

PRESS RELEASE

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ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PROBE EPA'S ABRUPT HALT TO SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF TOXIC CHEMICALS AND OTHER HEALTH THREATS Groups Seek Answers About the Cancellation of a Contract to Advance Solutions for Communities Facing Pollution and Injustice

On, May 26, 2026, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), with Earthjustice and the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative at NYU Law, filed a [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) request to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to uncover why the agency abruptly terminated a multi-year contract on Cumulative Impact Assessment without public notice or explanation.

In 2023, the EPA commissioned the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), to develop a public research review process and consensus report to inform and advise the agency on the state-of-the-science underlying the practice of assessing how multiple sources of pollution and social stressors combine to affect community health and well-being. Cumulative impact research is foundational to protecting health, as many regulations fail to account for the combined and connected exposures facing families and neighborhoods overburdened by toxic chemicals and other health and environmental threats. Communities have long awaited efforts to develop specific tools to put the science into action and policies to address and reduce cumulative impacts.

Following release of a pre-publication copy of NASEM's 2025 Consensus Study Report, entitled [State of the Science and the Future of Cumulative Impact Assessment](#), after years of work and community engagement, the EPA directed NASEM to terminate all remaining activity on the Cumulative Impacts report. In fall 2025, without any advance notice or opportunity for public input, [the EPA cancelled the contract with NASEM, leaving the project in a "pre-publication" state](#) and terminating remaining activity, including an anticipated process for community and public engagement and consultation. EPA has provided no public explanation for this cancellation.

“We need public health protections to address cumulative impacts. Instead of focusing on just one polluting industry’s emissions or one smokestack over a lifetime, cumulative impacts consider the whole picture of combined chemicals and toxins coming from all polluting sources released onto a community,” said **Beto Lugo Martinez, Kansas City resident and non-profit climate justice leader**. “We need cross-sector collaboration—uniting medicine, environmental science, and regulatory agencies—to integrate cumulative impacts into all levels of decision-making. This unified approach is necessary to address the myriad environmental and socioeconomic stressors that synergistically threaten public health.”

"For too long, communities across the nation have been burdened by multiple sources of pollution across jurisdictional boundaries, or regulatory silos. This report is critical for our communities across the nation - to better understand community experiences and impacts from the compounding efforts of pollution and health harms,” said **Esther Min, Director of Community Innovation, Evaluation, and Learning at Front and Centered**, a coalition of frontline community groups across Washington State that uses capacity building, leadership support, research and development, policy analysis and advocacy. “Communities need partnership across all levels of government to focus on improving health wellbeing of us all - and this report highlights the importance of exactly that. We need more people to pay attention to this report and to take cumulative impacts into account when making decisions affecting our lives."

"Rarely do people in Houston - the self-proclaimed Energy Capital of the World - face only one or even two sources of environmental stress in their daily lives. We have over 500 local polluting sources, more routine flooding, heat stress, and extreme weather due to climate change, and increasingly fragile stormwater and energy infrastructure,” said **Jennifer Hadayia, Executive Director of Air Alliance Houston**. “Houstonians and their health outcomes are showing the lived wear and tear of cumulative impact even if they don't know it. The promise of this report was to shine a light on the issue by putting forth vetted evidence-based solutions to environmental stress that regulators, policymakers, and other decision-makers could apply to their work with confidence. This sets us back even further, when there is no good reason to do so."

Alexia Leclercq, Co-Executive Director of Land Justice Community School, who served as a Community and Tribal Liaison for the NASEM, said, “For too many years, regulators have evaluated pollution one chemical at a time and one facility at a time. But in reality, communities experience pollution from multiple sources and we have impacts on our health from exposure over time. We need the federal government – and all levels of

government – to move forward with taking cumulative impacts into account. We need more people to pay attention to this report and to take cumulative impacts into account when making decisions affecting our lives.”

“The Trump administration’s action to cancel the work of independent scientists on vital health issues like cumulative impacts and pollution shows it’s actually not working to make our country healthier, just the opposite,” said **Emma Cheuse, Earthjustice attorney**, “Taking away science and tools that would help protect families and communities who are facing some of the most serious harm from toxic chemicals and pollution will not make our nation’s children healthier or safer.”

“Communities contributed their lived experiences to this report, expecting the final results to be disseminated to the public.” said **Marianne Engelman-Lado, Director of the Environmental & Climate Justice Initiative at NYU School of Law**. “That’s why we’re seeking information on what’s behind EPA’s decision to cancel this important scientific study just as the report reached its final stages of activity, including community engagement and public education on its scientific findings. The final stages of the NASEM’s work were critical to get the report into the hands of state, Tribal, and local governments, and the people they serve, who were looking to NASEM and EPA for a distillation of the best available science on CI in order to make better-informed decisions about their own policies and programs.”

EDF submitted the request with Earthjustice and the Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative at NYU School of Law. The groups are seeking public records to understand why the EPA stopped a multi-year project of such public importance without explanation.

With more than 3 million members, Environmental Defense Fund creates transformational solutions to the most serious environmental problems. To do so, EDF links science, economics, law, and innovative private-sector partnerships to turn solutions into action. Read more at <https://www.edf.org/>.

Earthjustice is the premier nonprofit environmental law organization. We wield the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. We are here because the earth needs a good lawyer. Read more at earthjustice.org

The Environmental and Climate Justice Initiative at NYU Law represents community-based organizations and their partners to address gross disparities in environmental benefits and

burdens – and particularly the impacts of climate change. Through legal advocacy and community-driven priorities, the Initiative provides technical and strategic support to advance environmental justice and social change. Read more at <https://www.law.nyu.edu/environmental-climate-justice-initiative>.

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