



CENTER ON RACE, POVERTY
& THE ENVIRONMENT

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CONTACT: Valerie Gorospe, (661) 303-1032, vgorospe@crpe-ej.org
Colin O'Brien, Earthjustice, (415) 217-2010, cobrien@earthjustice.org
Mark Rose, National Parks Conservation Association, (559) 385-6148, mrose@npca.org

Groups Charge EPA with Failing to Enforce Air Standards
San Joaquin Valley's air is the most toxic in the state

Oakland, CA | September 18 -- Today, represented by Earthjustice, community groups Committee for a Better Arvin and Committee for a Better Shafter along with Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, and National Parks Conservation Association filed a [formal complaint](#) against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its failure to enforce deadlines for the submission of clean-air plans in California's San Joaquin Valley. The lawsuit maintains that the EPA ignored its duty under the Clean Air Act to issue a finding that both the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (Air District) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) failed to submit four overdue plans to meet particle pollution standards, including standards set over 20 years ago.

Four of the nation's six dirtiest cities for both long and short-term particle pollution are found within California's San Joaquin Valley according to a recent [report](#) by the American Lung Association (ALA). Fine particle pollution (PM2.5) can penetrate deep into the lungs, enter the bloodstream, and is correlated with higher incidences of asthma, heart disease, heart attack and premature death. For 30 years, the Valley Air District has failed to meet deadlines set by the Federal Clean Air Act. "Each year, our communities in the Central Valley are on the American Lung Association list for for the worst air quality in the country. How much longer are we supposed to wait for better air? How many more children need to get sick from air pollution before real changes are made?" asks **Anabel Marquez, a member of the Committee for a Better Shafter.**

The Valley remains the only region in the nation listed as serious nonattainment for fine particle pollution standards set in 1997. **Colin O'Brien, staff attorney at Earthjustice** highlights, "Other parts of the country have made significant progress to improve their air quality and make their communities healthy places to live. By contrast, the Valley Air District and state officials have acted too slowly and done too little to address severe and dangerous air quality—with EPA complicit in their foot-dragging. This lawsuit against EPA seeks to enforce a Clean Air Act deadline provision that operates as a backstop against perpetual delay."

The negative impacts of poor air quality in the San Joaquin Valley reverberates through all aspects of life for its residents. **Estela Escoto, president of Committee for a Better Arvin** is tired of seeing marginalized communities bear the brunt of the impact of air pollution. "Big corporations and industries have been polluting the air in the Central Valley for decades. They make profits, but we've been forced to pay for the price of bad air quality not only with our medical bills, but with our overall well-being. Our families deserve better," said Escoto. Leading economists [estimate](#) that failing to meet the air quality standards costs the Valley \$1,000 per resident annually resulting in a total loss of about \$3 billion *every year*.

This effort by the community, health, and parks groups seeks to secure an enforceable deadline for the adoption of a plan to reduce harmful particulate matter so clean air becomes a reality in the San Joaquin Valley. The groups are committed to continuing to work collaboratively with the local air district, state and EPA officials,



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community residents and Valley businesses to find a way forward. We believe clean air is not only possible, but the economy and the people of the Valley will thrive because of it

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***The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment (CRPE)** is an environmental justice organization providing legal, organizing, and technical assistance to grassroots groups in low-income communities of color. Our mission is to achieve environmental justice and healthy, sustainable communities via collective action and the law. Follow us on [twitter](#), [Facebook](#), & [Instagram](#).*

***Committee for a Better Shafter (CBS)** works to advocate for environmental health, to support the development of economically and environmentally sustainable jobs, to develop and promote community garden projects, and to support community development programs in south San Joaquin Valley and Shafter. CBS strives to empower members to be active and involved in civic engagement.*

***Committee for a Better Arvin (CBA)**'s mission is to address problems to improve the quality of life in Arvin, to inform and unite the community, and to secure equality for all residents. CBA and its members have engaged in advocacy for improved local and regional air quality for many years and are concerned about the impacts of increased oil and gas development in the San Joaquin Valley.*

***Earthjustice** wields the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. We are here because the earth needs a good lawyer.*