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14 Groups Petition EPA for Stronger Controls on Methane from Landfills

Washington, D.C. – A coalition of 14 environmental and community advocacy groups [petitioned the EPA](#) today for stronger regulations to control methane pollution from municipal landfills, which release as much greenhouse gases as 66 million gasoline-powered vehicles driving for a year.

Rotting food scraps, yard trimmings, and other trash in the nation’s 1,100 county and city landfills produced at least 3.7 million metric tons of methane in 2021 alone, the equivalent of 295 million metric tons of greenhouse gases over a 20-year period.

To better control the third largest human-driven source of methane in the U.S., after livestock and natural gas, the groups called on EPA to expand requirements for gas collection systems at landfills, direct measurement of methane, and more composting of waste. These practices also reduce emissions of air pollutants that contribute to smog and create health risks and foul odors for nearby communities.

“Given the climate crisis we are facing, and the potency of methane as a greenhouse gas, it is time for EPA step up and strengthen its requirements for controlling methane from municipal landfills,” said **Leah Kelly, Senior Attorney for the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP)**.

The groups signing the petition, delivered to EPA Headquarters in Washington D.C., include EIP, Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, RMI, Clean Air Task Force, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Californians Against Waste, California Communities Against Toxics, South Baltimore Community Land Trust, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Idaho Conservation League, Industrious Labs and the Harahan/River Ridge Air Quality Group. Two individuals – Javian Baker and Gilda Hagan-Brown, residents of the landfill-adjacent Waggaman community in Louisiana - also joined the petition.

"Remote sensing technologies have found large methane plumes at landfills across the country, underscoring the need for stronger controls," said **John Coequyt, director of Government Affairs at RMI**. "EPA should seize this opportunity to develop robust landfill standards that guard against super-emitting events, protect communities, and advance our climate and environmental justice goals."

Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Director of the Bullard Center for Environmental & Climate Justice at Texas Southern University, said: “I began my work in environmental justice more than four decades ago fighting the disproportionate impact landfills have on the health, happiness and safety of people of color and low-income communities. To this day the emissions, odors, and

air pollution have not stopped. It's long past time for the EPA to act and better regulate these plagues on communities and the climate."

An EIP report released on May 18, "[Trashing the Climate](#)," found that more than half of municipal waste landfills are located in communities where residents are people of color or have lower incomes. In the absence of EPA leadership to reduce landfill methane emissions, state governments – including California, Oregon, and Maryland -- have issued landfill regulations that are stronger than existing EPA rules. Technology for the measurement of landfill methane, including from aerial surveys, has also advanced greatly in recent years.

To keep up with these state rules and technological advances, the coalition of 14 environmental groups urged EPA to immediately take several steps toward controlling methane in updated landfill regulations, including:

~Require more landfills to install gas collection and control systems, including pipes that collect methane from garbage and covering materials, such as soil, that help absorb and destroy methane;

~Require that flares that burn methane at landfills have at least a 99 percent destruction efficiency, meaning they burn up almost all of the pollution;

~Require landfills to install gas capture systems within one year after the dumping of waste;

~Impose better requirements for direct measurement of methane and support the development of equipment that can continuously monitor landfill emissions;

~Encourage composting and waste reduction and as an alternative method of reducing landfill methane emissions.

For a copy of the petition, [click here](#).

QUOTES FROM ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS:

Former Colorado Governor Bill Ritter said: "Cutting methane emissions from landfills across this country is critical in order for the U.S. to meet our climate goals. The EPA has already taken leadership to reduce greenhouse gases from some of our largest industrial sources, and landfills should be next on the list."

Javian Baker, resident of landfill-adjacent community in Waggaman, Louisiana, said: "The foul gassy smell lurking in our neighborhood inhibits me from bringing my fifteen-month-old outside to play. This petition offers a glimpse of hope when politicians in Jefferson Parish and Landfill officials have yet to get to the root of the problem impacting our predominately Black community."

Gilda Hagan Brown, resident of Waggaman, Louisiana, said: "Our new home and neighborhood was built in the center of a toxic wasteland - shadowed by a massive landfill and

host of other environmental polluting operations. As long as our right to a healthy, safe and clean environment are jeopardized, we feel that our aspirations have been destroyed.”

Lisa Karlin, a member of the Harahan/River Ridge Air Quality Group in Louisiana, which has spent the past five years advocating for improved landfill gas collection and odor control at a neighboring landfill, said: "Recent research suggests that methane is being produced in landfills earlier after waste disposal than previously thought. This change has been attributed to an increase in food waste ending up in landfills, which rapidly decays and produces methane. The EPA needs to require earlier installation of gas collection and control systems in landfills. And the public needs to be made aware that reducing food waste and composting food scraps can help reduce the methane generated by landfills and in turn, slow down global warming."

Carlos Sanchez, Zero Waste Organizer with the South Baltimore Community Land Trust, said: "Twenty-four hours a day, my health and environment are worsened by Baltimore City's choices to incinerate waste and improperly manage trash at the city landfill. We need EPA to encourage diversion of food scraps and other organic waste from municipal landfills and incinerators. Officials everywhere must recognize that community and worker-led composting is a core solution to this crisis.”

Jane Williams, Executive Director of California Communities Against Toxics, said: “Methane is about 80 times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO₂ over a 20-year period and it is long past time for EPA to regulate this climate-forcing gas.”

Nelson Brooke, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Alabama said: “Proper cover at landfills should keep trash and food waste segregated from rainwater to reduce odors, soil erosion, litter runoff, and other water pollution. The goal is to halt rain infiltration and slow down waste decomposition, which cause the creation of methane and leachate – major air and water pollutants.”

Anne Havemann, General Counsel for Chesapeake Climate Action Network, with offices in Norfolk and Richmond, Virginia said: “Virginia is home to eight 'mega-landfills,' many of which are sited in low-income communities of color. These landfills emit huge amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, but have not received the attention they deserve for all the pollution they release. We look forward to EPA taking action on this under-the-radar issue."

Katherine Blauvelt, Circular Economy Campaign Director with Industrious Labs, said: “Our analysis of data from industrial operators with the largest greenhouse gas emissions reveals that the biggest methane emitting facility in 37 states is a landfill. We urge the EPA to examine the best and most up-to-date practices and technology available to control landfill methane emissions."

Edwin LaMair, Attorney for Environmental Defense Fund, said: “EPA has an enormous opportunity to update and strengthen its standards for landfill pollution by seizing on recent advancements in methane monitoring and building from the work of leading states. Landfill pollution poses serious public health threats, and protective landfill standards are an urgently

needed addition to other significant actions EPA has recently taken to reduce climate-destabilizing and health-harming pollution.”

Kait Siegel, Waste Sector Manager of Methane Pollution Prevention at Clean Air Task Force, said: “Landfills are one of the largest sources of methane in the United States, with emissions estimated to grow significantly over the next decade if we don’t act now. Given its extreme potency over the first 20 years in the atmosphere, swiftly reducing methane emissions is critical to addressing climate change. The U.S. has an opportunity to catch up to what other leading jurisdictions are doing by reducing methane emissions from the waste sector right here at home, taking a much-needed step forward by revising and strengthening standards for landfills under the Clean Air Act.”

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Black Warrior Riverkeeper’s mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. The citizen-based nonprofit organization promotes clean water for the sake of public health, recreation and wildlife habitat throughout the Black Warrior River watershed.

blackwarriorriver.org/