Correspondence

Joint statement on EPA proposed rule and public availability of data (2019)

Eighteen months after articulating our concerns (J. Berg *et al. Nature* http://doi.org/crq8; 2018) regarding the 2018 'Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science' rule proposed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; go.nature.com/2kmtd7g), we have become more concerned in response to recent media coverage and a 13 November hearing on the role of science in decision-making at the EPA. These events suggest that the proposed rule is now moving towards implementation; whether it includes amendments sufficient to address the concerns raised by us and many others remains a question.

Our previous statement on the proposed rule, authored and published by the editors-in-chief of five major scientific journals in May 2018, reflected alarm that the proposal's push for 'transparency' would be used as a mechanism for suppressing the use of relevant scientific evidence in policy-making, including public-health regulations. After the public comment period for the proposed rule closed, the EPA reported more than 590,000 comments from individuals and scientific, medical and legal groups, many of which articulated similar concerns (see go.nature.com/2jfxhhn).

As leaders of peer-reviewed journals, we support open sharing of research data, but we also recognize the validity of scientific studies that, for confidentiality reasons, cannot indiscriminately share absolutely all data. Data sets featuring personal identifiers — including studies evaluating genomes of thousands of people to characterize medically relevant genetic variants — are but one example. Such data may be critical to developing new drugs or diagnostic tools, but cannot be shared openly; even anonymized personal data can be subject to re-identification, and it has been a long-standing practice for agencies and journals to acknowledge the value of data-privacy adjustments. The principles of careful data management, as they inform medicine, are just as applicable to data regarding environmental influences on public health. Discounting evidence from the decision-making process on the basis that some data are confidential runs counter to the EPA stated mission "to reduce environmental risks … based on the best available scientific information" (see go.nature.com/2kqheny).

We are also concerned about how the agency plans to consider options related to existing regulations. Even if a new standard is not applied retroactively, the standard could apply when a regulation is updated; thus, foundational science from years past — research on air quality and asthma, for example, or water quality and human health — could be deemed by the EPA to be insufficient for informing our most significant public-health issues. That would be a catastrophe.

We urge the EPA to continue to adopt an approach that ensures the data used in decision-making are the best available, which will at times require consideration of peer-reviewed scientific data, not all of which may be open to all members of the public. The most relevant science, vetted through peer review, should inform public policy. Anything less will harm decision-making that claims to protect our health.

We hope that in the end, decisions that are made to inform the proposed EPA rule will rise above any form of politics, focusing on what's best for our communities. We encourage anyone with concerns or opinions about this issue to express their views through relevant legislative channels. Whether submitting public comments to the EPA or communicating with lawmakers in Congress, it is important to emphasize that decision-making that affects us all should be informed by nothing less than the full suite of relevant science vetted through peer review.

H. Holden Thorp Science family of journals, Washington DC, USA. hthorp@aaas.org

Magdalena Skipper *Nature*, London, UK.

Veronique Kiermer Public Library of Science (PLoS) journals, San Francisco, California, USA.

May Berenbaum *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Washington DC, USA.

Deborah Sweet Cell Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Richard Horton *The Lancet*, London, UK.

Editor's note: This statement was published online on 26 November, and simultaneously as a letter in *Science* (H. Holden Thorp *et al. Science* https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba3197; 2019), which should be the primary citation. It is being disseminated by other publications represented by the signatories.

Boost glacier monitoring

Glacier-mass changes are a reliable indicator of climate change. On behalf of the worldwide network of glacier observers, we urge parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to boost international cooperation in monitoring these changes, and to include the results in the Paris agreement's global stocktake.

Since 1960, glaciers have lost more than 9,000 gigatonnes of ice worldwide — the equivalent of a 20-metre-thick layer with the area of Spain. This melting alone — as distinct from that of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets — has raised global sea level by almost 3 centimetres, contributing 25–30% of the total rise (M. Zemp *et al. Nature* **568**, 382–386; 2019).

The present rate of melting is unprecedented. Several mountain ranges are likely to lose most of their glaciers this century. And we face the loss of almost all glaciers by 2300 (B. Marzeion *et al. Cryosph.* **6**, 1295–1322; 2012).

Glacier shrinkage will severely affect freshwater availability and increase the risk of local geohazards. Global sea-level rise will result in the displacement of millions of people in coastal regions and in the loss of life, livelihoods and cultural-heritage sites.

The systematic monitoring of glaciers has been internationally coordinated for 125 years. Continuing to do so will document progress in limiting climate change for current and future generations.

Michael Zemp* World Glacier Monitoring Service, University of Zurich, Switzerland. michael.zemp@geo.uzh.ch
* On behalf of 38 co-signatories; see go.nature.com/34ak25y

Supplementary information to:
Boost glacier monitoring List of co-signatories to a Correspondence published in *Nature* **576**, 39 (2019)

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03700-3

Michael Zemp World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS), University of Zurich, Switzerland.

Abeer A. Sajood University of Kabul, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Pierre Pitte Argentinian Institute for Nivology, Glaciology and Environmental Sciences, Mendoza, Argentina.

Tas van Ommen Australian Antarctic Division, Kingston, Tasmania, Australia.

Andrea Fischer Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research, Innsbruck, Austria.

Alvaro Soruco Institute of Geological and Environmental Research, La Paz, Bolivia.

Laura Thomson Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Marius Schaefer Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, Chile.

Zhongqin Li Cold and Arid Regions Environment and Engineering Research Institute, Lanzhou, China.

Jorge L. Ceballos Lievano Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies, Bogotá, Colombia.

Bolívar E. Cáceres Correa National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Quito, Ecuador.

Christian Vincent Institute of Environmental Geosciences, St Martin d'Hères Cedex, France.

Levan Tielidze Institute of Geography, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Ludwig N. Braun Bavarian Academy of Sciences, Munich, Germany.

Andreas P. Ahlstrøm Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Hrafnhildur Hannesdóttir Icelandic Meteorological Office, Reykjavík, Iceland.

Dwarika P. Dobhal Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun, India.

Neamat Karimi Water Research Institute, Ministry of Energy, Tehran, Iran.

Carlo Baroni University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy.

Koji Fujita Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan.

Igor Severskiy Institute of Geography, Ministry of Education and Sciences, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Rainer Prinz University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria.

Ryskul Usubaliev Central Asian Institute of Applied Geosciences, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Hugo Delgado-Granados National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico.

Otgonbayar Demberel Khovd University, Khovd, Mongolia.

Sharad P. Joshi International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Brian Anderson Antarctic Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.

Jon Ove Hagen University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.

Luzmila R. Dávila Roller National Institute for the Study of Glaciers and Mountain Ecosystems, Huaraz, Peru.