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By Theresa Defino

◆ **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler is awarding \$4.25 million to four universities and a medical center as part of a directive to research alternative testing methods and strategies to drastically scale back testing on mammals, according to a September 10 memo.** “Today’s memo directs the agency to aggressively reduce animal testing, including reducing mammal study requests and funding 30% by 2025 and completely eliminating them by 2035,” Wheeler said in a press release announcing the directive. The grantees include Johns Hopkins University, Vanderbilt University, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Oregon State University, and University of California Riverside. In addition to its goal of eliminating the studies entirely by 2035, the EPA will thereafter require approval of any agency-funded mammal studies on a case-by-case basis.

“We can protect human health and the environment by using cutting-edge, ethically sound science in our decision-making that efficiently and cost-effectively evaluates potential effects without animal testing,” Wheeler said in the memo. Dr. Amy Clippinger, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animal’s director of Regulatory Testing Department, praised the move. “PETA will be helping regulatory agencies and companies switch to efficient and effective, non-animal testing approaches and working toward a day when all animal tests are only found in history books,” she said in a statement. But environmental group National Resources Defense Council Inc. (NRDC) immediately announced its opposition to the agency’s plan. “EPA is eliminating tools that lay the groundwork for protecting the public from dangers like chlorpyrifos, formaldehyde and PFAS,” NRDC senior scientist Jennifer Sass said in the group’s statement. “Phasing out foundational scientific testing methods can make it much harder to identify toxic chemicals—and protect human health,” she warned. (9/19/19)

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