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George A. Kimbrell (WSB 36050) (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
 Sylvia Shih-Yau Wu (CSB 273549) (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
 Meredith Stevenson (CSB 328712) (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
 Center for Food Safety  
 303 Sacramento Street, 2nd Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 T: (415) 826-2770 / F: (415) 826-0507  
 Emails: gkimbrell@centerforfoodsafety.org  
 swu@centerforfoodsafety.org  
 mstevenson@centerforfoodsafety.org

Stephanie M. Parent (OSB 925908) (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
 Center for Biological Diversity  
 PO Box 11374  
 Portland, OR 97211  
 T: (971) 717-6404  
 Email: sparent@biologicaldiversity.org

*Counsel for Plaintiffs*

THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 OF ARIZONA

Center for Biological Diversity, et al.,	)	Case No. CV-20-00555-DCB
	)	
<i>Plaintiffs,</i>	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR
	)	SUMMARY JUDGMENT
United States Environmental Protection	)	
Agency, et al.,	)	Oral Argument Requested
	)	
<i>Defendants,</i>	)	
	)	
and	)	
	)	
Bayer CropScience LP, et al.,	)	
	)	
<i>Defendant-Intervenors.</i>	)	
	)	

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

Pursuant to Local Rule of Civil Procedure 56.1 and Rule 56 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiffs Center for Biological Diversity, National Family Farm Coalition, Pesticide Action Network, and Center for Food Safety (Plaintiffs) hereby move for summary judgment on all claims of their Third Amended Complaint for Declaratory and Equitable Relief on the grounds that the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) approval violated the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). This motion is based on the pleadings and Administrative Record on file in this case and the Statement of Facts based on that Record, the points and authorities herein, and the declarations submitted herewith.

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# GLOSSARY

APA	Administrative Procedure Act
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FIFRA	Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, Rodenticide Act
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
LOC	Level of Concern
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAEC	No Observed Adverse Effect Concentration
OTT	Over-the-Top
PCE	Primary Constituent Elements
RQ	Risk Quotient
VRA	Volatility Reduction Adjuvant
VSI	Visual Sign of Injury

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Today's summary judgment filing has been some time coming, for multiple reasons beyond Plaintiffs' control. And it is comprehensive, as Plaintiffs have endeavored to provide the Court with the clearest picture possible, marshaling all the evidence and setting forth the lengthy background. But stepping back, this case is also quite straightforward. Less than three years ago, the Ninth Circuit held unlawful EPA's controversial dicamba approval for multiple reasons and vacated its registration. The court's factual findings cataloged the damning, unprecedented record of widespread harm from dicamba drift to farmers and the environment. The court gave a long laundry list of errors for EPA to fix, if it were to try and re-register the same dicamba use. Most importantly, EPA had to actually analyze and *weigh* the costs of drift damage to farmers, and could not rely on an unrealistic, impossible label to conclude dicamba use does not cause unreasonable adverse effects, when all the evidence screams that it does. Instead, EPA, under the prior administration, rushed to re-approval in a matter of months, fixing *none* of it, thumbing its nose at the court.

EPA also found new, different ways to violate FIFRA, ignoring additional costs and adverse impacts, like harm to trees and orchards, and harm from dicamba runoff and contaminated rainwater. This time EPA mysteriously registered dicamba use under the harder unconditional standard, but without meeting any of the prerequisites for it. And in its rush, EPA skipped no less than *three* separate required public notice-and-comment processes (any of which would have put the case back right before the Ninth Circuit on direct review). And last, but definitely not least, EPA continued to flout its ESA responsibilities, refusing to seek the guidance of the expert wildlife agencies to protect endangered species from dicamba harm, despite putting literally hundreds of species at risk.

Any of those violations, let alone all of them, are more than enough. But there's still

1 more: the new administration’s EPA put out an absolutely damning 2021 report basically  
 2 admitting its mitigation in the 2020 Decision had failed, showing drift harm continuing or  
 3 worsening and admitting harm to endangered species, and consequently admitting that  
 4 even EPA—the responsible defendant agency—was not sure the registration complied with  
 5 FIFRA and the ESA. And then did... essentially nothing about it.

6 And so it’s left to this Court. This is an important case with a lengthy record, but in  
 7 terms of outcome it is crystal clear: Plaintiffs are entitled to summary judgment, and the  
 8 Court should vacate the 2020 Decision.

### 9 PROCEDURAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

10 This case is the latest chapter in a series. In this case’s direct precursor, the Ninth  
 11 Circuit struck down Defendant EPA’s registration of the same over-the-top use of dicamba  
 12 at issue in this case. *Nat’l Fam. Farm Coal. v. EPA*, 960 F.3d 1120, 1124, 1144–45 (9th Cir.  
 13 2020) (*NFFC*). The Court held EPA violated FIFRA six separate ways, *id.* at 1124, 1144  
 14 (summarizing holdings), separated into two parts: EPA “substantially understated three  
 15 risks it acknowledged” and “also entirely failed to acknowledge three other risks.” *Id.* at  
 16 1124. As that case was heard on direct appellate review, the court’s detailed decision was  
 17 also filled with factual record findings recounting the catastrophic result for farmers and  
 18 the environment from EPA’s novel registration: millions of acres of off-field dicamba drift,  
 19 as well as damage to crops, wild plants, and native ecosystems each growing season since  
 20 EPA first approved over-the-top spraying in 2016. *Id.*; see Pls.’ Stmt. Facts (SOF) ¶¶ 17–53  
 21 (filed concurrently).

22 The first group of holdings all related to costs to farmers from dicamba drift. The  
 23 Ninth Circuit held that EPA understated the dicamba amount sprayed (and thus the drift  
 24 harm from it), *id.* at 1124, 1136, improperly minimized the amount of under-reporting of  
 25

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26 <sup>1</sup> The Statement of Facts is submitted separately per the Court’s rules and covers the  
 27 procedural history in more detail.

1 drift damage, *id.* at 1137–38, and, despite the copious record evidence of drift harm, in its  
2 registration decision “refused to quantify or estimate the amount of damage caused” by  
3 drift as an economic cost. *Id.* at 1138.

4 As to the second group of violations, the Ninth Circuit first held that EPA had  
5 predicated its registration on unrealistic and unanalyzed mitigation, entirely failing to  
6 account for the substantial non-compliance with the dicamba use instructions or grapple  
7 with the near impossibility of following the label in real-world farming conditions, and  
8 what that would mean for increased drift damage. *Id.* at 1144. That is, the Court held that  
9 EPA improperly based its approval on the premise that the label’s mitigation would be  
10 followed and thus limit off-field drift, when the record evidence showed that label  
11 instructions were “difficult if not impossible” to follow. *Id.* at 1124. Second, EPA similarly  
12 failed to recognize and factor in another, separate “clear” economic cost: drift damage  
13 coercing farmers to defensively adopt dicamba-resistant crops, and its anti-competitive,  
14 monopolistic ramifications. *Id.* at 1142. Finally, EPA entirely failed to consider the social  
15 costs to farming communities: dicamba drift had “torn apart” their “social fabric,” pitting  
16 neighbor against neighbor, causing damage to crops and also trees and gardens. *Id.* at 1143.  
17 For these reasons, the Ninth Circuit held EPA’s decision was contrary to the record and  
18 the agency had “failed to perform a proper analysis of the risks and the resulting costs of  
19 the uses.” *Id.* at 1144.

20 As to remedy, the Ninth Circuit vacated EPA’s decision, finding it “exceedingly  
21 unlikely” EPA could (lawfully) issue the same registration again and that EPA failed to  
22 overcome its burden of showing why vacatur is not warranted. *Id.* at 1145. EPA  
23 subsequently issued its own “final cancellation order” for the dicamba uses. SOF ¶ 54.

24 Yet four months later, in late October 2020, EPA re-approved over-the-top dicamba  
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spraying,<sup>2</sup> and Plaintiffs filed this corresponding case. Compl., ECF 1. In December 2021, with a year's worth of evidence under the new registration, EPA issued a damning report (the Report) revealing significant drift damage continuing despite the 2020 Decision's mitigation measures and openly admitting that the agency was no longer sure if the registration could be sustained under FIFRA or the ESA. EPA subsequently minorly revised the 2020 Decision with superseding amendments for a handful of states but otherwise decided to largely leave it as is, twice, in March 2022 and in February 2023. Notices, ECFs 73 & 137. Each time, Plaintiffs supplemented their Complaint to encompass the most recent EPA decisions. Am. Compls., ECFs 84 & 149.

### STANDARDS OF REVIEW

Summary judgment is appropriate if there is no genuine issue of material fact, and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c); *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 322–23 (1986).

Under the APA, a court must “hold unlawful and set aside” agency decisions that are “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law,” or adopted “without observance of procedure required by law.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(2). In determining if an action is “arbitrary and capricious,” courts evaluate whether the agency “examine[d] the relevant data and articulate[d] a satisfactory explanation for its action including a ‘rational connection between the facts found and the choice made.’” *Motor Vehicle Mfrs. Ass’n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 463 U.S. 29, 43 (1983). An action is “arbitrary and capricious if the agency has relied on factors which Congress has not intended it to consider, entirely failed to consider an important aspect of the problem, offered an explanation for its decision that runs counter to the evidence before the agency, or is so implausible that it could not be ascribed to a difference in view or the product of

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<sup>2</sup> Plaintiffs refer to EPA’s continued approval of over-the-top dicamba use collectively as the Decision or the Registration Decision, and specify agency decisions by year (2020 Decision, 2022 Decision, or 2023 Decision) where appropriate.

agency expertise.” *Id.*

In APA review, the Court must conduct a “searching and careful inquiry, the keystone of which is to ensure that the [agency] engaged in reasoned decision making.” *Nw. Coal. for Alts. to Pesticides v. EPA*, 544 F.3d 1043, 1052 n.7 (9th Cir. 2008) (internal quotation omitted). The APA standards apply here. *See, e.g., Ctr. for Food Safety v. Regan*, 56 F.4th 648, 656 (9th Cir. 2022) (explaining that “because the ESA does not specify a standard of review, we review EPA’s compliance under the [APA]”); *Ellis v. Housenger*, 252 F. Supp. 3d 800, 808 (N.D. Cal. 2017) (reviewing FIFRA challenge under 7 U.S.C. § 136n(a) under APA standards); *Friends of Animals v. EPA*, 383 F. Supp. 3d 1112, 1120 (D. Or. 2019) (holding APA standards for “other final actions” of EPA under § 136n(a)).<sup>3</sup>

#### SELECT STATUTORY BACKGROUND<sup>4</sup>

**FIFRA:** In registering pesticides, the core standard is the “unreasonable adverse effects” standard. That is, EPA applies a cost-benefit analysis “to ensure that there is no unreasonable risk created for people or the environment from a pesticide.” *Pollinator Stewardship Council v. EPA*, 806 F.3d 520, 522–23 (9th Cir. 2015). That cost-benefit analysis “is the *critical determination* that the pesticide complies with FIFRA’s safety standard.” *NRDC*, 38 F.4th at 53 (emphasis added). Congress anticipated that EPA’s balancing of costs and benefits would “take every relevant factor [the agency] can conceive into

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<sup>3</sup> FIFRA also provides its own standard of review for direct appellate review: EPA must support registrations with “substantial evidence.” 7 U.S.C. § 136n(b). Like APA review, the agency’s reasoning “must also be coherent and internally consistent.” *Nat. Res. Def. Council v. EPA (NRDC)*, 38 F.4th 34, 44 (9th Cir. 2022). Given that this case was previously heard via that provision, and the difference is EPA’s (unlawful) failure to hold notice-and-comment, *see supra*, there is some question if it should also apply. Regardless, the standards are similar, and any difference between them is irrelevant, as EPA’s 2020 Decision does not pass muster under either. *See, e.g., Ass’n of Data Processing Serv. Orgs. v. Bd. of Governors of the Fed. Reserve Sys.*, 745 F.2d 677, 683–84 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (Scalia, J.) (holding “there is no substantive difference between” arbitrary and capricious and substantial evidence tests).

<sup>4</sup> For more detail, *see* ECF 149 ¶¶ 43–97 (pp. 17–32).



account,” S. Rep. 838, 92d Cong. 2d Sess., reprinted in 1972 U.S.C.C.A.N. 3993, 4032–33, and thus defined “unreasonable adverse effects on the environment” to mean “any unreasonable risk to man or the environment, taking into account the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits of the use of any pesticide.” 7 U.S.C. § 136(bb).

The challenged 2020 Decision is an “unconditional” registration, which EPA can only grant if it concludes that the pesticide (1) “will perform its intended function without unreasonable adverse effects on the environment,” *id.* § 136a(c)(5)(C), and (2) “when used in accordance with widespread and commonly recognized practice [the pesticide] will not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment.” *Id.* § 136a(c)(5)(D); *see also* 40 C.F.R. § 152.112(e).

FIFRA also requires that EPA hold notice-and-comment for pesticide registrations that create, *inter alia*, a “changed use pattern,” 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(4), which EPA interprets to include, *inter alia*, “any additional use pattern that would result in a significant increase in the level of exposure, or a change in the route of exposure, to the active ingredient of man or other organisms.” 40 C.F.R. § 152.102; *id.* at § 152.3 (“new use”). Finally, after a pesticide cancellation, EPA’s regulations impose even more procedural requirements and a heightened standard for un-canceling and re-approval. *See* 40 C.F.R. § 164.

**ESA:** Congress enacted the ESA to ensure the survival and recovery of endangered species. 16 U.S.C. § 1531(b), (c). Unlike FIFRA’s cost-benefit analysis, Congress made a “conscious decision” to give endangered species priority over the “‘primary missions’ of federal agencies.” *Tennessee Valley Auth. v. Hill*, 437 U.S. 153, 185 (1978).

Section 7 is the ESA’s “heart,” crucial to the recovery of ESA-protected species. *Karuk Tribe v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 681 F.3d 1006, 1019 (9th Cir. 2012) (en banc). Through it, EPA has a substantive duty to “insure” authorizations of pesticides are not likely to jeopardize any species or adversely modify any critical habitat. 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2); 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. To satisfy its substantive duties, EPA has a procedural duty: evaluating the registration’s effects “in consultation with and with the assistance of” the agencies that—

unlike EPA—Congress designated as having endangered species expertise any time EPA determines its actions “may affect” protected species or critical habitat. 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2); 50 C.F.R. §§ 402.14(a), 402.01(b). “[T]he strict substantive provisions of the ESA justify *more* stringent enforcement of its procedural requirements, because [they] are designed to ensure compliance with the substantive provisions.” *Thomas v. Peterson*, 753 F.2d 754, 764 (9th Cir. 1985) (emphasis in original), *abrogated on other grounds by* *Cottonwood Env’t Law Ctr. v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 789 F.3d 1075, 1088–89 (9th Cir. 2015).

**APA:** Under the APA, agency actions that qualify as rules must go through notice-and-comment. 5 U.S.C. §§ 553(b), (c). The APA defines “rule” as “the whole or a part of an agency statement of general or particular applicability and future effect designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy.” *Id.* § 551(4). Legislative rules are agency decisions that “create rights, impose obligations, or effect a change in existing law pursuant to authority delegated by Congress.” *Hemp Indus. Ass’n v. Drug Enforcement Admin.*, 333 F.3d 1082, 1087 (9th Cir. 2003).

## ARGUMENT<sup>5</sup>

### I. The Registration Is Arbitrary and Capricious, Contrary to FIFRA and the APA.

EPA has been sitting on dynamite since rushing to re-issue the challenged dicamba use approval in late 2020 (the 2020 Decision). And by December 2021—then with a year under the new registration—EPA had compiled the dicamba drift evidence, *see* U.1 (the Report), and the results were *devastating*: the registration measures that registrants and EPA assured stakeholders would, this time, finally halt the problem had utterly failed.

The evidence left EPA little choice but to admit that “despite the control measures

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<sup>5</sup> Plaintiffs have standing because the Decision injures Plaintiffs’ professional, economic, environmental, aesthetic, and recreational interests. *Hunt v. Wash. State Apple Advert. Comm’n*, 432 U.S. 333, 342–43 (1977). *See* Clauser Decl.; Bradley Decl.; Newman Decl.; Hess Decl.; Limberg Decl.; Faux Decl.; Mormann Decl.; Smith Decl.; Buse Decl.; Trimble Decl.; Nelms Decl.; Suckling Decl.

1 ... 2021 incident reports *show little change* in number, severity, or geographic extent of  
 2 dicamba-related incidents” compared to prior years. Ex-R.9 at 2 (emphasis added); U.1 at  
 3 43. [REDACTED]  
 4 [REDACTED], U.1 at 9, 30 & 43, and drift hit between 65,000 to over a quarter-million  
 5 soybean fields, indicating damage to as many as *15.6 million* farmland acres. A.6 at 31,  
 6 tbl.8. [REDACTED]  
 7 [REDACTED], U.1 at 18, tbl.3, fn.1, [REDACTED]  
 8 [REDACTED]. *Id.* at 18  
 9 tbl.3, fn.5; *see also id.* at 17.

10 [REDACTED]  
 11 [REDACTED], *id.* at 17, [REDACTED]  
 12 [REDACTED] *Id.* at 24. [REDACTED]  
 13 [REDACTED] *Id.* at 5.

14 These are all reasons why EPA said in its official release accompanying the Report  
 15 that it was no longer sure “whether over-the-top dicamba can be used in a *manner that does*  
 16 *not pose unreasonable risks* to non-target crops and other plants, or to listed species and their  
 17 designated critical habitats.” Ex-R.10 at 2;<sup>6</sup> *see also* Pls.’ Mot. Complete, ECF 108; Ex-R.9 at  
 18 2–3. Thus, the agency was “evaluating all of its options for addressing future dicamba-  
 19 related incidents.” Ex-R.10 at 3 (EPA repeated this verbatim to the Court later, *see* EPA’s  
 20 Opp’n, ECF 67 at 3). Even more bluntly, EPA admitted to reporters that the agency was  
 21 not even sure it could “continue to defend the 2020 dicamba registration” as it was in this  
 22 lawsuit. Ex-R.11 at 2 (“[W]e [EPA] do have significant concerns about the ability for us to  
 23 continue to make arguments in the ongoing litigation. ...[W]e are examining our ability to  
 24 continue to defend it.”).

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
 26 <sup>6</sup>For the Court’s convenience, Plaintiffs concurrently reattach the extra-record materials  
 27 cited to in Plaintiffs’ pending Motion to Complete/Supplement the Administrative  
 28 Record, ECF 108, and distinguish them from the record citations by “Ex-R.”

1 Yet in March 2022, four months later, when EPA did finally act, it was a whimper,  
 2 not a roar: it only made minor registration amendments for two of 34 states (Minnesota  
 3 and Iowa), including a June 20th cutoff in Iowa, and a June 12th cutoff and 85-degree  
 4 temperature restriction for part of Minnesota. See ECF 73-1. Beyond that, EPA declared  
 5 that the 2022 Decision “does not affect any conditions that were previously imposed on  
 6 this registration,” Q.9 at 1, and that the agency did not prepare a “new ecological risk  
 7 assessment” beyond what it had done in 2020. *Id.* at 2.<sup>7</sup> *In other words: everything we said in*  
 8 *2020 in terms of the Decision and risk assessment, still goes.*

9 Given the minor 2022 amendment, and for only two states, it was perhaps no  
 10 surprise that the 2022 season turned out to be just as disastrous. See SOF ¶ 157 (“EPA has  
 11 reason to believe dicamba-related incidents continued through the 2022 growing season as  
 12 well.”). Yet now faced with a *second* chance to fix the 2020 Decision, instead EPA again  
 13 largely just doubled down on it, this time making minor changes to further restrict over-  
 14 the-top dicamba use in three more states (Iowa again, plus Illinois, Indiana, and South  
 15 Dakota), merely tightening the application dates in those states. See SOF ¶ 158. EPA’s  
 16 actions are classic arbitrary and capricious agency action, contrary to the record before the  
 17 agency at the time and failing to make a “rational connection between the facts found and  
 18 the choice made.” *State Farm*, 463 U.S. at 43.

19 First, the scope of EPA’s 2022 & 2023 Decisions is arbitrary and capricious. There  
 20 are multiple aspects of the 2020 Decision that the Report and the Record exposed as  
 21 wholly inadequate, yet EPA did not even attempt to address them, in either 2022 or 2023.  
 22 The 2022 Decision only covered two states, when the Report showed drift harm  
 23 continuing in 29 of 34 states; the 2023 Decision made changes in three more states, when  
 24 the Record showed that multiple states sought further use restrictions. SOF ¶¶ 159–160,  
 25

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26 <sup>7</sup> EPA used the same language for the other product registration amendments. See also  
 27 ECFs 73-1 & 73-2 & 73-3; S.1; R.9.

1 168, 171. EPA “entirely failed to consider” these myriad problems. *Id.*

2 Unrealistic reliance on an impossible label: For example, [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED]  
4 [REDACTED]. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1139–41 (detailing  
5 “extensive evidence” of the real-world difficulty in complying and citing numerous  
6 examples of how few hours the extensive restrictions left available for legal spraying). [REDACTED]

7 [REDACTED], U.1 at 33–34, [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED]  
9 [REDACTED] *Id.*; SOF ¶¶ 117–125.

10 Yet EPA’s 2022-2023 Decisions did nothing to address the problem. *State Farm*, 463  
11 U.S. at 43. [REDACTED]

12 [REDACTED]  
13 [REDACTED]  
14 [REDACTED]. U.1 at 38.

15 Volatility: And lack of feasibility aside, [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]  
17 [REDACTED]  
18 [REDACTED]. U.1 at 6, 21;  
19 SOF ¶ 122–124. [REDACTED]

20 [REDACTED] *Id.* at 37; *see* SOF ¶ 125.

21 The same can be said for all the other critical failings the Ninth Circuit found,  
22 *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1124, 1144, and that EPA claimed to have assessed and remedied,  
23 including: buffers’ inadequacy; under-reporting of drift incidents; social costs to farming  
24 communities; and economic costs, including monopolistic effects.<sup>8</sup> The Report revealed  
25

26 \_\_\_\_\_  
27 <sup>8</sup> *See* SOF ¶¶ 55–82; Mot. Lift Stay, ECF 66 at 10–13 (and citations therein).  
28

1 that all continued and in some cases *worsened*. Yet EPA in its 2022-2023 Decisions  
 2 arbitrarily and capriciously failed to address *any* of them. *State Farm*, 463 U.S. at 43.

3 Second, there is also a major “failure to explain” APA violation. In light of the new  
 4 evidence summarized in the Report, EPA said it was re-reviewing “*whether over-the-top*  
 5 *dicamba can be used in a manner that does not pose unreasonable risks to non-target crops*  
 6 *and other plants, or to listed species and their designated critical habitats.*” Ex-R.10 at 3  
 7 (emphases added). In other words, EPA admitted it was not sure whether the Decision  
 8 might be posing unreasonable risks. This makes sense, considering widespread damage in  
 9 the Report and potential jeopardy to endangered species from incidents in ESA counties.

10 Yet under FIFRA and the ESA, EPA *must* be sure of the opposite: first that the  
 11 Decision will “*not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment,*” 7  
 12 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(5)(D) (emphasis added); 40 C.F.R. § 152.112(e); and second that the  
 13 Decision is not likely to jeopardize any federally listed species or adversely modify any  
 14 designated “critical” habitat. 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2); 50 C.F.R. § 402.02.

15 It follows then that EPA needed to explain how its 2022-2023 Decisions cleared up  
 16 its own admitted uncertainties, yet EPA failed to explain: (1) how the amendments address  
 17 the many problems with the Decision that the Report revealed; and (2) how the  
 18 amendments meet EPA’s FIFRA and ESA statutory duties in light of the Report (and its  
 19 own prior statements about its import). *A Community Voice v. EPA*, 997 F.3d 983, 986 (9th  
 20 Cir. 2021) (holding that a “failure to explain” how addressing a harm by an agency in the  
 21 “face of mounting evidence” of that danger is arbitrary and capricious).

22 Instead, EPA’s sparse rationale<sup>9</sup> for the 2022-2023 Decisions raises more questions  
 23 than answers. In March 2022, [REDACTED]

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25 <sup>9</sup> Any explanation the agency provides now is *post hoc* litigation positioning that cannot  
 26 sustain the Decision. *Nat. Res. Def. Council v. EPA*, 735 F.3d 873, 877 (9th Cir. 2013) (“It  
 27 is well-established that an agency’s action must be upheld, if at all, on the basis articulated  
 28 by the agency itself.”) (quoting *State Farm*, 463 U.S. at 50).

1 [REDACTED]  
2 [REDACTED] U.1 at 38, EPA suddenly found it “likely” that more  
3 restrictions would *help* the situation without any explanation of their feasibility in real-  
4 world farming conditions. Q.9 at 1-2; R.9 at 1-2; S.1 at 1-2. EPA then based its 2022  
5 Decision (a June 20th cutoff date for Iowa and June 12th/85-degree temperature  
6 restriction for southern Minnesota) solely on the 2020 ecological risk assessment’s general  
7 conclusion that volatility is reduced in lower temperatures, without explaining why then  
8 the 2020 assessment would not also support such restrictions in the 27 other states that  
9 also experienced significant damage. *Id.*

10 And after another season of widespread damage in 2022, *see* SOF ¶¶ 157–165, EPA  
11 again found it “likely” that the 2023 Decision would reduce volatility based again on the  
12 2020 assessment and alleged success in Minnesota. SOF ¶ 170. But according to states and  
13 academics, the 2022 growing season in Minnesota did not provide a reliable metric for  
14 whether the June 12th cutoff date reduced damage (due to an unusually wet spring  
15 preventing many growers from using dicamba before the cutoff date as well as  
16 underreporting following five years of growing dicamba fatigue). Stevenson Decl., Ex. I at  
17 1; Ex. H at 5; Ex. K at 26 (filed concurrently). And Bayer admitted that its amendment  
18 rationale (adopted by EPA) was not based on peer-reviewed studies. Z.41 at 4.

19 Nevertheless, EPA moved forward with the 2023 Decision in four states because  
20 they accounted for a “significant” percentage of off-target movement in the last three years.

21 [REDACTED]  
22 [REDACTED] U.1 at 18,  
23 tbl.3. [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED]  
25 [REDACTED] Nowhere did EPA explain how its 2023  
26 Decision will mitigate damage in those states.

27 Finally, nowhere did EPA explain how the 2023 Decision will protect federally  
28

## II. EPA Failed to Fix the Violations the Ninth Circuit Held.

### A. Unreasonable Reliance on Infeasible Use Instructions

Importantly, EPA wrongly presents the crux of this issue as applicators' inability to properly understand a complex label, E.3 at 4 ("██████████

\_\_\_\_\_"); E.17 at 4 ("I



1 [REDACTED]), when the real issue is that the weather-related usage  
2 instructions are so numerous and restrictive as to make it impossible, on a consistent basis  
3 in the real world, to successfully use the products for their intended purpose of weed  
4 control while still complying with the label. *See* SOF ¶¶ 117–125, 42–47, 72.

5 B. Drift and Its Economic Costs

6 The Ninth Circuit also held that EPA violated FIFRA multiple ways with regards to  
7 drift’s economic costs: EPA understated the amount sprayed, improperly minimized under-  
8 reporting of incidents, and overall for its cost-benefit analysis “refused to quantify or  
9 estimate the amount of damage caused.” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1124, 1136–38.

10 And just as in 2018, the Record before EPA in 2020 was replete with evidence of  
11 crop damage, as well as injury to beekeepers, orchards, vineyards, and non-agricultural trees  
12 and plants ensuing from dicamba drift.<sup>10</sup> *See* SOF ¶¶ 77–79.<sup>11</sup> Such damages resulted in  
13 significant yield losses, and in the case of perennial plants like fruit and ornamental trees,  
14 recultivation of the damaged trees to maturity meant economic losses for multiple years.  
15 *See id.*

16 Yet despite the Ninth Circuit’s unambiguous instruction, *nowhere* in the 2020  
17 Decision documents did EPA assess, quantify (or even provide rough estimates) and weigh  
18 the costs of farmers’ losses, or economic impacts to seed companies and other stakeholders  
19 as a result of off-target drift. (EPA did not do so in the Report *either*.) Instead, the best EPA  
20 could muster was vaguely acknowledging that “non-users may experience impacts from crop  
21

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23 <sup>10</sup> EPA also again made the same unfounded claim that “there may have been issues of  
24 overreporting,” A.4 at 8, despite the Ninth Circuit finding no evidence to support this. *See*  
25 *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1137.

26 <sup>11</sup> In fact, the 2020 Decision Record is even *stronger* than before because of market harm  
27 evidence from class action damages litigation over dicamba drift since, evidence EPA had.  
28 *See, e.g., Bader Farms, Inc. v. BASF Corp.*, 39 F.4th 954 (8th Cir. 2022). *See* SOF ¶ 78.

injury or increased costs resulting from offsite movement of dicamba.” A.6 at 7. This does not come close to complying with the Ninth Circuit’s directive.

C. Economic Costs: Anti-Competitive, Monopolistic Effects

The Ninth Circuit also held EPA failed to consider another separate but equally “clear” economic cost that is “virtually certain” to stem from the Decision: the coercive effect of drift forcing farmers to defensively buy dicamba-resistant seeds and its anticompetitive, monopolistic ramifications. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1142. Again, if anything, the 2020 record evidence of this cost was even stronger than previously. *See* SOF ¶¶ 78; A.6 at 43–44 (EPA’s data analysis indicating “large proportion” of dicamba seeds remain untreated relative to other herbicide tolerant soybean, indicating growers plant defensively since only half of dicamba-resistant soybean and 60 percent of dicamba-resistant cotton acreages receive over-the-top spraying).

Yet in the 2020 Decision EPA *still* meaningfully never “took into account this cost.” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1142. While EPA concedes that defensive planting could entail “increased cost and/or reduced yields,” A.6 at 45, it provides no *assessment* of these costs to either farmers or seed dealers. Nor did EPA attempt to actually *weigh* these costs against the purported benefits, as FIFRA requires. *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 522–23; 7 U.S.C. § 136(bb).<sup>12</sup>

D. Social Costs

The Ninth Circuit also held EPA failed to consider the “clear social cost,” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1142 (citing 7 U.S.C. §136(bb)), caused by the 2018 registration: the “severe strain on social relations in farming communities” that has “torn apart the[ir] social fabric”

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<sup>12</sup> The “costs” EPA considered refer almost exclusively to putative costs on growers from compliance with use measures or costs of alternatives, not costs externalized on other farmers. *See* A.6 at 43–45.

1 and was “likely to increase.” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1143 (describing evidence of harm to off-  
 2 field crops as well as old-growth trees and gardens).

3 Yet the 2020 Decision again failed to abide by this requirement, despite a robust  
 4 record that such social strife has continued. *See, e.g.*, SOF ¶¶ 81–82. Instead, EPA justified  
 5 its refusal by speculating that such social costs would continue even without the 2020  
 6 Decision, due to illegal dicamba use. A.6 at 46. This excuse fails because the Ninth Circuit  
 7 has already held, as a matter of law, that this is a cognizable cost of the *over-the-top use*  
 8 *registration*. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1143. [REDACTED]

9 [REDACTED] U.1 at 5, 28; *see also* Ex-R.4 at 6.  
 10 EPA’s nonresponsive response is wholly insufficient to meet its duties under FIFRA to  
 11 assess, consider, and weigh social costs, 7 U.S.C. § 136(bb), a duty the Ninth Circuit has  
 12 already held EPA must meet for this specific cost, for this registration. *Id.*

### 13 **III. EPA Failed to Address Other Risks from the 2020 Decision.**

14 In addition to failing on remand to abide by the Ninth Circuit’s commands, EPA  
 15 also made other legal errors, failing to consider and weigh other problems from dicamba’s  
 16 continued registration, rendering the Decision arbitrary and capricious. *State Farm*, 463  
 17 U.S. at 43 (arbitrary and capricious if agency fails to consider important aspect of the  
 18 problem).

#### 19 **A. EPA’s Disregard of Dicamba Runoff Violated FIFRA**

20 As with volatility, EPA has always known that dicamba runoff is another major  
 21 cause of damage: in the 2018 registration, EPA required as a condition of registration that  
 22 registrants study off-field effects including runoff. SOF ¶ 14. That study revealed dicamba  
 23 concentrations in runoff—seven days after spraying—*still* exceeded EPA’s own plant harm  
 24 threshold. A.9 at 61. Other record studies similarly showed significant damage from runoff  
 25 up to ten days after spraying. SOF ¶¶ 84–85. [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED]  
2 [REDACTED] E.15 at 1, and that [REDACTED]  
3 [REDACTED] E.13 at 2; SOF ¶¶ 84–85.

4 Yet EPA still *failed to mitigate* the unreasonable adverse effects of dicamba runoff. In  
5 its rush to re-approval, all EPA did was extend the limitation on spraying when rainfall is  
6 forecasted from the previous 24 hours to 48 hours, as well as noting generally “best  
7 management practices for minimizing runoff should be employed.” A.9 at 8. However,  
8 EPA already acknowledged with the 2018 registration that identifying the conditions likely  
9 to cause dicamba runoff “currently exceed the capabilities of most applicators and most  
10 regulatory compliance officials.” M.37ag at 8. Nor does EPA have any explanation as to  
11 why it prohibited spraying only *within 48 hours* of rainfall when the data before the agency  
12 found runoff damage *up to ten days* after spraying. *See supra*. EPA’s conclusion that dicamba  
13 runoff would not have unreasonable adverse effects was arbitrary and capricious and  
14 unsupported by the Record.

15 B. EPA Failed to Consider Harm from Dicamba-Contaminated Rainfall

16 EPA also failed to consider harm from dicamba in rainfall. Intensive dicamba use  
17 leads to “atmospheric loading,” the accumulation of dicamba vapor in the air. M37o at 15;  
18 M.64 at 4; M.32; M.16. Rainfall then results in “extremely high amounts of dicamba in  
19 rainwater” at levels injurious to sensitive plants, as was found in Missouri in 2019-2020.  
20 SOF ¶¶ 87–88.

21 EPA was well-aware of this threat prior to the Decision. Missouri provided EPA  
22 with a report recording over one hundred dicamba detections in rainfall and streams in  
23 2019. M.95 at 4; *see* SOF ¶ 87. [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED]  
25 [REDACTED] E.12 at 4. Instead, EPA’s subsequent 2020 ecological risk assessment *entirely*  
26  
27  
28

1 failed to address the issue of dicamba-contaminated rainfall injuring crops or plants; any  
2 rainfall mentions concerned only dicamba runoff from fields. *See, e.g.,* A.9 at 8, 17, 24.

3 C. EPA Failed to Account for “Wide Area Effects” of Dicamba Spraying

4 Dicamba drift is not merely a nearby problem, it also results in “wide-area effects”:  
5 dicamba damage episodes caused by vapor drift that occur well beyond buffer zones  
6 established to protect against near-field effects. A.9 at 309–10; E.12 at 1. Indeed, the  
7 Record shows that EPA was well-aware that injury from dicamba drift has been reported  
8 from sites as far away as [REDACTED] feet from the original potential sources of dicamba  
9 spraying.<sup>13</sup> Even field studies have been damaged by incursions of dicamba drift from  
10 external sources traveling over 1400 feet, “far greater distances than the labeled in-field  
11 setbacks.” A.9 at 261; *see* SOF ¶¶ 89–90.

12 Yet despite evidence of extensive, long-distance drift damage, EPA’s dicamba drift  
13 mitigations are based on 10- to 20- acre field studies and modeling, and are only designed  
14 to address “near field” effects, A.9 at 9, meaning those “adjacent to the treatment site,” *id.*,  
15 at most 400 feet from a treated field, *id.* at 309. [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]  
17 [REDACTED]  
18 [REDACTED] *See* E.12 at 3 ([REDACTED])  
19 [REDACTED]; SOF ¶ 91. EPA again failed to address this  
20 important part of the problem. *State Farm*, 463 U.S. at 43.

21 D. EPA Failed to Consider Dicamba Harm to Trees

22 Like runoff, another 2018 conditional registration requirement was studies on  
23 effects of dicamba on “trees, shrubs, and perennials” in light of reports of damage to tree  
24 species and orchards. M.168 at 19; SOF ¶ 93. EPA reviewed only one such preliminary  
25

26 <sup>13</sup> This figure is based on 2017–2019 data reported by BASF, *see* I.2; I.3, and Bayer, I.4; I.6,  
27 [REDACTED], U.1 at 31.

(Tier 1) study submitted by Bayer (Bayer Tree Study), but that study—which contained numerous deficiencies<sup>14</sup>—actually showed that EPA lacked sufficient data to rule out unreasonable harm to trees. See SOF ¶¶ 93–95.

EPA categorized the Bayer Tree Study as a preliminary (Tier 1) study because it only tested one dicamba concentration and its effects on five different tree species, and therefore could not be used to determine—*nor prevent*—harm to the most sensitive tree species. See G.31 at 14–15 (“This test was conducted with a single test concentration (Tier 1); therefore, the most sensitive species could not be determined.”). In it, Bayer researchers studied dicamba at an extremely low concentration (0.000153 lb/acre)—the concentration that EPA found to have inhibited growth in soybeans by 25%, A.9 at 49—and its effects on trees. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] F.80 at 9, 21, 32. In other words, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A.9 at 31. And, EPA has no idea just how little dicamba it would take to stunt growth in American red oak (or other similar trees) because all that the study concluded was that the harm threshold (the NOAEC) for American red oak and apple saplings is less than the concentration EPA found significantly injurious to soybeans. See G.31 at 2 (“NOAEC: <0.000513 lb ae/A (apple and American red oak height)”). Yet, EPA did not call for another study nor examine any other data. EPA’s cavalier disregard of the significant harm to trees and orchards from dicamba drift violated FIFRA.

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to being a preliminary study, the Bayer Tree Study is also deficient [REDACTED], F.80 at 1, and the testing ended after just 90 days, leading the EPA reviewer to conclude that the Study was “*not scientifically sound*.” G.31 at 15 (emphasis in original).

1 **IV. EPA Failed to Meet the Unconditional Registration Standard.**

2 EPA also violated FIFRA by failing to meet the rigorous preconditions  
 3 for an “unconditional” registration.<sup>15</sup> The past registrations were conditional, *see NFFC*,  
 4 960 F.3d at 1133, an easier standard to meet. *Nat’l Fam. Farm Coal. v. EPA*, 966 F.3d 893,  
 5 915–16 (9th Cir. 2020) (*Enlist*) (unconditional standard is “higher” and “more  
 6 burdensome” than conditional); *cf.* 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(7) (conditional) *with id.* § 136a(c)(5)  
 7 (unconditional). Unconditional registrations have several prerequisites, all of which EPA  
 8 failed to meet.

9 **A. No Additional Data Necessary**

10 While mere “satisfactory data” are required for conditional registration, *id.* §  
 11 136a(c)(7)(B), for unconditional, EPA must determine that “no additional data are  
 12 necessary,” 40 C.F.R. § 152.112(c) (setting forth registration requirements under FIFRA  
 13 Section 3(c)(5)). Even under the *lesser* conditional standard, EPA previously lacked the  
 14 required support. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1124 (data had “several flaws”), *id.* at 1133–36  
 15 (discussing data’s flaws). EPA again fails here under this tougher standard.

16 First, the nearest EPA comes to affirming the “no additional data” requirement is  
 17 vaguely saying that “EPA received studies and other information, necessary to comply with  
 18 the data requirements for the uses of these products.” A.4 at 19. Then there is the issue of  
 19 the studies, data, and monitoring that EPA conditioned registration upon in 2018 and  
 20 what became of them, M.168 at 23; EPA does not say, nor give any rationale as to why the  
 21 agency did not continue to require similar data and monitoring in this Decision. EPA’s  
 22 failure to explain and support the significant registration change is arbitrary and capricious.  
 23 *State Farm*, 463 U.S. at 43.

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24 <sup>15</sup> FIFRA Section 3(c)(7)(B) authorizes EPA to conditionally register some pesticides while  
 25 missing data is prepared. Despite eliminating the conditionality of prior approvals, EPA is  
 26 silent about the approval now being unconditional other than stating that the approval,  
 27 like all unconditional registrations, is pursuant to FIFRA section 3(c)(5) (as opposed to  
 28 conditional registrations under section 3(c)(7)). *See* A.4 at 3, 18 (quoting section 3(c)(5)).

1 Second, and speaking of this Decision's continued reliance on pre-2020 data, EPA  
 2 admitted that much of the 2018 assessments were irreparably *tainted* with politic  
 3 interference. See SOF ¶¶ 61–64. The 2020 Decision was overseen by the same  
 4 administration and same political EPA officials. And the 2020 Decision refers back,  
 5 incorporates, and relies on the admittedly tainted 2018 studies. See SOF ¶¶ 63–64. EPA's  
 6 continued and unexplained reliance on admittedly tainted data is arbitrary and capricious.

7 Finally, even if the politically tainted assessments EPA re-used are somehow  
 8 magically absolved, the Record is replete with evidence that—in the frenzied few months  
 9 between the Ninth Circuit's vacatur of the registration and the 2020 Decision, SOF ¶¶  
 10 55–61—EPA did *not* have all the data it needed to determine risks unconditionally. For  
 11 example, even though EPA relied heavily on the use requirement that farmers mix volatility  
 12 reducing agents (VRAs or pH buffering agents) into spraying tanks, [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED], P.481, despite [REDACTED]  
 14 [REDACTED] E.7 at 3; *id.* at 1 ([REDACTED])  
 15 [REDACTED]  
 16 [REDACTED]) (emphasis added); see also SOF ¶ 74.<sup>16</sup> [REDACTED]  
 17 [REDACTED]  
 18 [REDACTED]  
 19 [REDACTED] E.12 at 3; see also E.5; SOF ¶¶ 89–91; *supra* at 18. Other issues  
 20 for which EPA lacked data include: dicamba in rain; dicamba in runoff; and dicamba's  
 21 effects on trees, shrubs, and other woody perennial species seedlings. See *supra* Section III;  
 22 SOF ¶¶ 83–95.

23  
 24  
 25 <sup>16</sup> And, even assuming the agents work, in its rush to re-register dicamba, EPA failed to  
 26 ensure [REDACTED]. E.1; E.2; see also Ex-R.22 at 154 (“If  
 27 we had more time...”); SOF ¶ 60.  
 28



1 B. Performing Intended Function Without Causing Unreasonable Adverse Effects

2 The unconditional registration standard also requires EPA to find and support with  
 3 the Record that the dicamba uses can perform their “*intended function without* [causing]  
 4 unreasonable adverse effects on the environment.” 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(5)(C). Yet the record  
 5 evidence strongly belies any such conclusion. Over and over again, experts—scientists, state  
 6 regulators, and commercial applicators—told EPA that, due to the byzantine,  
 7 unprecedented use directions that set forth near impossible conditions for lawful use,  
 8 farmers are *not* able to use the products lawfully (1) for their “intended function” of  
 9 suppressing weeds, and (2) *without* actually causing unreasonable adverse effects through  
 10 off-field drift and runoff. *See supra* at 10; SOF ¶¶ 42–47, 70–72, 117–125.

11 Even before EPA added additional use restrictions in its 2020 Decision, experts  
 12 described the prior label as “probably the most complex label I have ever seen in my 40-  
 13 year career.” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1140 (estimating only 44 hours of application time allowed  
 14 under the label during 2017); *id.* at 1140 (“There doesn’t appear to be any way for an  
 15 applicator to be 100% legal in their application.”); A.1 at 6 (“Label requirements essentially  
 16 make it impossible to do an on-label application”). Unsurprisingly, then state regulators  
 17 described the even *more* restrictive 2020 label as the “biggest, gnarliest label ever seen,” Ex-  
 18 R.5 at 10, requiring conditions “so rare that it is impossible to follow.” Ex-R.5 at 2; *see also*  
 19 U.1 at 33 [REDACTED]. And even when farmers *did* have  
 20 the rare conditions making the 2020 use directions feasible, vapor drift *still* occurred. Ex-  
 21 R.1 at 2–3; SOF ¶¶ 121–123.

22 C. No Unreasonable Adverse Effects When Used in Widespread and Common Ways

23 Finally, EPA must find and support with the Record that the over-the-top dicamba  
 24 spraying will not cause unreasonable adverse effects when used in “widespread and  
 25 commonly recognized practice.” 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(5)(D). Congress underscored its intent  
 26 that “[i]f a pesticide is such that when used in accordance with its *label or common practice* it  
 27 is injurious to man, other vertebrates, or useful plants, *it cannot be registered* under the Act  
 28

1 and cannot be sold or distributed in interstate commerce.” S. Rep. 838, 92d Cong. 2d  
 2 Sess., 1972 U.S.C.C.A.N. 3993, 3996 (emphases added). Registration under any possible  
 3 contrived, hypothetical, laboratory scenario—no matter how difficult to follow, or how  
 4 much of a weather/wind “fairy tale,” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1140, it is in the real world of  
 5 farming—is *not* what Congress meant.

6 Indeed, “widespread and commonly recognized practice” is the *antithesis* of the  
 7 practices EPA approved safety under here: what EPA approved requires use instructions  
 8 unlike any other farmers have ever seen. *See* Ex-R.5 at 10; *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1140; SOF ¶¶  
 9 42–47, 72, 119–121. Approval under such “complex and onerous” requirements—both  
 10 putting farmers in a no-win situation and making the “restrictions” illusory—is not what  
 11 Congress intended. EPA violated FIFRA’s registration mandates.

12 **V. EPA Violated the Endangered Species Act.**

13 EPA’s 2020 “no effect” determination is arbitrary and capricious, flies in the face of  
 14 documented damage, lacks analysis, and risks harm to hundreds of ESA-protected plants  
 15 and animals and their habitat. And despite the Report’s admission of [REDACTED]  
 16 [REDACTED], EPA’s 2022-2023 Decisions *still*  
 17 failed to protect species.

18 **A. EPA Arbitrarily Applied Its FIFRA Approach to ESA Effects Determinations**

19 For the third time, EPA circumvented ESA Section 7 consultation with expert  
 20 wildlife agencies regarding dicamba’s use registration. Despite documented damage,  
 21 including potential harm to *hundreds* of endangered plants and animals and their critical  
 22 habitats, EPA made the unprecedented finding, again, that dicamba’s novel over-the-top  
 23 uses could nonetheless have “no effect” on all but one species and its designated critical  
 24 habitat. *See* SOF ¶¶ 15-16, 101-110. EPA’s “no effect” determination also violates its  
 25 substantive duty to ensure against jeopardy and destruction or adverse modification of  
 26 designated critical habitat.

1 As in 2016 and 2018, in the 2020 Decision EPA arrived at this conclusion by  
 2 substituting the less protective FIFRA standards for the ESA's standards in its Ecological  
 3 Assessment. *See generally* A.9; SOF ¶¶ 101-104. Namely, instead of determining whether  
 4 the 2020 Decision met the low ESA "may affect" threshold, EPA's flawed methodology  
 5 only evaluated whether exposing species or their habitat to dicamba exceeds EPA's self-  
 6 determined "level of concern" under the FIFRA standard. SOF ¶¶ 102-104.

7 EPA must complete interagency consultation whenever it proposes an action that  
 8 "may affect" a listed species or critical habitat. 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(a). The "may affect"  
 9 threshold is extremely low—intentionally—to ensure the expert agencies are consulted to  
 10 implement congressional intent of "institutionalized caution." *Hill*, 437 U.S. at 194; 51  
 11 Fed. Reg. 19,926, 19,949 (June 3, 1986) ("Any possible effect, whether beneficial, benign,  
 12 adverse, or of an undetermined character, triggers the formal consultation requirement.");  
 13 "[A]ctions that have *any chance of affecting* listed species or critical habitat—even if it is later  
 14 determined that the actions are 'not likely' to do so—require at least some consultation  
 15 under the ESA." *Karuk Tribe*, 681 F.3d at 1027 (emphasis added).

16 To arrive at "no effect" for hundreds of ESA species, EPA in 2020, and as re-  
 17 affirmed unchanged in 2022 and 2023, applied its Risk Quotient (RQ)/Level of Concern  
 18 (LOC) assessment, designed to address FIFRA's registration standard of no "unreasonable  
 19 adverse effects," just as it did in 2016 and 2018. SOF ¶¶ 15-16, 102-104. These are  
 20 fundamentally different: the FIFRA standard includes a risk-benefit consideration, in  
 21 contrast to the ESA's low bar of "may affect" that cannot allow *any* chance of impacts on  
 22 protected species without consultation. A.9 at 33–34; 7 U.S.C. § 136(bb); *Wash. Toxics*  
 23 *Coal. v. U.S. Dep't of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Serv.*, 457 F. Supp. 2d 1158, 1184 (W.D. Wash.  
 24 2006) ("The risk framework of FIFRA (no unreasonable adverse effects) does not equate to  
 25 the survival and recovery framework of the ESA.").

26 Whatever its merit in the FIFRA context, in the ESA context, this approach is "not  
 27 scientifically defensible" for judging risks to endangered species from pesticides, as no less a  
 28

1 source than the expert National Academy of Sciences (NAS) told EPA in a sharply critical  
 2 2013 report.<sup>17</sup> SOF ¶ 104; *Enlist*, 966 F.3d at 925; *id.* at 932–33 (Watford, J., dissenting).  
 3 In *Enlist*, faced with the identical approach, the majority gave it a one-time pass for that  
 4 registration, but cautioned it did not expect use of the FIFRA methodology “to reoccur  
 5 given EPA’s commitment to gather the data necessary to implement NAS’s new  
 6 methodology going forward.” *Id.* at 926. That was *prior* to the 2020 Decision and years  
 7 before the 2022-23 Decisions. It has been *a decade* since NAS leveled its critique, and EPA  
 8 had no deadline to register dicamba again four months after the Ninth Circuit vacated it.  
 9 *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1145. EPA cannot legally persist in applying an unsound method, and  
 10 its reliance on it here once again, despite the Ninth Circuit’s admonition, was arbitrary and  
 11 capricious.

12 Further, after the 2017 *Enlist* registration, EPA has *not* relied solely on the FIFRA  
 13 RQ/LOC to eliminate species for ESA “may affect” determinations and instead *has*  
 14 initiated consultation based on newer methodologies resulting in “may affect”  
 15 determinations for many pesticides, including chlorpyrifos (2018),<sup>18</sup> diazinon (2018),  
 16 malathion (2018), carbaryl (2021), methomyl (2021), atrazine (2021) and glyphosate  
 17 (2021). *See* ADD47-50 (Donley Decl. ¶¶ 7–14); SOF ¶ 105. The results are strikingly  
 18 different. EPA determined there were *zero* “no effect” determinations for the pesticide  
 19 glyphosate. ADD50 (Donley Decl. ¶ 13). Thus, EPA has not only had the time to  
 20

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21 <sup>17</sup> National Research Council, Nat’l Academies, *Assessing Risks to Endangered and Threatened*  
 22 *Species From Pesticides* (2013), [https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/18344/assessing-](https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/18344/assessing-risks-to-endangered-and-threatened-species-from-pesticides)  
 23 [risks-to-endangered-and-threatened-species-from-pesticides](https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/18344/assessing-risks-to-endangered-and-threatened-species-from-pesticides).

24 <sup>18</sup> *See* Donley Decl., Ex. 1; *see also* EPA, *Biological Evaluation Chapters for Chlorpyrifos ESA*  
 25 *Assessment*, [https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/biological-evaluation-chapters-](https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/biological-evaluation-chapters-chlorpyrifos-esa-assessment)  
 26 [chlorpyrifos-esa-assessment](https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/biological-evaluation-chapters-chlorpyrifos-esa-assessment) (last visited Apr. 11, 2023) (EPA based its Biological Evaluation  
 27 on methods developed with FWS and NMFS “in response to the National Academy of  
 28 Science report.”).

1 implement better ESA assessment methods; it has *already done so repeatedly*; the scientific  
 2 data to do so is necessarily available. As such, EPA's failure also violates the ESA's mandate  
 3 that every agency "shall" use the "best scientific and commercial data available." 16 U.S.C.  
 4 § 1536(a)(2); 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(8).

5 Finally, applying the correct "may affect" standard is crucial to the survival of species  
 6 on the brink of extinction, as compared to effects on non-listed species. 16 U.S.C. §  
 7 1532(6) ("endangered" species are "in danger of extinction"); *id.* § 1532(20) ("threatened"  
 8 species are likely to become endangered). Yet in another fatal flaw, EPA used the *exact same*  
 9 LOC for both listed and non-listed plants.<sup>19</sup> SOF ¶ 103. In other words, EPA applied the  
 10 same LOC to soybeans as it does to endangered plants. For example, FWS listed the  
 11 whorled sunflower (*Helianthus verticillatus*) as endangered due to threats to its survival that  
 12 include agricultural "chemical vegetation management" (herbicides) and "limited  
 13 distribution and small population sizes." SOF ¶ 103. EPA's reliance on the outdated and  
 14 flawed RQ/LOC "could underestimate risk and EPA would never know it." *Enlist*, 966  
 15 F.3d at 932–33 (Watford, J., dissenting). Not only did EPA unlawfully fail to consult with  
 16 the wildlife agencies, it could be jeopardizing the continued existence of species like the  
 17 sunflower in violation of its substantive ESA duty to avoid this. 50 C.F.R. § 402.02  
 18 (defining "jeopardize").

#### 19 B. EPA's "Action Area" Is Unsupported

20 The ESA "action area" is broadly defined as "all areas to be affected directly or  
 21 indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action."  
 22 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. The potential "effects" an agency must consider are similarly broad,  
 23 including both the "direct" and "indirect" effects of the action. *Id.*

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24  
 25 <sup>19</sup> To determine acute effects to animals, EPA used the "lethality-based" endpoint of the  
 26 median lethal dose or concentration (LD50 or LC50), which is the amount of a chemical  
 27 that kills 50% of the exposed animals. A.9 at 30.

*Vaper Drift Buffer Belied by the Evidence:* Here, the most significant flaw is EPA's continued reliance on a 57-foot buffer to assume any volatility effects are limited to the sprayed field, despite contrary evidence. Faced with evidence of off-field damage, *supra* at 18, in the 2018 registration, EPA added a 57-foot buffer only in certain counties where listed plant species survive near cotton and soybean fields. A.4 at 24. The buffer's size contradicted EPA scientists' 2018 recommendation to expand the action area to 443 feet (135 meters) after a study revealed injury to dicamba-sensitive soybeans 135 meters away. M.37o at 72–74. EPA has now admitted these studies were ignored due to improper political influence, which “compromised the integrity of [EPA's] science.” See SOF ¶¶ 62–66. Nonetheless, EPA *again* relied on the same unsound ESA buffer distance in the 2020 Decision, even though damage continued much farther off field in 2019 and 2020 with the buffer in place. See *supra* at 18.

In 2021, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], see SOF ¶¶ 137–140, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] U.1 at 5.<sup>21</sup> Because of this, EPA admitted that it is “no longer certain whether over-the-top dicamba can be used in a manner that is protective of listed endangered species, critical habitats and non-target plants.” Ex-R.11 at 2; Ex-R.8 at 3.

Even Bayer urged EPA to enact ESA protections prior to the 2022 season. Ex-R.12 at 3. Yet, in its 2022 Decision, EPA re-affirmed use of the 57-foot buffer by only amending the registration for Minnesota and Iowa, and then only to address cut-off dates, not the 57-foot ESA buffer. “[M]itigation measures that merely ‘reduce,’ but cannot scientifically

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<sup>20</sup> [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] U.1 at 5.

<sup>21</sup> Harm to individual species is considered “take.” 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. It is unlawful for any person to take any species, unless such “incidental” take is allowed by the expert agency biological opinion, upon completion of consultation. 16 U.S.C. § 1538(a)(1)(B); 16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(4).

1 ‘eliminate’ an ‘effect’ probably compel a ‘may affect’ finding.” *Enlist*, 966 F.3d at 924.  
 2 EPA’s decision not to alter its buffer in the 2022 Decision—in the face of the damning  
 3 evidence of its failure—was arbitrary and capricious and contrary to law.

4 *Ignored Evidence for Larger Drift Buffer:* An additional scientific flaw is EPA’s reliance  
 5 on a threshold of 10% visual sign of injury (VSI) as a threshold to require the 310-foot drift  
 6 buffer to limit the action area and arrive at its “no effect” conclusions. A.9 at 51.

7 [REDACTED]  
 8 [REDACTED]  
 9 [REDACTED]  
 10 E.9 at 1–2; E.15 at 3–4 [REDACTED]  
 11 [REDACTED]  
 12 [REDACTED] E.16 at 3  
 13 (emphasis added); E.13 at 2–3 [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]  
 14 [REDACTED] E.9 at 3, 5; E.10 at 2.

15 Within a few weeks, something changed: [REDACTED]  
 16 [REDACTED]  
 17 [REDACTED] E.2 at 1. [REDACTED]  
 18 [REDACTED] E.1 at 1. [REDACTED]  
 19 [REDACTED] This appears to  
 20 be another political taint that permeated the 2020 Decision.

21 *Indirect Effects:* Finally, in setting the action area, EPA failed to include the 310- and  
 22 57-foot ESA buffers in counties with species that rely on plants (obligate relationship). A.9  
 23 at 72. For example, the Poweshiek skipperling requires grasses and flowering plants, such  
 24 as non-listed black-eyed Susan and purple coneflower. 17 C.F.R. § 17.95(i) (insects).<sup>22</sup> The  
 25 skipperling has critical habitat in eleven counties where EPA does not require any ESA

26 <sup>22</sup> Available at [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-17/subpart-I/section-17.95)  
 27 [17/subpart-I/section-17.95](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-17/subpart-I/section-17.95) (searchable by species name).



1 buffers. Donley Decl. ¶ 15. Likewise, the Dakota skipper requires grasses and flowering  
 2 plants within small, scattered critical habitat units. 17 C.F.R. § 17.95(i). The skipper has  
 3 critical habitat in eight countries where EPA does not require any ESA buffers. Donley  
 4 Decl. ¶ 15. EPA's failure to determine effects on species that rely on plants is arbitrary and  
 5 not in accordance with the ESA.

6 *Enlist Duo*: The arbitrary dicamba action area is legally and factually distinct from  
 7 *Enlist*. Compare 966 F.3d at 928. Here, Plaintiffs point to EPA scientists and studies that  
 8 undermine EPA's politically tainted decision to limit the ESA volatility buffer to 57 feet  
 9 and the drift buffer to 310 feet. See *supra*. Here, the damage reported every year since EPA  
 10 approved these new dicamba uses very much shows that "mitigation measures are not  
 11 working." *Id.* at 928; *Sierra Club v. Marsh*, 816 F.2d 1376, 1386–89 (9th Cir. 1987)  
 12 (consultation should occur if mitigation ineffective), *abrogated on other grounds as recognized*  
 13 *in Cottonwood Env't Law Ctr.*, 789 F.3d at 1075. And here, the mitigation measures are not  
 14 "reasonably certain to occur" due to their complexity on the labels, see *supra* at 10,  
 15 contributing to the fact that damage from dicamba volatility has "materialized in the real  
 16 world." *Enlist*, 966 F.3d at 921.

#### 17 C. EPA Violated the ESA's Critical Habitat Mandates

18 Critical habitat is "critical" because it is imperative to allow species to recover so  
 19 that they no longer need ESA protection.<sup>23</sup> EPA's conclusion that there would be no effect  
 20 (destruction or adverse modification) of critical habitat is likewise arbitrary. Rather than  
 21

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22 <sup>23</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 402.02 (definition); 16 U.S.C. § 1532(5)(A) ("critical habitat" contains the  
 23 "physical or biological features ... essential to the conservation of the species" and "which  
 24 may require special management considerations or protection"); *id.* § 1532(3)  
 25 ("conservation" means using all methods to bring species to the point that they no longer  
 26 need protection under the ESA); 50 C.F.R. § 402.02 (adverse modification is "a direct or  
 27 indirect alteration that appreciably diminishes the value of critical habitat as a whole for  
 28 the conservation of a listed species").



1 evaluating whether the 2020 Decision may affect critical habitat that overlaps with dicamba  
2 uses, EPA limited its analysis to just the sprayed field, based on its assumption that  
3 dicamba will not drift off it: an assumption that the Record conclusively shows is faulty.  
4 EPA then added more hurdles—that the species itself must use the agricultural field and  
5 have a “direct toxic effect concern,” and the action area must include dicamba effects on  
6 plants that are characteristic of the critical habitat. A.9 at 111. EPA’s miserly framework  
7 does not satisfy its robust ESA duty to insure no destruction or adverse modification of  
8 critical habitats in the path of dicamba drifting and volatilizing miles from the fields. 16  
9 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2). EPA’s arbitrary approach resulted in a “no effect” determination for  
10 hundreds of critical habitats overlapping with the approved dicamba uses.

11       Using these tactics, EPA concluded that only critical habitat for the whooping crane  
12 met its criteria. A.9 at 111. However, even there EPA concluded that whooping crane  
13 critical habitat would not be modified based on residues of dicamba that “are not  
14 reasonably expected to be at a level raising concern for direct effects to the whooping  
15 crane.” *Id.* But ensuring against destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat is a  
16 *separate* inquiry from EPA’s duty to ensure against jeopardy. *Gifford Pinchot Task Force v.*  
17 *Fish & Wildlife Servs.*, 378 F.3d 1059, 1069–70 (9th Cir. 2004) (to meet ESA critical habitat  
18 mandates, agencies must ensure not only species survival but recovery).

19       The “no effect” determination for dicamba, which is known to volatilize and drift, is  
20 again factually distinguishable from *Enlist*. The *Enlist* majority again relied on the lack of  
21 evidence of damage from Enlist drift or volatilization off fields, affirming appropriateness  
22 of limiting EPA’s critical habitat assessment to the fields themselves and species whose  
23 critical habitat contained Primary Constituent Elements (PCEs) related to agriculture on  
24 those fields. *Enlist*, 966 F.3d at 928–29; *id.* at 922–23 (explaining critical habitat and  
25 PCEs). But, for dicamba, damage far off the fields has been reported *every year* since 2016  
26 “in the real world,” and EPA’s inadequate ESA buffers are not supported by science in the  
27 Record.

1 The *Enlist* majority also pointed to the whooping crane and Virginia bat as species  
 2 with critical habitat designations without PCEs.<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 929 (citing 50 C.F.R. § 17.95(a)  
 3 (mammals) and *id.* § 17.95(b) (birds)). But other species' critical habitats that overlap with  
 4 cotton and/or soy, *see* Bradley Decl. & Clauser Decl., *do* have PCEs within harm's way  
 5 from dicamba drift. For example, the Southwestern willow flycatcher and yellow-billed  
 6 cuckoo PCEs in their critical habitats include vegetation required for nesting and breeding  
 7 (trees and shrubs) and low vegetation habitat for insects and small vertebrates on which the  
 8 birds feed. 50 C.F.R. § 17.95(b); Suckling Decl. ¶¶ 8, 11. Likewise, the Chiricahua leopard  
 9 frog critical habitat PCEs require vegetation as habitat for its food and to provide cover  
 10 from predators. 50 § C.F.R. 17.95(d) (amphibians); Suckling Decl. ¶ 16. These species'  
 11 critical habitats are unlawfully at risk from dicamba drift far off fields.

## 12 VI. EPA Violated the Procedural Mandates of FIFRA and the APA.

13 EPA also made a series of procedural violations. First, EPA flouted its own  
 14 regulations requiring a different process, including notice-and-comment, because it  
 15 cancelled the prior dicamba registration. Second, EPA violated its regulations for its failure  
 16 to have notice-and-comment in re-registering the new over-the-top dicamba uses. And  
 17 finally, EPA violated the APA by amending its regulations under FIFRA 24(c) without  
 18 notice-and-comment.

### 19 A. EPA Violated FIFRA's Post-Cancellation Regulations

20 After the Ninth Circuit vacated the 2018 registration, EPA issued a "final  
 21 cancellation order."<sup>25</sup> Unlike a new or renewed pesticide, if a registration is canceled,  
 22 FIFRA regulations require EPA to go through a special process to "un-cancel" it, to explain

23 \_\_\_\_\_  
 24 <sup>24</sup> Even if not explicitly set forth in the critical habitat designation, by definition,  
 25 designated critical habitat contains the "physical or biological features' essential to  
 conservation of the species ... ." 16 U.S.C. § 1532(5); 16 U.S.C. § 1533(a)(3).

26 <sup>25</sup> Stevenson Decl., Ex. J (EPA, *Final Cancellation of Three Dicamba Products* (June 8, 2020),  
 27 [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/documents/final\\_cancellation\\_order\\_for\\_three\\_dicamba\\_products.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/documents/final_cancellation_order_for_three_dicamba_products.pdf)).

1 what has so substantially changed. *Compare* 40 C.F.R. §152.100(a) (registration process for  
2 all pesticides “except” those that were the “subject of a previous Agency cancellation or  
3 suspension notice”) *with id.* § 152.100(b) (EPA must use “subpart D of part 164” when  
4 evaluating “registration of a pesticide involving use of the pesticide in a manner that is  
5 prohibited by a suspension or cancellation order”). Subpart D requires EPA to “determine  
6 whether reconsideration of the Administrator’s prior cancellation or suspension order is  
7 warranted.” *Id.* § 164.131(a). Among other things, EPA must assess whether there is  
8 “substantial new evidence” affecting the prior cancellation decision. *Id.* If EPA finds  
9 reconsideration is warranted, EPA must publish notice in the Federal Register and hold a  
10 “public hearing” to decide the matter. *Id.* § 164.131(c). (This means hold notice-and-  
11 comment: the courts have equated “public hearing” in FIFRA with notice-and-comment,  
12 including in cancellation proceedings). *See United Farm Workers of Am., AFL-CIO v. EPA*,  
13 592 F.3d 1080, 1083 (9th Cir. 2010); *Nw. Food Processors v. Reilly*, 886 F.2d 1075, 1077 (9th  
14 Cir. 1989).

15        Nevertheless, in October 2020 EPA again re-registered dicamba products for over-  
16 the-top use, proceeding as if *the agency had never issued a cancellation order*. The agency made  
17 zero effort to comply with the procedures of 40 C.F.R. Part 164 and the “substantial new  
18 evidence” findings required of the agency to reverse its previous cancellation order. *See id.* §  
19 164.131(a). Had EPA followed the correct procedures, it would have had to consider  
20 whether the registrants had presented substantial evidence that materially altered the prior  
21 cancellation order; at a minimum, EPA had to justify that re-registration was warranted.  
22 Instead, EPA re-registered without evaluating whether the reconsideration was warranted,  
23 rendering its decision arbitrary and capricious and contrary to procedures required by law.

24 B. EPA Violated FIFRA’s “New Use” Notice-and-Comment Requirements

25        In *Center for Food Safety v. Regan*, 56 F.4th 648 (9th Cir. 2022), the Ninth Circuit  
26 confirmed that EPA violates FIFRA if it fails to provide notice-and-comment before *re-*  
27

1 approving the same pesticide uses that the court *previously vacated*. *Id.* at 661 (“FIFRA  
 2 requires EPA to ‘promptly’ publish in the Federal Register ‘a notice of each application for  
 3 any pesticide if it contains any new active ingredient or if it would entail a changed use  
 4 pattern.’”) (quoting 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(4)). EPA made the same violation here.

5 EPA received new applications for the three dicamba pesticides in July 2020, B.1  
 6 (Xtendimax); C.6 (Engenia); D.4 (Tavium), and had to hold notice-and-comment if they  
 7 posed a “changed use pattern.” FIFRA does not define “changed use pattern,” but its  
 8 regulations explain it is “a new use,” 40 C.F.R. § 152.102, which is defined in relevant part  
 9 as “(2) any ... use pattern, if no product containing the active ingredient is currently  
 10 registered for that use pattern, or (3) [a]ny *additional use pattern that would result in a*  
 11 *significant increase in the level of exposure ... to the active ingredient of man or other*  
 12 *organisms.*” 40 C.F.R. § 152.3 (emphases added). Prior to the 2016 registration, never  
 13 before had dicamba been sprayed over-the-top of genetically engineered crops resistant to  
 14 it; EPA’s approval was undeniably (and very controversially) a “changed use patten” for  
 15 dicamba. EPA acknowledged this and held notice-and-comment. SOF ¶¶ 5, 17, 65; *NFFC*,  
 16 960 F.3d at 1132.

17 This time, in its rush to re-approve dicamba, EPA bypassed notice-and-comment  
 18 despite the obvious controversy of dicamba’s continued over-the-top use. EPA claims that  
 19 notice-and-comment was not required because, even though the prior uses were vacated,  
 20 there was still one such later approved “me too” over-the-top dicamba product active.<sup>26</sup> A.4  
 21 at 3 n.1, n.2. EPA’s reliance is incorrect as a matter of law and contradicted by the Record.

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 23  
 24 <sup>26</sup> EPA’s 2018 Decision and the scope of the Ninth Circuit’s review included the over-the-  
 25 top dicamba use approval and three dicamba products, two of which—XtendiMax and  
 26 Engenia—were renewed and re-approved in EPA’s 2020 Decision. Another product,  
 27 Tavium, was registered in April 2019, five months after EPA had issued the October 2018  
 28 decision, and was not at issue in the case.

1        First, even though the Ninth Circuit did not directly reach the later “me too”  
 2 product registration, the court vacated as unlawful the underlying use registration on  
 3 which it was based: EPA had conditionally registered Tavium under “FIFRA section  
 4 3(c)(7)(A),”<sup>27</sup> 7 U.S.C. § 136a(c)(7)(A), which authorizes registration of pesticide uses  
 5 “identical or substantially similar to any currently registered pesticide and use thereof”  
 6 under a fast-track process (known as “me too” registrations) where EPA does not conduct  
 7 new analyses, instead relying on the data and analyses for the prior registration.<sup>28</sup> *Id.* It  
 8 makes no sense that over-the-top spraying of Tavium would remain legal when the Ninth  
 9 Circuit struck down the *underlying* use registration (and identical products) upon which it  
 10 was based.

11        Second, EPA’s reliance is belied by the definition of “new use,” which includes not  
 12 just “any ... use pattern, if no product containing the active ingredient is currently  
 13 registered for that use pattern,” but also “[a]ny additional use pattern that would result in a  
 14 *significant increase in the level of exposure ... to the active ingredient of man or other*  
 15 *organisms.*” 40 C.F.R. § 152.3 (emphasis added). For the 2020 Decision, the *prior* Tavium  
 16 registration would have expired in December 2020. A.4 at 3 n.1.<sup>29</sup> The current/active  
 17 Tavium application specifically *extended* over-the-top Tavium use beyond 2020: an  
 18 “additional use” that significantly increased the level of exposure to dicamba. *See* SOF ¶ 59.

19        <sup>27</sup> EPA, *Notice of Pesticide Registration: A21472 PLUS VAPORGRIP TECHNOLOGY* (Apr. 5,  
 20 2019), [https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem\\_search/pppls/000100-01623-20190405.pdf](https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem_search/pppls/000100-01623-20190405.pdf).

21        <sup>28</sup> EPA, *Identical/Substantially Similar (Formerly “Me-Too”) Product*,  
 22 [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/pesticide-registration-manual-chapter-2-](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/pesticide-registration-manual-chapter-2-registering-pesticide-product#meetoo)  
 23 [registering-pesticide-product#meetoo](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/pesticide-registration-manual-chapter-2-registering-pesticide-product#meetoo) (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

24        <sup>29</sup> EPA itself previously recognized over-the-top dicamba spraying as a “new use.” Back in  
 25 2018, EPA explained that because the “[dicamba] use will expire before the end of 2018  
 26 unless these amendment requests are granted ... EPA believes it appropriate to consider the  
 27 extension of these uses *as a ‘new use’...*” M.168 at 17 (emphasis added). Nothing changed  
 28 in 2020, except this time, EPA had to justify its use extension after the Ninth Circuit’s  
 ruling, so EPA conveniently decided not to refer to the 2020 Decision as a new use  
 approval to avoid going back directly before the same Ninth Circuit panel.

1 The Ninth Circuit squarely rejected EPA’s similar reliance on previous and ongoing uses of  
 2 the pesticide to avoid its notice duties. *Regan*, 56 F.4th at 662 (rejecting EPA’s claim that  
 3 the uses were not new because they had been previously registered and emphasizing that  
 4 “EPA documents repeatedly refer[red] to the 2019 amendment[] as ‘new uses’”).<sup>30</sup> The  
 5 2020 Decision was for “changed use” within the definition of that term, requiring EPA to  
 6 hold notice-and-comment under FIFRA.

7 C. The APA Required Notice-and-Comment for the FIFRA 24(c) Rulemaking

8 Nor did EPA hold notice-and-comment on its sweeping 24(c) rule change for not  
 9 just dicamba but all pesticides. For decades, FIFRA 24(c) provided a critical tool for states  
 10 to install their own “special local needs labels” to address agricultural, environmental, or  
 11 public health needs. This was particularly important for mitigating dicamba damage: states  
 12 relied on 24(c) to step into the breach left by EPA and address the rampant drift. SOF ¶  
 13 96. But EPA reversed this decades-old policy in its 2020 Decision, for the first time  
 14 prohibiting states from “impos[ing] further restrictions on the dicamba products, or any  
 15 other federally registered pesticides” through 24(c), in a footnote no less. A.4 at 20 n.19.  
 16 That decision violated the APA for three reasons.

17 First, the 24(c) change is a legislative rule: an agency decision that “create[s] rights,  
 18 impose[s] obligations, or effect[s] a change in existing law pursuant to authority delegated  
 19 by Congress.” *Hemp Indus. Ass’n*, 333 F.3d at 1088; *Ctr. for Env’t Health v. Vilsack*, 2016 WL  
 20 3383954, \*4 (N.D. Cal. 2016) (applying and quoting). EPA did not just one but *all* of  
 21 these: it amended a longstanding interpretation allowing states to restrict pesticide uses  
 22 through 24(c);<sup>31</sup> imposed an obligation for states to undergo the time-intensive 24(a)

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24 <sup>30</sup> See also Ex.R-22 at 48 (EPA stating that it “expects to announce for public comment its  
 25 decisions on whether to register/renew the products by the end of October.”).

26 <sup>31</sup> Stevenson Decl., Ex. B at 10 (“[S]tates may issue §24(c) registrations to implement more  
 27 restrictive labeling under certain circumstances.”); *id.* at 2 (explaining the prior

1 process, resulting in many states' inability to adapt effectively; and altered rights for  
 2 farmers, conservationists, and state regulators that relied on the flexible 24(c) process for  
 3 protection. SOF ¶¶ 96–99.

4 Second, none of the rulemaking exceptions apply here. *Ctr. for Env't Health*, 2016  
 5 WL 33833954, at \*4 (exceptions must be “narrowly construed and only reluctantly  
 6 countenanced.”). The 24(c) rule change is not an interpretive rule, 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(A),  
 7 which do “not itself purport to impose new obligations or prohibitions or requirements on  
 8 regulated parties.” *Nat'l Min. Ass'n v. McCarthy*, 758 F.3d 243, 251 (D.C. Cir. 2014)  
 9 (emphasis added); *Kollasoft Inc. v. Cuccinelli*, 2020 WL 263618, at \*6 (D. Ariz. Jan. 17,  
 10 2020) (interpretive rules “merely explain, but do not add to, the substantive law that  
 11 already exists.”). Rather, it creates a “strict and specific set of obligations,” binding states to  
 12 the new formal legislative process and prohibiting restrictions under 24(c). *Elec. Priv. Info.*  
 13 *Ctr. v. U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 653 F.3d 1, 7 (D.D.C. 2011) (finding the decision to  
 14 screen airline passengers with advanced imaging technology legislative because it  
 15 “substantially change[d] the experience of airline passengers and [was] therefore not merely  
 16 ‘interpretative’ either of the statute directing the TSA to detect weapons likely to be used  
 17 by terrorists or of the general regulation requiring that passengers comply with all TSA  
 18 screening procedures.”).

19 Nor is the 24(c) rule change a “general statement of policy,” 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(A), a  
 20 directive that cannot “establish a ‘binding norm,’ ... but must instead leave [agency] officials  
 21 ‘free to consider the individual facts in the various cases that arise.’” *Mada-Luna v.*  
 22 *Fitzpatrick*, 813 F.2d 1006, 1014 (9th Cir. 1987). The registration decision absolutely  
 23 establishes a “binding norm”: it flatly prohibits states from restricting uses under 24(c). A.4  
 24 at 20 n.19. Additionally, the rule change is not a “procedural,” internal agency

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26 interpretation culminates the efforts of the 1992 24(c) Center for Excellence); *NFFC*, 960  
 27 F.3d at 1128–29 (describing 24(c) rules in Minnesota and Arkansas).



“housekeeping” rule governing “organization, procedure, and practice,” *Chrysler Corp. v. Brown*, 441 U.S. 281, 283 (1979); 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(A), because here, “the agency action trenches on substantial private rights and interests.” *Batterton v. Marshall*, 648 F.2d 694, 708 (D.C. Cir. 1980). *See supra*.

And third, EPA cannot demonstrate that “good cause” supported issuing the 24(c) rule change—for all pesticides, in a surprise, buried footnote—without going through notice-and-comment. 5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(B). This standard imposes a “high bar,” applying “only in those narrow circumstances in which ‘delay would do real harm.’” *United States v. Valverde*, 628 F.3d 1159, 1164–65 (9th Cir. 2010). EPA knew how critical 24(c) was, knew it was controversially contemplating a major rule change requiring notice-and-comment. In fact, EPA repeatedly reassured stakeholders it would hold notice-and-comment, and even prepared two draft 2019 Notices for public comment but never issued them. SOF ¶ 98 This was rulemaking, plain and simple, and it required notice-and-comment.

## REMEDY

The Court should declare that EPA has violated FIFRA, the ESA, and the APA and set aside, or vacate, the Decision.

Under the APA, a reviewing court “shall ... hold unlawful and set aside agency action, findings, and conclusions found to be ... arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(2) (emphasis added).<sup>32</sup> As such, vacatur is the default, presumptive remedy for invalid agency action. *All. for the Wild Rockies v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 907 F.3d 1105, 1121–22 (9th Cir. 2018) (“Presumption of vacatur” unless *defendants* meet burden showing otherwise); *NRDC*, 38 F.4th at 51 (“[v]acatur is the traditional remedy for erroneous administrative decisions.”). Just as in the prior *dicamba* case, *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1144–45 (vacating registration), this default goes for unlawful pesticide registrations. *E.g.*, *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532–33 (vacating sulfoxaflor registration);

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<sup>32</sup> FIFRA includes similar “set aside” language. 7 U.S.C. § 136n(b).



1 NRDC, 38 F.4th at 52 (vacating glyphosate registration); *Farmworker Ass’n of Fla. v. EPA*,  
 2 2021 U.S. App. LEXIS 16882 (D.C. Cir. June 7, 2021) (vacating aldicarb registration);  
 3 *NRDC v. EPA*, 676 F. Supp. 2d 307, 311–17 (S.D.N.Y. 2009) (vacating spirotetramat  
 4 registration).

5 As such, the Ninth Circuit authorizes remand without vacatur only in “limited  
 6 circumstances,” *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532; *Ctr. for Food Safety*, 56 F. 4th at 668 (“unique  
 7 facts”), and only when “equity demands” that result, *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532 (quoting  
 8 *Idaho Farm Bureau Fed’n v. Babbitt*, 58 F.3d 1392, 1405 (9th Cir. 1995)) (emphasis added).

9 To determine if these “rare” circumstances are present, courts “weigh the  
 10 seriousness of the agency’s errors against the disruptive consequences of an interim change  
 11 that may itself be changed.” *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1144 (quoting *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532).  
 12 Within this framework, in environmental cases courts consider “the extent to which either  
 13 vacating or leaving the decision in place would risk environmental harm.” *NRDC*, 38 F.4th  
 14 at 51–52. Finally, courts have also considered whether an agency “could adopt the same  
 15 rule on remand,” or, on the other hand, whether there are “fundamental flaws” in the  
 16 decision that make it “unlikely the same rule would be adopted on remand.” *Id.*; see also  
 17 *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1144–45.

18 *Seriousness of Violations:* First, the seriousness of the agency’s violations weighs  
 19 heavily in favor of vacatur. The very same types of FIFRA violations the Ninth Circuit held  
 20 in the prior dicamba litigation—understating some risks, failing to assess other costs—were  
 21 plenty serious enough to vacate then, and they are again. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1125, 1145.  
 22 Despite rushed efforts to paper over them, EPA again understated, failed to acknowledge,  
 23 and/or failed to assess important costs and risks. See *supra* Section II. EPA also made new  
 24 errors, failing to assess other ecological risks, and failing to meet the unconditional  
 25 registration requirements. *Supra* Sections III & IV. And, just as in 2018, when EPA  
 26 continued the registration in the face of the damaging 2017 summer evidence, in 2021  
 27 EPA had one better still: its own confirmatory Report, compiling that damage while openly  
 28

1 questioning whether the registration met the required ESA and FIFRA mandates. But in  
2 EPA's 2022-23 amendments, the agency *still* failed to meaningfully address the damage.

3 Similarly, a violation of Section 7 is a violation of the "heart" of the ESA's scheme,  
4 *Kraayenbrink*, 632 F.3d at 495, warranting vacatur. E.g., *Nat'l Parks Conservation Ass'n v.*  
5 *Jewell*, 62 F. Supp. 3d 7, 20–22 (D. D.C. 2014) (holding a failure to consult violation to be  
6 a serious error for purposes of vacatur and vacating the agency action); *Defs. of Wildlife v.*  
7 *EPA*, 420 F.3d 946, 978 (9th Cir. 2005) ("Typically, when an agency violates the  
8 Administrative Procedure Act and the Endangered Species Act, we vacate the agency's  
9 action and remand to the agency to act in compliance with its statutory obligations."), *rev'd*  
10 *and remanded sub nom. Nat'l Ass'n of Home Builders v. Defs. of Wildlife*, 551 U.S. 644 (2007).

11 ESA violations risk the "incalculable" loss of endangered species, *Hill*, 437 U.S. at  
12 187, and the consultation process EPA violated is how agencies carry out the ESA's  
13 substantive mandate to protect endangered species from jeopardy. 50 C.F.R. §§ 402.12–  
14 402.16; *Thomas*, 753 F.2d at 764 ("[T]he strict substantive provisions of the ESA justify  
15 more stringent enforcement of its procedural requirements, because the procedural  
16 requirements are designed to ensure compliance with the substantive provisions.")  
17 (emphasis in original), *abrogated on other grounds by Cottonwood Env't Law Ctr.*, 789 F.3d at  
18 1075.

19 Finally, as to the *thrice* ways EPA unlawfully failed to hold public notice-and-  
20 comment procedures, such procedural violations raise significant doubts about the  
21 correctness of EPA's decision and thus even a *single* such violation qualifies as a  
22 "fundamental flaw" that "almost always requires vacatur." *Allina Health Servs. v. Sebelius*,  
23 746 F.3d 1102, 1110 (D.C. Cir. 2014); *NRDC v. Wheeler*, 955 F.3d 68, 85 (D.C. Cir. 2020)  
24 (vacating and explaining notice-and-comment violation is a "fundamental flaw that  
25 normally requires vacatur"); *AFL-CIO v. Chao*, 496 F.Supp.2d 76, 90–91 (D.D.C. 2007)  
26 (compiling cases) (failure to comply with notice-and-comment requirements is  
27 "unquestionably a 'serious' deficiency" for purposes of vacatur); *NRDC*, 676 F. Supp.2d at  
28

312–17 (vacating pesticide for failure to hold FIFRA notice-and-comment).

*Consequences of Vacatur*: Second, this is not one of those “limited” or “unique” instances, *see supra*, where the Court should remand without vacatur.<sup>33</sup> Whatever alleged “disruptive” consequences Intervenor spin, the Ninth Circuit *already rejected* those *same* arguments just a few years ago, *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1144–45, and the drastic consequences they claimed did not occur.

As to any reliance on the registration and whether the “*same* rule would be adopted on remand,” *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532 (emphasis added), the Ninth Circuit held it was “*exceedingly unlikely*” EPA could lawfully re-approve the same or substantially similar registration. *NFFC*, 960 F.3d at 1145 (emphasis added). The same is true again: any future EPA dicamba decision will differ procedurally and substantively because EPA will need to incorporate any number of changes including the substantive results of ESA consultation, FIFRA notice-and-comment, and the lawful re-assessment of risks and costs. Even without vacatur, any reliance on past EPA dicamba approvals is misplaced, as the parameters have shifted nearly every year. Under vacatur law, when “a different result *may* be reached” after remand, it undermines any “disruptive consequences of an interim change that may itself be changed” and supports vacatur. *Id.* (emphasis added). That is the case here.

Finally, the “consequences” inquiry in environmental cases should be guided towards the result that is the most environmentally protective. *All. for the Wild Rockies*, 907 F.3d at 1122 (vacatur “appropriate when leaving in place an agency action risks more environmental harm than vacating it”); *Pollinator*, 806 F.3d at 532 (“given the precariousness of bee populations, leaving EPA’s registration of sulfoxaflor in place risks more potential environmental harm than vacating it.”). And here the answer to that inquiry is plain: vacate.

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<sup>33</sup> It should *not*, but if it does remand without vacatur, the Court should require compliance by a court-ordered deadline of at most 180 days. *Ctr. for Food Safety*, 2022 WL 17826872, \*17 (requiring same).

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs ask that the Court **grant** their Motion for Summary Judgment and **vacate** the 2020 Decision, as amended in 2022 and 2023.

Respectfully submitted this 12th day of April, 2023.

/s/ George A. Kimbrell

George A. Kimbrell (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
Sylvia Shih-Yau Wu (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
Meredith Stevenson (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
Center for Food Safety  
303 Sacramento Street, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
T: (415) 826-2770 / F: (415) 826-0507  
Emails: gkimbrell@centerforfoodsafety.org  
swu@centerforfoodsafety.org  
mstevenson@centerforfoodsafety.org

Stephanie M. Parent (*Pro Hac Vice*)  
Center for Biological Diversity  
PO Box 11374  
Portland, OR 97211  
T: (971) 717-6404  
Email: sparent@biologicaldiversity.org