

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden**  
**Subcommittee on Environment hearing on**  
**“Modernizing Environmental Laws: Challenges and Opportunities for**  
**Expanding Infrastructure and Promoting Development and Manufacturing”**  
**February 16, 2017**

Yesterday, the Energy Subcommittee began to explore the great potential for American economic growth from modernizing our electricity and energy infrastructure. Today, this Environment Subcommittee—with its expanded jurisdiction under Chairman Shimkus’ experienced and able leadership—turns to the economic and environmental benefits that will flow from modernizing some key environmental laws.

The common goal here is to identify what steps are necessary to responsibly reduce the barriers to a more productive U.S. economy and then to develop targeted legislative reforms that will provide for this economic expansion and create good paying jobs. Doing this will ultimately benefit American consumers.

To begin delivering clear results, we must craft policies that will expand our infrastructure and help accelerate innovation and investment and spur manufacturing growth. It also means taking the necessary steps to ensure our laws do what we intended them to do, as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. And it means making sure regulations are developed and implemented with transparency and predictability.

There are plenty of opportunities to make commonsense changes to environmental laws and the way we implement those laws that will reduce unnecessary barriers, disincentives and delays to permitting new infrastructure and

manufacturing. This is particularly the case with implementation of some of our air laws.

And, there are additional opportunities for environmental cleanup that will turn old, environmental dead zones into healthy, revitalized spaces for our local communities and all of that can help spur new economic growth.

Some barriers and burdens to development come from outdated assumptions going back decades—when many of our laws were developed. We’ve learned much since then about what works best and what doesn’t work at all. Other roadblocks come from regulatory practices that have proven impractical or have become outdated as environmental quality has improved to the point that additional refinements have become more costly to obtain.

The digital age has produced analytical tools that were not available when the Clean Air Act was last amended in 1990. Just look at the computing power packed into an iPhone, or the developments in nanotechnology and bioscience, or all the modern technology that companies use to respond successfully to what consumers want in the information age. Clearly, we’ve seen tremendous advances all around us that we must embrace as we modernize our laws to increase the speed, effectiveness, and quality of environmental decision-making. All of which can produce cleaner air, water and soils.

Our challenge is this: Can we go bold and actually harness these new tools and technologies in partnership with the inherent advantages of more localized decision-making? Can we refocus our resources on clean up efforts rather than court-room brawls and bureaucratic bungling? Are there analytical tools and modeling approaches that can make for more practical, risk informed decision-

making that will ease unnecessary burdens and reduce the costly delays in business development? Can analysis and decision-making be decentralized to enable innovative approaches to improving public and environmental health?

We have enormous opportunities to make meaningful improvements in our environmental laws and regulations. We can join the twin engines of modern science and common sense and produce better public health and a better economy. Today we will begin to identify those opportunities. Let me thank the witnesses for their thoughtful testimony. You are doing a great service in helping to guide our examination of these important issues.