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Greens ask EPA to curtail 'damage' from plastics plants

[James Marshall](#), E&E News reporter

Over 360 conservation groups today filed a petition with EPA asking the agency to establish more stringent air pollution standards for plastic-producing industrial plants.

"Plastic plants are poisoning our air and fueling the climate crisis," said Lauren Packard, the Center for Biological Diversity attorney who authored the petition. "This dirty industry spews greenhouse gases at every step, from leaky gas wells to the plastic pollution degrading in our oceans and landfills. That has to stop."

The [petition](#) calls on EPA to "update the air pollution rules that apply to industrial facilities that create plastic to significantly curtail the damage these plants cause."

It requests EPA take five steps including listing ethylene, propylene, polyethylene and polypropylene production facilities as a source category under the Clean Air Act. It also calls for requiring plastics plants to use renewable energy for all on-site power.

A smaller coalition of conservation groups filed a similar petition in July urging EPA to ban discharges of plastic pollution from industrial plants under the Clean Water Act ([Greenwire](#), July 23).

Petitioners said fracked gas is helping fuel a rise in plastic production.

"Using fracked gas to make yet more plastic manages to combine many of our environmental sins into one diabolical bundle," said Bill McKibben, founder of climate activism group and petition signatory 350.org.

The Administrative Procedure Act requires EPA to respond to the petition, but courts tend to be lenient in allowing agencies time to respond, said James Goodwin, senior policy analyst at the Center for Progressive Reform. He said petitions are part of a "fundamental asymmetry in environmental law" because they generally don't force agencies to act.

"It's very easy to use the law to block agencies from doing something, but it's very hard to use the APA to compel action," Goodwin said. "This petition process is meant to sort of alleviate that asymmetry. It doesn't work in practice."