National Tribal Air Association

Fact Sheet

Interim Framework for Advancing Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OLEM-2024-0360

The comment deadline is ***February 19, 2025.*** *Your comment letter can be submitted electronically to the Federal Rulemaking Portal.* https://www.regulations.gov/ OR email to a-r-Docket@epa.gov.

Background

The Environmental Protection Agency has long recognized threats to human health and the environment due to the cumulative effects of multiple "stressors". For example, the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 urged EPA to "move beyond single chemical assessments". EPA's May 2003 report, *Framework For Cumulative Risk Assessment,* addresses, in part, "cumulative approaches to risk assessment". Most recently, following three decades of study, and numerous scientific analyses, is the proposed *Interim Framework for Advancing Consideration of Cumulative Impacts.* It also recognizes and focuses on the disproportionate impact of multiple threats to selected populations and a commitment to "environmental justice for all".

This proposed action provides information and guidance to EPA staff on how to consider cumulative impacts on communities when making decisions on rules, permits and programs. The guidance explains cumulative impacts for agency staff and provides tools to support cumulative impacts analyses. As guidance it provides information and direction but does not require cumulative impact analyses in all actions, but where it is practical and appropriate.

What Does this Guidance include?

The *Interim Framework for Advancing Consideration of Cumulative Impacts* describes principles for EPA to consider cumulative impacts in EPA decisions. These principles include:

- Centering cumulative impacts work on improving human health, quality of life, and the environment in all communities.
- Ensuring the disproportionate and adverse burden of cumulative impacts are not ignored or overlooked.
- Applying a fit-for-purpose approach grounded in science to assessing and addressing cumulative impacts.
- Engaging communities, consulting with Tribes, and considering and incorporating their lived experience.
- Using the best available data, science, and information to make decisions and take action.
- Operationalizing and integrating ways to highlight, consider and address cumulative impacts.

The guidance provides a framework for Agency staff in considering cumulative impacts in decision making including: standard setting, permitting, rulemaking, cleanup, emergency response, funding, planning, program oversight for states, territories, and Tribes, or other decision making.

The guidance defines cumulative impacts as:

Cumulative impacts are the totality of exposures to combinations of environmental stressors and their effects on health and quality of life outcomes.

• Chemical stressors are compounds that are released into the environment by waste, emissions, pesticide use, or use of consumer products and can change or damage living organisms or ecosystems.

• Nonchemical stressors are factors in the built, natural, and social environments, including climactic stress that directly or indirectly adversely affect health or increase vulnerability. Such as income, existing health and social stressors, access to health care, cultural practices and Traditional lifeways, redlining and other government decisions that have impacted local communities.

How does this affect my Tribe?

This guidance is an important step in providing tools and guidance to the Agency when considering, not just exposures from multiple sources and multiple pollutants, but other issues that can impact the fenceline communities. This is particularly important to Tribes where communities are "locked in place" and don't have the options for relocation. It also provides the Agency tools to work with the impacted Tribes to consider cultural and traditional practices that can be impacted by the decisions at hand.

This guidance throughout discusses the importance of working with and consulting with Tribes on decisions that impact them. It seeks to move EPA forward in providing guidance on considering cumulative risk.

It is important to recognize that, when adopted, this "framework" provides "guidance". It does not require agency programs and staff to consider cumulative impact in all decisions.

How to Comment on the Action:

Comments are accepted via https://www.regulations.gov/ or by email: a-and-r-docket@epa.gov, Attn. Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OLEM-2024-0360. Comments are due on February 19, 2024.

To Learn More

In addition to the information provided on for the proposal can be found in the EPA Fact sheet, the NTAA has created a template letter that your Tribe can use to help with providing written feedback and is available on NTAA's policy resource kit website. Any questions can be directed to the NTAA Program Manager, Miranda O'Neill at miranda.oneill@nau.edu or 928.523.9701