter," said Ursula Kramer (Tucson, Arizona), Co-President of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA). "These activities warrant additional funding, not grant reductions."

"Compounding the effect of the cuts is the fact that we are already half-way through the fiscal year. These significant reductions would have to be absorbed during the next six months, which will be very disruptive to our programs," said Shelley Kaderly (Nebraska), Co-President of NACAA. "As it is, we are forced to do more with less. Further cuts may be devastating for some agencies."

NACAA is calling upon Congress to restore the FY 2007 categorical grants to their FY 2006 levels through a directive to EPA in the FY 2007 supplemental appropriations bill currently being considered by Congress.

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) also expressed its opposition to the proposed cuts to both EPA and the leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. In a letter to Congressional leaders, ECOS states "The agency did not consult with the states in this matter, and we do not agree with the Administrator's action..." and, further, that, "We ask that the Committee overturn this action and restore the 2007 Categorical Grants to their 2006 levels."

The EPA Operating Plan details how the agency intends to allocate the FY 2007 appropriations provided in the Continuing Resolution that Congress adopted in February 2007 to

fund the agency until September 30, 2007. Although the Continuing Resolution generally called for FY 2007 appropriations to be equal to FY 2006 levels, EPA was given some flexibility to shift funds among accounts. While most categorical grant accounts were held steady or showed modest shifts from FY 2006 to FY 2007, there were exceptions, including the \$20.5-million reduction to air grants and an increase of \$18.9 million for the Underground Storage Tank Program.

NACAA, formerly known as STAPPA and ALAPCO, is the national association of air pollution control agencies in 54 states and territories and more than 165 major metropolitan areas across the country. For more information on the association, please visit the association's website at www.4cleanair.org.

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