

**Testimony of Surbhi Sarang, Senior Attorney, Environmental Defense Fund
on EPA’s proposed rule *Minor New Source Review Program Air
Permitting Public Participation Requirements for State Implementation
Plans*, 91 Fed. Reg. 41591 (July 7, 2026) at July 22, 2026 public hearing.**

My name is Surbhi Sarang and I am a senior attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund. EDF is a nonprofit organization that leverages expertise in science, economics, and the law to deliver transformational solutions to address the biggest environmental challenges of our time with the support of over 3 million members. EDF opposes EPA’s proposal to revise its regulations to remove public participation requirements in minor New Source Review programs.

The impacts of climate change on air quality have come into focus this summer, with communities across the country suffering from unhealthy air. This is a time to be expanding community input on air permitting decisions—not erasing it. Wildfires in Canada have led cities like Chicago and Detroit to have the worst air quality in the world.¹ People have been forced to remain indoors and to wear protective masks because the air is toxic. Even with these precautions, people are experiencing symptoms like difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, and throat and eye irritation. Extreme heat has engulfed portions of the country this summer—with record highs exposing over 165 million Americans to either “major” or “extreme” heat-related health issues and resulting in at least 25 heat-related deaths.²

¹ Ben Kellerman, *Wildfires give North American cities the worst air quality on Earth*, Reuters (July 17, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/wildfires-give-north-american-cities-worst-air-quality-earth-2026-07-17/>.

² Jennifer Gray et. al., *Extreme heat dome breaks numerous record highs across Central and Eastern US*, The Weather Channel (July 5, 2026), <https://weather.com/2026/07/02/forecast/national/heat-wave-fourth-of-july-week-midwest-south-east>; Lucy Campbell, *At least 25 people die in US as record heatwave scorches swaths of country*, The Guardian (July 5, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jul/05/heatwave-deaths-weather>.

Climate change-induced impacts will make it more difficult both to achieve and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (“NAAQS”) and increase the importance of doing so as Americans are exposed to multiple stressors, increasing their cumulative effects. We are seeing changes in temperature, precipitation, and wind, each of which in turn affect air quality. Heat and drought conditions induced by climate change are contributing to greater numbers of wildfires which release PM_{2.5}, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), nitrogen oxides, and other toxic pollutants. Climate change-induced heat waves also increase the production of harmful ozone pollution.³

Public participation in the permitting process is a key safeguard for local air quality. Community members are uniquely positioned to share information on the impact of additional pollution on daycares and soccer fields where children play or to alert regulators to relevant community health issues like an existing high incidence of respiratory disease. With EPA playing a minimal role in overseeing the issuance of minor New Source Review permits, community oversight and transparency becomes even more important. Removing this safeguard reduces independent review of permit decisions and means regulators have less information on which to base critical decisions affecting community health. The proposal will make it more difficult for states and local governments to maintain and achieve the NAAQS. This proposal is therefore unlawful and EPA should withdraw it. Thank you for the opportunity to share comments.

³ A.R. Crimmins, et. al., Chapter 14, Air Quality, *Fifth National Climate Assessment*, U.S. Global Change Research Program (2023), <https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA5.2023>.