



February 5, 2021

Mr. Michael Regan

Dear Mr. Regan,

Friends of the Parks writes to congratulate you on your confirmation as the administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency. We believe that your appointment by President Biden bodes well for a renewed focus on climate change and a badly-needed emphasis on environmental justice. Additionally, we are very encouraged that President Biden has signed an executive order to establish a White House interagency council on environmental justice, to add a separate environmental justice office at the US Department of Justice, and to create an office of health and climate equity within the US Department of Health and Human Services.

We invite you to come to Chicago to gain first-hand exposure to the concerns about which our communities are crying out for help. The birthplace of the environmental justice movement in this country, Chicago's overly-burdened Southeast Side continues to face environmental racism, including at the hands of a federal entity in the form of the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). Under your leadership, our city could be a great laboratory to showcase the Biden Administration's commitment to coordinate across federal departments to fight climate change impacts and pollution that tend to especially burden communities of color.

We point you to some specific scenarios that would benefit from federal attention:

- 1) In looking for alternative sites for the nearly-full Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) which has long overstayed its original 10-year authorization per the Illinois state legislature, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) failed to look anywhere outside Chicago's Southeast Side 10th Ward Environmental Justice community where the current CDF sits at the confluence of Lake Michigan and the Calumet River.
 - Like all of Chicago's lakeshore, the site is threatened by lakeshore erosion that has battered much of our city's lakefront park system, including destroying many revetments constructed by the ACOE, as well as the relatively few private homes along the shore.

- Yet the ACOE has seen fit to recommend a 25-foot vertical expansion on top of the existing CDF, a total about-face from the previous plan to cap the site and turn it over to the park district by 2022.
 - Meanwhile, this summer Lake Michigan crept up the steps of the beach house at the immediately-adjacent Calumet Park, which was supposed to be the beneficiary of expanded park acreage upon the imminent closure of the CDF.
 - Additionally, data that we forced the ACOE to release to the public shows that the water in the CDF is interacting with the water outside the CDF, thus allowing PCBs, mercury, arsenic, and lead back into our water supply while the ACOE has let up on appropriate monitoring procedures.
- 2) Down the Calumet River in this same Environmental Justice community, and not far from Rowan Park and from polluted baseball fields that had to be remediated last summer, neighbors are fighting for their lives in the face of a notoriously bad actor.
- General Iron’s metal shredding operations that have caused significant uproar—including explosions—in the affluent Lincoln Park neighborhood on Chicago’s north side are slated to be relocated under the banner of a different company to a 10th Ward site.
 - Neighborhood-based environmental advocates have already sued over this environmental racism, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Justice Department are investigating claims of discrimination against the City of Chicago and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.
- 3) On the Southwest Side, activists in another diverse neighborhood are fighting the MAT Asphalt plant that makes a walk in the adjacent McKinley Park a smelly, unhealthy endeavor. Neighbors and river advocates have long fought to clean up the Chicago River tributary called “Bubbly Creek” for the impact of all the decomposed material that polluted it. Environmental justice leaders have led battles around the Hilco Redevelopment Partners’ implosion of the former Crawford power plant, and truck exhaust are a daily struggle of residents in the overcrowded, park poor “*La Villita*” neighborhood.

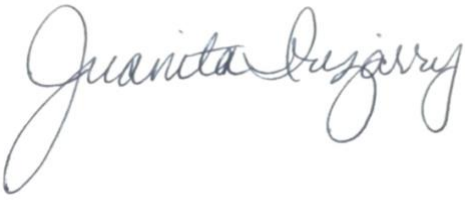
All of the neighborhoods above are rightly expressing concern about the connection between poor air quality and historically poor health outcomes for their communities—ones that also suffer right now from particularly high COVID-19 rates.

As Friends of the Parks pursues our mission of “inspiring, equipping, and mobilizing a diverse Chicago to ensure an equitable park system for a healthy Chicago,” we cannot help but

confront the many climate change and environmental justice challenges that threaten our parks and the people who seek to use them. We hope you will take us up on our offer to make our great city one of your first stops as you get your bearings and seek to bring some early leadership on behalf of the Biden presidency to the good of our environment and environmental justice. We would love to host you.

67 E. Madison St. • Suite 1817 • Chicago, Illinois 60602 • p (312) 857-2757 • www.fotp.org
 Healthy Parks for a Healthy Chicago

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juanita Irizarry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juanita Irizarry
Executive Director