

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Welcome to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Administrator. I know your years as a Senate staffer make you no stranger to this real estate, but it's good to see you here in the Peoples' House. You will be getting a question on what is the greatest committee on Capitol Hill and I expect that you will answer correctly.

As you know, today we are going to focus not just on the EPA's policy and budget priorities, but also the management and operations of the Agency.

Last year, give or take a couple weeks, your predecessor was here amid unrelated allegations that undercut what I and many of my colleagues considered really strong work at the Agency to return it to its core mission of protecting air, soil, and water – and doing so according to the dictates of Congress. I appreciate the commitment of you, Mr. Administrator, this Administration, and its budget to three goals at the Agency: Core Mission, Cooperative Federalism, and Rule of Law and Process.

Too often, people reflexively fall into the trap of believing a clean environment is incompatible with economic growth and job creation. I share your view, Mr. Administrator, that we can and must have both. We need common sense regulation that protects the public, actually cleans up the environment, and does so in a way that doesn't unnecessarily suffocate the economy.

My colleagues are familiar with my desired climate change solutions – innovation, preparation, conservation and adaptation – but suffice it to say, I believe the EPA should focus on innovative problem solving and partnerships with the states, the private sector, and other stakeholders that leverage their resources and expertise.

To truly succeed we need stronger local, state, federal and private partnerships where we can team up and leverage all available resources to accomplish the goals of cleaner water, air and soil.

It also never hurts to work hard to root out unnecessary red-tape, to provide greater regulatory transparency so that stakeholders, including the regulated community, better know what is expected of them, and to promote prompt, even, and fair enforcement of the law.

Before closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention two things – first, I am incredibly appreciative of the work of the EPA professionals to reinvigorate the Superfund program, and specifically to accelerate the cleanup of the Willamette River at the Portland Harbor. This is important to my state.

Second, I want to thank the Administrator for his leadership in moving to repeal the previous administration's "waters of the United States" (WOTUS) rule, and his prioritization of America's agriculture community in doing so. The WOTUS rule was a misguided and onerous regulation that was crafted without the input of the people it hurt most.

This EPA's new proposal on the definition of the "waters of the United States" incorporates the input of the farmers, ranchers, and property owners who were most burdened under the old rule. As a result, it helps make sure the federal government is not meddling in things like irrigation ditches.

Our Oregon farm and ranch families care deeply about stewarding their land and water resources so they are available for generations to come. We can improve America's water quality and ensure we are supporting America's farmers and ranchers. These are not mutually exclusive principles. And I am

grateful that Administrator Wheeler and this Administration's EPA recognized that fact and acted upon it regarding this important issue.

Mr. Administrator, I hope that after today you will continue to engage with us as a partner and co-equal branch of government. I look forward to our discussion today about the Agency's budget and EPA's direction now and into the future.

I yield back the remainder of my time.