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The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin,

Thank you for your much needed leadership at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Your commitment to reducing the federal regulatory burden is badly needed for our agriculture producers and rural communities, like those in Wyoming, who feed our nation, keep the lights on, and support our small businesses. It is in this spirit that I write to request information regarding the Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OARA).

On March 1, 2024, EPA Administrator Michael Regan announced the creation of the OARA, naming Rod Snyder, his agricultural adviser since 2021, as head of the office.¹ Administrator Regan stated that the creation of the Office is the EPA “ensuring agricultural and rural stakeholders will continue to have a seat at the table for many years to come.” He further states that with Snyder in charge, the OARA “will expand on the work of the Ag Advisor and increase coordination with a network of existing agriculture policy advisors located in all ten EPA regional offices across the country.”

While it is crucial that agricultural and rural communities, like those in Wyoming, are consulted in the governing process, it is unclear why this particular office is needed. For example, the EPA already has a Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee, agriculture advisors in the 10 EPA regional offices, and the regional offices themselves. It is also important to recognize that, while its organic statute does not necessarily prohibit the EPA from creating this Office, there is no direct permission to do so, and it was put in place without Congressional authorization.

It also goes without saying that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was created for the very purpose of ensuring that our agriculture producers and rural communities are represented at the federal level, with an untold number of federal farm, ranch and rural benefit programs already in place. The creation of the OARA thus seems to be an effort by the EPA to encroach on the jurisdiction and oversight of an existing Cabinet-level agency.

¹ EPA launches new office to strengthen engagement with agricultural and rural communities. March 1, 2024.

Setting aside the redundancy, it is also unclear what, if anything, the OARA did under Administrator Regan. Agriculture and rural communities were never granted a seat at the table when it came to weighing in on the Biden EPA's regulatory agenda. For example, the *National Primary Drinking Water Regulations for Lead and Copper: Improvements* went into effect placing a nearly \$100 billion burden on municipalities to pay for and complete in just ten years, an undoable task for these communities.² Instead of working with these communities to address a real issue, the need to address lead piping in the U.S., the EPA chose a heavy-handed response and a top-down approach.

Another proposed regulation that would hurt, rather than assist, agriculture communities was the *Clean Water Act Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Meat and Poultry Products Point Source Category*.³ The existence of the OARA did nothing to prevent the administration from pursuing this rule.

The Biden EPA took numerous regulatory actions against the nation's coal plants all intended to close these facilities, even though the fuel source for the plants comes from communities like those in Wyoming. Rural communities would also be some of the hardest hit from grid failures if these coal plants were to be taken offline.

These actions and more were all taken at the expense of agricultural and rural communities who seemingly had no voice in the process, even though the Biden EPA was making commitments to ostensibly help these communities, like through actions of creating the OARA. I am not surprised that this Office was no help against these bad policies since Biden's EPA website for OARA reveals that their purpose includes "advance[ing] the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation and adaptation goals,"⁴ which exposes the real purpose of this Office. The EPA also touts Rod Snyder as a "longtime champion of agricultural solutions to climate change."⁵ Unfortunately, this statement that the OARA is committed to climate goals remains on the EPA website at the time of this writing.

Evidently, Mr. Snyder also recognized that the OARA was unnecessary, as he announced his departure from the EPA on August 13, 2024⁶, just five months after its creation and the ensuing celebration of its establishment at the White House bowling alley.⁷ By the end of August, Mr. Snyder would go on to routinely engage with the Harris-Waltz campaign on X, including speaking about the campaign's agriculture policy forum at an event at the Press Club.⁸

² National Primary Drinking Water Regulations for Lead and Copper: Improvements (89 FR 86418)

³ Clean Water Act Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Meat and Poultry Products Point Source Category (89 FR 4474)

⁴ [About the Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs \(OARA\) | US EPA](#)

⁵ [EPA Announces Appointment of Rod Snyder as EPA Agriculture Advisor | US EPA](#)

⁶ @KevinBogardus. <https://x.com/KevinBogardus/status/1823081105068618237>

⁷ @RodSnyderWV. <https://x.com/RodSnyderWV/status/1811517831416029488>

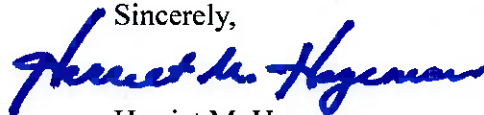
⁸ @RodSnyderWV. <https://x.com/RodSnyderWV/status/1829234165130182766>

I am concerned that the OARA was created not for the communities it purported to serve, but for the personal benefit of Mr. Snyder after his nearly three years as a senior adviser. His short tenure with the Office and seemingly few accomplishments raise questions about what it achieved, and whether it was merely a spring-board for his status within the EPA, and possibly a future role in a Harris administration, had the election gone another way. For these reasons, I am seeking information on the following:

1. What do EPA records, documents, and other information show were the OARA activities under the Biden administration?
2. Did the OARA represent agriculture and rural community voices to the EPA, including in the regulatory process, or did it aid in the EPA's harm to these communities?
3. What role did the OARA play in the Biden administration's climate change agenda?
4. Who is currently in charge of the OARA, and what role does he/she currently play?

Finally, as the representative of Wyoming, which should under normal circumstances be the beneficiary of an office such as this, I would like to work with you to actually make this Office one which gives my communities a seat at the table. For too long, the adversarial nature of the EPA, which switched from one that assisted with legal compliance to heavy handed mandates and crushing enforcement actions, has harmed my constituents, sown distrust in the government, and set the nation back. The OARA, if done properly, could provide Washington, D.C. with much needed perspective in terms of creating federal policy, and we are willing to work with this administration to do just that. Please give full and fair consideration of this request consistent with the applicable law, rules, and regulations.

Sincerely,



Harriet M. Hageman
Member of Congress