

May 15, 2023

Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dave Applegate  
Director  
United States Geological Survey  
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive  
Reston, VA 20192

**Re: Restoring the National Pesticide Use Map Database**

Dear Secretary Haaland and Director Applegate,

We write to you on behalf of the 123 public health, farmworker, environmental justice, conservation and science-based organizations to express our serious concern that the United States Geological Survey (“USGS”) is adhering to a previous directive that has fundamentally undermined and may ultimately terminate the National Pesticide Use Map database – one of the most vital tools for monitoring pesticide use and estimating water pollution nationwide.

Since 1991, the USGS National Water Quality Assessment (“NAWQA”) has been a key tool in measuring the quality of our Nation’s streams and groundwater, how conditions are changing over time, and how human activities are affecting these vital resources. An extremely important component of NAWQA has always been the National Pesticide Use Map database, which has produced highly sophisticated pesticide use estimates throughout every single watershed in the country.

Pesticide use estimates have been generated for every agricultural pesticide annually since 1992, which have been essential for the design of USGS water-quality studies. In many cases these important data have been used to predict concentrations of pesticides in streams and groundwater, implicate atmospheric transport of pesticides that are detected in air and rain samples far from sites of application, and predict changes in local water quality based on temporal and spatial variations in pesticide use over time.

While the National Pesticide Use Map database has been an invaluable resource to the federal government, perhaps the greatest benefit has been to scientists, state and local public health officials, and environmental health advocates, as it provides vital information and tracks trends that are not available anywhere else. The pesticide use data produced by the USGS have been used in the development of over 500 peer-reviewed scientific papers, including some of the most highly cited and seminal works in the field. It is information vital to understanding water pollution and landscape-level impacts associated with pesticides.

After accumulating valuable data for over 30 years, the National Pesticide Use Map database is now in danger of termination due to continued use of directives from the previous administration that restructured the USGS and devalued important data sources. The Pesticide Use Mapping Project previously provided data for around 540 agricultural pesticides that are used and can contaminate water throughout the country. Beginning in 2019, the Pesticide Use Mapping Project now only follows just over 70 pesticides – an 87% reduction. Furthermore, after a planned update for those 70 pesticides in 2024, there are no definite plans to continue the program or update the database unless action is taken.

We use 1.1 billion pounds of pesticides each year in the United States and total pesticide use in the U.S. is up 47% since 1970. Chemical mixtures of pesticides have never been more prevalent in the environment since pesticide use began in earnest in the 1950s.

We need credible sources of data to be able to study and understand what this widespread pesticide use means to the health of people and the environment. There is not a single data source that can even come close to replacing the USGS National Pesticide Use Map database. Data from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, for example, is collected intermittently, for a specific subset of crops, in a limited number of states and in a difficult to use format. The USGS pesticide use estimates are the only comprehensive, national sources of information about pesticide levels in the environment. Important work by water quality facilities, agricultural extension offices, farmworker healthcare clinics and countless other services will be compromised by the loss of the Pesticide Use Mapping Project.

We urge the USGS to:

- 1) Provide use estimates for *all* agricultural pesticides by restoring the scope of the program to its pre-2019 level;
- 2) Retroactively calculate estimates for all pesticides that lapsed during the recent program cuts; and
- 3) Continue adding new agricultural pesticides to the database as they gain EPA-approval.

Eliminating this dataset would profoundly undermine our understanding of pesticide pollution nationwide.

Thank you for your consideration of our request,

540WMain Inc (Antiracism education)

ActionAid USA

Agricultural Justice Project

Alabama State Association of Cooperatives

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc.

American Bird Conservancy

American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA)

American Sustainable Business Network

Antibiotic Resistance Action Center, the George Washington University

Asociación Con P de Parkinson  
Beyond Pesticides  
Beyond Toxics  
Boston Area Beekeepers Association  
Breast Cancer Action  
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners  
California Nurses for Environmental Earth & Justice  
Californians for Pesticide Reform  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Environmental Health  
Center for Food Safety  
Centre County Beekeepers  
Clean Production Action  
CleanAirNow\_EJ  
CleanEarth4Kids.org  
Collaborative for Health and Environment  
Compañeras Campesinas  
Conservation Coalition  
Consumer Reports  
CRLA Foundation  
Crown Bees  
CT Pesticide Reform  
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology  
Earthjustice  
Ecology Center  
Endocrine Society  
Environment America  
Environmental Integrity Project  
Environmental Protection Network  
Environmental Working Group  
Farmworker Association of Florida  
Farmworker Justice  
Food Animal Concerns Trust  
Friends of the Earth  
Geiger Farm  
Government Information Watch  
Green America  
Grow Safe: Non-Toxic Missoula  
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA)  
Health Research Institute  
Heartland Health Research Alliance  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
IPM Institute of North America  
JAIDE Conservation Collective, LLC  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.  
LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.  
Locust Point Community Garden  
Malibu Monarch Project  
Maryland Pesticide Education Network  
Microbes and Social Equity working group  
Mission PD  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment  
Missouri Prairie Foundation  
Moms Advocating Sustainability.org

National Co+op Grocers  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Naturedigger  
Nature's Path Foods  
NC Farmworker Advocacy Network  
Non Toxic Communities  
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont  
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council  
Norwalk River Watershed Association  
OCIA International Board of Directors  
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association  
Organic Voices  
Parkinson's International Foundation  
Parkinson Society British Columbia  
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture  
People & Pollinators Action Network  
Pesticide Action Network North America  
Pollinate Minnesota  
Pollinator Pathway  
Pollinator Pathway Stamford  
Pollinator Stewardship Council  
Prairie Rivers Network  
Prairie Rivers of Iowa Resource Conservation & Development  
Prairie State Conservation Coalition  
Protect Our Pollinators  
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility  
Re:wild Your Campus  
Real Food Media  
Rincon-Vitova Insectaries  
Rural Advancement Fund of the National Sharecroppers Fund  
Rural Coalition  
Salud Sin Fronteras, Inc.  
Seaway Parkinson's Coalition  
Seedfolx Farm  
Shake It Up Australia Foundation  
Shaky Nation  
Student Action with Farmworkers  
The Land Connection  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research  
The Vicks Estate, Farm, & Fishery  
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation  
Toxic Free NC  
Turning Green  
U.S. PIRG  
UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment

University of Northern Iowa's Center for  
Energy & Environmental Education

Until Justice Data Partners

Valle de Oro NWR EJ Leadership Team

Wild Farm Alliance

Women's Health Consultants

Women's Voices for the Earth

World Animal Protection

World Wildlife Fund-US

YardSmartMarin

Yuvedo Foundation