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128 Environmental and Social Justice Groups

Denounce United States Environmental Protection Agency as Racist and Unjust due to EPA's inaccurate assessment of Chemical Waste Management Hazardous Waste Dump

Kettleman City and Avenal Residents along with Environmental Justice Supporters from across the US and the World Tell the U.S. EPA: “Kettleman City in not your trash can!”

San Francisco, CA – In an historic show of support for the small San Joaquin Valley farm worker community of Kettleman City, 128 environmental and social justice groups from across the United States and around the world today submitted a letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency denouncing the agency for racism due to their flawed and inaccurate assessment of the impacts on residents living near the Chemical Waste Management hazardous, toxic and solid waste dump.

128 groups from 17 states and the District of Columbia signed the letter, as well as 9 organizations from 8 countries around the world. The groups denounced the US EPA for “committing a grave act of environmental racism and injustice” for their outrageous and false claim that Kettleman City and Avenal residents do not experience adverse impacts from living near the Chem Waste facility in Kettleman City.

This historic environmental justice solidarity letter was submitted to EPA along with extensive technical comments by the Kettleman City grassroots group People for Clean Air and Water/El Pueblo para el Aire y Agua Limpio and Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice regarding EPA's Draft Environmental Justice Assessment (DEJA) and Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) permit for the Chemical Waste Management hazardous waste landfill in Kettleman City.

Along with the technical comments highlighting flaws in the methodology and analysis of the DEJA, the comments include 70 declarations from Kettleman City and Avenal residents who expressed fears of living near one of the largest hazardous waste landfills in country and resented being excluded from the EPA's environmental justice assessment process.

“We are so pleased that so many groups nationally and internationally signed onto our letter.” Says Maricela Mares Alatorre, Kettleman City resident and coordinator of People for Clean Air and Water. “We know this issue does not just affect our group in our community, but is something that affects a lot of people and it needs the strength built by the collaboration of a variety groups that will ultimately make this change.”

Greenaction organizers have been working extensively with the People for Clean Air and Water, Kettleman City and Avenal residents to help analyze and interpret the technically dense U.S. EPA documents. “Both the Assessment and the PCB Permit are full of holes, holes that directly

benefit Chem Waste and harm the people of Kettleman City and Avenal,” Says Erica Swinney, organizer for Greenaction, “If this (DEJA) goes through, it could set a dangerous standard that will further the harm done on communities of color in Kings County and around the country.”

Residents were dismayed to learn that the EPA thinks its okay to live near toxic waste citing their families’ health concerns and the worry of living under threat of accidents and further contaminated air and water. “The people I talked to are worried and they have such little access to what decisions are being made. They just want to live in a healthy, safe community,” Anna Martinez, organizer for Greenaction. “We will continue to fight for health and justice.”

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