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Contact: Shannon Smith, FracTracker Alliance, smith@fractracker.org, (717) 303-0403

**EPA Awards Nearly \$500,000 to Groups in the Mid-Ohio River Valley
to Support Grassroots Air Monitoring Efforts**

Ohio River Valley - FracTracker Alliance was selected to receive a grant of \$495,301 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enhance air quality monitoring in communities in the mid-Ohio River Valley. The project, "Community-Based Ambient Air Monitoring to Evaluate Criteria Pollutants and Air Toxics Related to Unconventional Oil and Gas Development in the Ohio Valley," expands upon an ongoing community-science project launched in 2020 with the support of FreshWater Accountability Project, Environmental Health Project, The Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment Lab (CREATE Lab), and American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange. The project uses low-cost monitors to provide real-time data for a variety of pollutants associated with unconventional oil and gas development and petrochemical-related industries that have rapidly proliferated in the region.

The groups will focus on underserved communities in the Ohio counties of Jefferson, Belmont, and Monroe, and the West Virginia counties of Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall. Community science has validated residents' concerns, provided opportunities for increased participation and involvement, and supported ongoing efforts to improve air quality in the region.

Lea Harper of FreshWater Accountability Project and community science lead for the ongoing Thriving Earth Exchange project for air monitoring in the mid-Ohio Valley region stated, "What we have found so far from our low-cost air monitors combined with summa sampling shows high levels of spikes in harmful chemicals and concentrations in the valley that could impact public health. This project award demonstrates that the Biden administration and USEPA want better protections for those living with a legacy of heavy pollution overlaid by the cumulative impacts of unconventional oil and gas development in the region. We hope our ongoing efforts bolstered by this grant will lead to improved legal protections."

"Heavily industrialized communities in the Ohio River Valley have some of the lowest-ranking health indices in the nation, in part due to poor air quality," said Shannon Smith, Executive Director of FracTracker Alliance. "Over the past few years, residents have taken it upon themselves to set up monitoring systems with the means available to them. By selecting this project, the EPA is acknowledging the importance of expanding on these monumental efforts to better understand and protect public health."

Garima Raheja, Thriving Earth Exchange Community Science Fellow and other individuals involved in this project co-authored "[Community-based participatory research for low-cost air pollution monitoring in the wake of unconventional oil and gas development in the Ohio River Valley: Empowering impacted residents through community science](#)" in the journal Environmental Research Letters.

This project is one of 132 air monitoring projects in 37 states that will receive \$53.4 million from the EPA as part of President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act and American Rescue Plan to enhance air quality monitoring in communities across the United States.

FracTracker Alliance, was also selected to receive a separate EPA grant for the project “Robinson/Smith AirWatch: A Case for Assessing Cumulative Air Pollution Impacts from Shale Gas Operations using Community-Based Ambient Air Monitoring and Air Sampling Technology in Robinson and Smith Townships, Washington County, Pennsylvania.” Partners include Environmental Integrity Project, Environmental Health Project, and Carnegie Mellon University’s CREATE Lab. This project will install stationary monitors in 12 locations in Smith Township, where two gas processing plants, two large natural gas compressor stations, and a well pad operate in an area of less than half a square mile. In addition, a FLIR GIS-320 Optical Gas Imaging System on a DJI Matrice 200 Series drone to assess a 3-dimensional distribution of methane and 200+ hydrocarbons, VOCs and HAPs. This aerial monitoring will provide insight into the relationship between weather inversions and exposure to air pollution, and into industrial operations that cause pollution events like flaring and pipeline pigging.

FracTracker Alliance maps, analyzes, and communicates the risks of oil, gas, and petrochemical development to advance just energy alternatives that protect public health, natural resources, and the climate.

<https://www.fractracker.org/>

The Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment Lab (CREATE Lab) explores socially meaningful innovation and deployment of robotic technologies. <https://cmucreatelab.org/home>

FreshWater Accountability Project advocates for water protection by providing education and factual information to community advocates to work towards meaningful change at the local, state, and federal levels of government. <https://fwap.org/>

Thriving Earth Exchange supports community science by helping communities find resources, project managers, and experts to address their pressing concerns. <https://thrivingearthexchange.org/>

The Environmental Health Project (EHP) defends public health in the face of shale gas development. <https://www.environmentalhealthproject.org/>

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