

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
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Subject: Pruitt defends watershed work despite proposed cuts

By Annie Snider

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EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt sought to reassure skeptical lawmakers that the Trump administration's proposal to defund popular watershed cleanup programs would not interfere with their goals.

He did not offer any specifics on how that would happen.

Facing critical questions from both Democrats and Republicans on a House Appropriations subcommittee, Pruitt acknowledged that Congress was unlikely to go along with the proposal to zero-out programs targeting regions like the Great Lakes, which received \$300 million this year, and Chesapeake Bay, which got \$73 million.

Pruitt told Rep. [Marcy Kaptur](#) (D-Ohio) he could not recall whether he asked OMB Director Mick Mulvaney or other White House staff to eliminate the watershed programs. "In our discussions with OMB [we] talked about the importance of the Great Lakes Initiative," he said.

EPA will continue to facilitate states' efforts around such cleanups, he said.

"Honestly, money's important, but I think this leadership role is important as well, and that's going to continue," Pruitt told Rep. [Dave Joyce](#) (R-Ohio). Joyce was careful to call the funding blueprint the "Mulvaney budget" rather than attributing it to Trump.

As an example, Pruitt pointed to EPA's role bringing the six Chesapeake Bay states together around a landmark cleanup plan. As Oklahoma's attorney general, Pruitt joined a lawsuit challenging that plan, but he has recently said that he now sees the effort as a model for how states and the federal government can work together. However environmental groups say the administration's proposal to eliminate funding for the program would devastate that effort.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Appropriations subcommittee is expected to write EPA's fiscal 2018 spending bill later this summer.

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