

Cattlemen Appalled that EPA Releases Personal Information

Last week, Kansas Cattlemen's Association learned that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released farmers and ranchers personal information to a number of environmental activist groups. This sensitive information, the EPA acknowledged, could have been withheld and kept private. Yet, approximately 80,000 producers' personal information has been released to Earth Justice, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Pew Charitable Trust.

According to its website "NRDC is the nation's most effective environmental action group, combining the grassroots power of 1.3 million members and online activists with the courtroom clout and expertise of more than 350 lawyers, scientists and other professionals. The New York Times calls us "One of the nation's most powerful environmental groups." Earth Justice was founded in 1971 as the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund.

After Congressional backlash, the EPA rescinded its compliance with the activists and asked each group to return the information.

"These have been considered extremists groups. The information included people's home addresses, and even if the EPA asked for the information back, it is already out there. What is troublesome is that the EPA was not required to give out all of this personal information, and they chose to do so, putting the safety of farmers and ranchers and their families at risk. This information wasn't on just big business; it was a number of family operations from 29 different states. The EPA has a history of overreaching its authority, and this is another example of inappropriate behavior from an administrative department that needs to be reined in," stated KCA Executive Director Brandy Carter.

In light of the seriousness, KCA reached out to the Kansas congressional delegation and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). KCA was notified that no information was released on Kansans. Although an attempt was made by the EPA to get Kansans' information, KDHE Secretary Robert Moser determined that the requesting organizations would have to file their requests directly with the state. The Kansas congressional delegation had previously been made aware of this situation and will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that personal data is not released.

KCA will keep communicating with our Congressmen and woman and work with them and various administrative agencies to keep Kansas agriculture and family farmers safe and their information private.