



Top Stories

3/17/2016—NCSL sent a [letter](#) to Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.) commending him for introducing a suite of legislation that addresses the country’s increasing drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs. In particular, NCSL was pleased to see the Senator focus on the needs of the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.

3/10/2016—President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau jointly [committed](#) to new actions to reduce methane pollution from existing oil and gas sources, during the Prime Minister’s state visit to the U.S. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin the process of developing new regulations by first requiring oil and gas companies to provide information to assist in how to reduce methane.

2/29/2016—The U.S. Supreme Court [refused](#) to hear an appeal of a lower court’s decision that upheld EPA’s pollution limits for the Chesapeake Bay. The American Farm Bureau, the organization that submitted the appeal, concluded that the EPA had violated the Clean Water Act in deciding water limits rather than allowing the states to do so.

From the Administration

3/22/2016—The White House held a day-long [Water Summit](#), which brought together leaders in the private sector, government and academia to discuss new approaches to

dealing with drought, flooding and water quality issues. According to the White House, private companies have pledged to invest \$1 billion in research and development and \$4 billion into infrastructures in the next decade.

3/22/2016—The U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) [released](#) a comprehensive assessment on how climate change will affect

water supplies across the United States. The report predicts generally drier conditions across the southwest and south central U.S. and an increase in precipitation in the northwest and north central parts of the country over the next few decades. The report also predicts a 7 to 27 percent decrease in water flows

during spring and summer months in the Colorado, Rio Grande and San Joaquin river basins.

3/22/2016—The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) [announced](#) it is evaluating two species of wild bumblebees for possible protection under the Endangered Species Act. FWS is asking for scientific data on the species through May 16.

3/22/2016—EPA’s Office of Inspector General released a [report](#) which found that the agency and state regulators have not done enough to ensure that small community water systems are properly addressing serious health violations in their drinking water. As a result, more than three quarters of the health violations that were reported by EPA went unresolved for more than three years.



3/21/2016—President Obama issued an [executive memorandum](#) focused on drought preparedness and response. The memorandum officially establishes the National Drought Resilience Partnership and mandates that the partnership submit a progress report to the president’s climate council within 150 days. The partnership will also be required to update the White House on quarterly meetings. The memorandum also establishes federal policy that recognizes the prime role of state, tribal and local water users in “building their resistance to drought.”

3/18/2016—The U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) a total of \$272 million in Fiscal Year 2015 for the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payments that will be distributed to 41 states and Puerto Rico. The SRS program provides funding to states with a large portion of their land under federal control.

3/17/2016—DOI’s Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) [released](#) proposed updates to air quality regulations for offshore oil and gas operators. The proposal would update the standards for measuring emissions and make BOEM’s air quality regulations consistent with EPA’s air pollution regulations.

3/10/2016—EPA [found](#) that 11 states have failed to submit State Implementation Plans (SIP) for how they will comply with sulfur dioxide air quality standards, as required by the Clean Air Act. EPA will apply certain sanctions on the states in 18 months and again in 24 months if the states still have not submitted a completed SIP. After 24 months EPA will begin to institute a Federal Implementation Plan for those in non-compliance.

3/9/2016—The Bureau of Land Management gave preliminary [approval](#) to the Power Company of Wyoming, LLC for an initial 500 wind turbines in southeast Wyoming. The project is forecasted to become one of the largest wind farms in the world.

3/8/2016—FWS [proposed](#) a revised Mitigation Policy that attempts to expand the broad landscape-level approach to mitigation that FWS took with the sage grouse, and apply it to the full suite of the agency’s work. The proposed changes will be open for public comment until May 9, 2016.

3/7/2016—FWS [distributed](#) \$1.1 billion in FY 2016 through the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Fund, which collects excise taxes paid by sportsmen. The money will go to state wildlife agencies to fund fish and wildlife conservation and recreation projects across the nation.

3/1/2016—EPA sent [letters](#) to governors and water regulators across the country outlining the agency’s plan to increase oversight of state programs and address deficiencies in state drinking water systems. The letters were sent in response to recent events that have highlighted the inadequacies of water infrastructure systems in protecting public health.

From Congress

3/15/2016—Twelve Republicans from the U.S. House of Representatives [launched](#) a new group, the Energy, Innovation and Environmental Working Group, that supports clean energy. The representatives say they will work for “market-based reforms that will promote cleaner energy production and preserve the quality of our air and water.”

Additional News

3/21/2016—The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request to hear a separate brief arguing that EPA colluded with environmentalist groups in drafting the Clean Power Plan.

3/21/2016—The Center for Food Safety and the Center for Biological Diversity are [suing](#) DOI for failing to extend Endangered Species Act protections to monarch butterflies.

NCSL Resources

The NRI Committee is pleased to present its [2016 Spring Webinar Series](#) with topics ranging from rural broadband to water infrastructure to GMO labeling. Webinars will be occurring every other Thursday from April 14-June 23. Check our [website](#) for more information and to register.