

Business

Senators Demand Answers on Why EPA Released Farmers' Private Info to Environmental Groups

Jun. 7, 2013 2:41pm [Becket Adams](#)

Twenty-four U.S. senators are calling on the Environmental Protection Agency respond to allegations that it has leaked thousands of farmers' private information to environmental groups.

"We are writing today to express concern regarding the sensitivity of the data that was released," the senators [said in a letter](#) addressed to EPA acting administrator Bob Perciasepe.

"Unlike most regulated facilities, farms and ranches are also homes and information regarding these facilities should be treated and released with that understanding," it adds.



YouTube.

The senators were prompted to act after a [recent report](#) revealed the scope of EPA's alleged leaking.

"The information was obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by Earth Justice, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Pew Charitable Trust," the [Washington Free Beacon's](#) C.J. Ciaramella reports.

The EPA said "some of the personal information that could have been protected ... was released," according to official documents obtained by Fox News.

The senators have asked the EPA to explain why the information was being gathered in the first place and who gave it the authority to release it.

The EPA, for its part, claims it has asked the environmental group that received the private data to please return all original forms and personal documents.

Here's what one EPA spokeswoman said [via WFB]:

EPA's commitment to working with all stakeholders—the agricultural and environmental communities and our state partners—to ensure clean water and public health protections with regard to the operation of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and animal feeding operations (AFOs) requires openness and transparency.

After a recent release by EPA of CAFO- and AFO-related information under a Freedom of Information Act request, the agricultural community raised a number of privacy concerns. In response, EPA determined that some personal information that could have been protected under FOIA was released. EPA has now redacted that information and asked the FOIA requesters to return the original information.

EPA issued a second set of redacted documents that properly amended data for Montana and Nebraska to ensure that personal information in these two states was withheld pursuant to FOIA and privacy protections. EPA provided the organizations with this new version of the data and requested they return the previously released data.

Here's the full letter from the senators:

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