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EPA Awards \$1.79 Million to Groups in Southwest Pennsylvania to Support Air Monitoring Efforts in Environmental Justice Communities

Southwest Pa. – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Thursday [announced](#) an award of four grants totaling \$1.86 million to groups in southwest Pennsylvania to enhance ambient air quality monitoring in communities that are underserved, historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution.

Nationally, the [EPA has offered 132 grants totaling \\$53.4 million](#) to organizations in 37 states. The funding is part of President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and American Rescue Plan to enhance air quality monitoring in communities across the United States.

Locally, the initiatives will expand existing citizen research and monitoring initiatives in the region. The projects are:

- **Robinson/Smith AirWatch: A Case for Assessing Cumulative Air Pollution Impacts** from Shale Gas Operations using Community-Based Ambient Air Monitoring and Air Sampling Technology in Robinson and Smith Townships, Washington County, Pennsylvania by FracTracker Alliance (applicant), Environmental Integrity Project, Environmental Health Project, and Carnegie Mellon University's CREATE Lab. The group received \$430,001. FracTracker was also selected to receive a separate EPA grant for \$495,301 for the project "Community-Based Ambient Air Monitoring to Evaluate Criteria Pollutants and Air Toxics Related to Unconventional Oil and Gas Development in the Ohio Valley," along with FreshWater Accountability Project and other partners.

- **Monitoring Chronic and Acute Pollution in the Upper Ohio River Valley** (Breathe Project, applicant) received \$499,141. The program is hosted by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies and Community Partners, Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC), Beaver County (BC) NAACP and Beaver County United (BCU), Community First Sewickley Valley (C1), Community Monitoring Project (CMP), Coraopolis NAACP, Carnegie Mellon University Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies (CAPS), Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab, Clean Air Council (CAC), Environmental Health Project (EHP), Community Partners in Asthma Care (CPAC), Environmental and Occupational Health (EOH) Department at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, and University of Pittsburgh's Center for Healthy Environments and Communities (CHEC).
- **The Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP)** (GASP, applicant), Allegheny County Clean Air Now, Birmingham/Uptown Clean Air Group, Breathe Project, Clean Water Fund, CREATE Lab, Protect Elizabeth Township, and Valley Clean Air Now received \$499,781 for a project that will expand community-owned air monitoring networks to equip residents from across the region with local and accurate estimates of ambient air pollution exposure. The project builds on crowd-sourced odor reporting data from over 1000, unique individual reporters in Carnegie Mellon University's Smell PGH app, and monitoring networks facilitated by community groups throughout the southwestern Pennsylvania region.
- **Clean Air for All: Knowledge is Power** of Protect PT (Penn-Trafford applicant) and project partners Environmental Health Project and CREATE Lab received \$365,887. The project addresses the lack of knowledge about fossil fuel air emissions and the impact on quality of life in Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties which have been exacerbated by the Covid-10 pandemic.

Southwestern Pennsylvania communities in the Ohio River Valley continue to experience air pollution from industrial sources and anticipate additional air pollution from the buildout of petrochemical facilities and infrastructure. Many of these communities experience poor health outcomes from these pollution sources.

The funds from these grants will enhance the quality of information available to impacted community members by deploying more extensive, reliable and complete monitoring technology attuned to community concerns and information needs.

"Air monitoring will greatly enhance the capabilities of communities to understand and address pollution events throughout the region, protecting the health of residents in the process," said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project.

Residents involved in the monitoring projects expressed their hopes for the opportunities that these funds will provide:

"The massive shale gas buildout has spiderwebbed around us, and yet no one has even considered any cumulative impacts," said Cathy "Cat" Lodge a Washington County resident.

"We hope this project can help bring much needed attention to what we are being exposed to as the march of this polluting industry continues to take a toll on our communities, our farms and our health."

"The additional monitors will allow us to collect data on episodic air pollution' events which will have a real effect on the health of the people in Beaver County who need to know the concentration of the pollutants they have actually been exposed to," said Dr. Clifford Lau, a member of the Eyes on Shell Watchdog Team of Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community.

"These areas have seen a significant increase in air pollution which impacts the surrounding community's health and quality of life, said Gillian Graber, executive director for Protect PT. "By offering these communities environmental monitoring, pollution reporting tools and air quality education, the community can take back its power from industry."

"This is tremendous news for the region and comes in the wake of a prolonged air pollution episode that had Allegheny County residents breathing poor air for nearly half the month of October," said Patrick Campbell, GASP executive director. "This funding provides residents, advocates and air quality experts the ability to come together and use their combined time and talent to fill in some of the monitoring gaps and continue leading the charge for cleaner air for our region."

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