



Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

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Contact:
Laura McMillan, 540-292-8429

CFE/Save the Sound: EPA blackout is a red flag *Transparency, critical programs, scientific objectivity at risk*

NEW HAVEN, CONN. – Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound expressed serious concerns about the administration-ordered blackout of communications at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies.

Agency staff have been ordered not to speak with reporters, issue press releases, or in some cases even use social media.

“The current communications blackout should be a concern to anyone who cares about transparency and accountability,” **said Donald S. Strait, president of CFE/Save the Sound.** “Along with the nomination of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, a longtime foe of sensible air and water protections, as EPA administrator, and recent announcements that scientific research may now be screened by political appointees, it threatens the public’s ability to assess the facts behind the drastic policy changes this Administration is proposing.”

The gag order comes as the new administration has also made a number of other controversial environmental announcements, including freezing EPA grants; issuing executive orders to move forward with the Dakota Access Pipeline despite an open Environmental Impact Statement process; and ordering EPA to remove climate change information from its website.

The timing of the blackout precludes public input on these and other decisions just when transparency is needed most, CFE/Save the Sound said.

“For more than four decades, Americans have depended on the EPA to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink. Its efforts have helped slow climate change, cleaned up the Sound we love, and held polluters accountable. Any actions that change the mission and direction of this agency must be given full public hearing, not undertaken under cover of darkness,” **said Strait.**

CFE/Save the Sound sent a letter of opposition to Scott Pruitt’s nomination to the Trump transition team and senators in December and again just before Scott Pruitt’s confirmation hearing in mid-January. The letter was signed by 35 organizations and 757 individuals from Connecticut, New York, and other states. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy of Connecticut, Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, and Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia responded to indicate their concerns about Pruitt’s record and commitment to protecting natural resources.

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