



By **Lisa Friedman**

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WASHINGTON — An Environmental Protection Agency panel that advises the agency’s leadership on the latest scientific information about soot in the atmosphere is not listed as continuing its work next year, an E.P.A. official said.

The 20-person Particulate Matter Review Panel, made up of experts in microscopic airborne pollutants known to cause respiratory disease, is responsible for helping the agency decide what levels of pollutants are safe to breathe. Agency officials declined to say why the E.P.A. intends to stop convening the panel next year, particularly as the agency considers whether to revise air quality standards.

Environmental activists criticized the move as a way for the Trump administration to avoid what they described as the panel’s lengthy but critical assessment of how much exposure to particulate matter is acceptable in the atmosphere.

“To me this is part of a pattern,” said Gretchen Goldman, research director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a science-oriented environmental nonprofit. “We’re seeing E.P.A. trying to cut science out of the process.”

When asked about the future of the larger, 20-person scientific board, the E.P.A. spokesman confirmed that the board was not “listed” in agency documents as continuing its work past 2018. The body is slated to meet in December.

The EPA is responsible for updating six air standards every five years under the Clean Air Act: carbon monoxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, lead, and ozone.

Mr. Wheeler, in a statement, praised the group as being highly qualified with a diverse set of backgrounds needed to take on new responsibilities.

“These experts will provide critical scientific advice to E.P.A. as it evaluates where to set national standards for key pollutants like ozone and particulate matter,” he said, adding the group would “work hard over the next two years to advise E.P.A. in a manner consistent with the Clean Air Act and the protection of public health.”

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