



Society of Environmental Journalists

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The White House
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Washington, D.C. 20500

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January 25, 2017

Dear President Trump:

The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) recognizes that incoming presidential administrations sometimes pause some communication from federal agencies until new directors are installed; however, we strongly urge the Trump administration to reopen communications between federal agencies and the public immediately. We call on the administration to commit itself to transparency and to provide verifiable, factual information to all Americans, including journalists.

Journalists play a vital role in America's understanding of environmental toxins, air and water pollution, and the loss of endangered species. Any federal government public information lockdown is an affront to both the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act and the public trust. The public has a right to be informed about how they are being regulated, how their tax dollars are being spent, and how the federal government is enforcing U.S. environmental laws. What's more, they have a right to know how polluters are affecting their health and their local environment.

SEJ rejects this gag order. Our members will continue to provide credible, robust journalism about the environment in the coming months despite it. We will continue to reach out to federal agencies and hope that we can continue to find ways to work together. We will continue to educate the American people about the places they live in and the places they work. The public deserves access to the officials regulating them, and journalists, whom the public relies upon to receive factual information about the government, deserve an open line of communication to agency officials and scientists across the entire federal government.

Additionally, SEJ urges the Trump administration to maintain public access to scientific information pertaining to climate change and other environmental issues that was available on federal government websites prior to January 20th, 2017. All of the Trump administration's changes to environmental regulation must be made with transparency and open communication with the American people. The U.S. government has a legal and civic obligation to provide as much information to the public as possible because these choices affect everyone – for many years to come.

Bobby Magill, President
Society of Environmental Journalists

*Strengthening the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media
to advance public understanding of environmental issues*