



Top Stories

10/24/17 – President Donald Trump [signed](#) a \$36.5 billion emergency aid package into law in response to recent natural disasters that hit parts of the United States and its territories. The package delivers nearly \$18 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, \$16 billion to the National Flood Insurance Program, \$577 million to wildfire response efforts, and allows Puerto Rico to receive up to \$4.9 billion in loans to pay employees, and fund other services. This is the second package of emergency funding, and Trump has told lawmakers he will seek a third installment in November.

10/24/17 – The National Park Service (NPS) [proposed](#) raising peak-season entry fees for 2018 at 17 of its busiest parks as a way to raise \$70 million a year for infrastructure projects. Under the new proposal, entry fees would be \$70 for a private vehicle, \$50 for a motorcycle, and \$30 for a person on bike or foot, doubling the current cost of entry for many parks.

10/16/17 – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt [signed](#) a directive aimed at reducing settlements with environmental groups and installed a timeline for public notice of complaints against EPA. The directive also states the need for stepped-up outreach to states and affected industries regarding consent decrees or settlements stating, "EPA shall seek to receive the concurrence of any affected states and/or regulated entities before entering into a consent decree or settlement agreement."

10/13/17 – EPA [announced](#) it will increase regulation of the herbicide dicamba to stem crop damage resulting from drift, classifying the chemical as a "restricted use pesticide." That classification allows only certified applicators, or someone in the presence of a certified applicator to use the product.

Additionally, EPA said it will require special dicamba training for sprayers and bar application in winds over 10 mph — down from 15 mph under the former rules. Farmers will also have to keep specific records to ensure compliance and help trace future crop damage.

9/27/17 – A suit was [filed](#) in a U.S. District Court by the State of Maryland against EPA, asking a judge to compel the agency to act on the state's petition from last November alleging that 19 power plants in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia must do a better job of limiting releases of nitrogen oxides that contribute to ozone formation. Maryland currently has three areas listed in nonattainment for the 2008 ozone standard, and out-of-state pollution "will continue to contribute significantly" to the state's ability to comply.

From Congress

10/25/17 – The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved several EPA nominees - [Michael Dourson](#), [William Wehrum](#), [Matthew Leopold](#) and [David Ross](#). Dourson, a former EPA scientist, was nominated to be the assistant administrator of for toxic substances at EPA; Wehrum, formerly the acting administrator for air and radiation at EPA, was nominated to serve as the assistant administrator for air and radiation; Leopold, the former general counsel of the Florida department of environmental protection, was appointed to be EPA's General Counsel; and Ross, director of the environmental protection unit for the Wisconsin department of justice, to be an assistant administrator for the office of water at the EPA.

10/12/17 – The House Natural Resources Committee approved [H.R. 3990](#), which would overhaul the Antiquities Act for the first time since its enactment more than a century ago. The bill would sharply reduce the size of future monuments and create a formal process for reductions. However, it is unlikely to receive Senate approval.

10/5/17 – A bipartisan group of 38 Senators [called](#) upon EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to reverse proposed cuts to biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol volumes in the Renewable Fuel Standard, while also praising the agency for setting conventional biofuel volumes at the maximum allowed by law.

10/4/17 – The Senate confirmed [Howard R. Elliott](#), to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Elliot previously served as group vice president of public safety, health, environment and security for CSX Transportation in Florida. [Bruce Walker](#) was also confirmed, by voice vote, to be the assistant secretary of Energy Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability. Walker is currently the deputy county executive for the county of Putnam and the acting energy sector chief for the Hudson Valley Infragard.

From the Administration

10/25/17 – The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), with financial support from the EPA, [released](#) an online dashboard aimed at offering a clearer picture of steps made in curbing pollution, handling cleanups and meeting health standards. The dashboard offers state-by-state rundowns in measures of air, and water quality, waste management and “healthy communities.”

10/25/17 – The U.S Department of Interior (DOI)’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [rescinded](#) previous guidance from the White House Council on Environmental Quality to consider greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change in National Environmental Policy Act reviews prior to approving energy projects.

10/25/17 – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [released](#) a report on rules that could be repealed or reformed

because of their effect on domestic energy production in response to a March [executive order](#) which directed federal agencies to review all federal rules that negatively impact U.S. energy producers. The report calls for re-evaluating the New Source Review permitting program under the Clean Air Act, national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS), particulate matter and four other "criteria" pollutants, saying the current rules imposes higher costs. The report also announces the formation of task forces to review each issue.

10/25/17 – The U.S. Department of Commerce [issued](#) recommendations aimed at speeding up the environmental review process in regards to offshore energy projects. This is in response to a March [executive order](#) which called for all federal agencies to streamline the permit processes for energy projects.

10/24/17 – A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report [found](#) that while precise economic effect estimates of climate change are difficult to calculate, policymakers should aim to collect better data to prioritize adaptation actions that could dampen the financial risks to the government as the owner of vulnerable infrastructure, insurer of property and crops and provider of disaster assistance.

10/20/17 – BLM [announced](#) it will hold a series of public meetings in Idaho, Colorado, California and Oregon in November on potential changes to plans for protecting greater sage grouse habitat. The meetings will be in Idaho on Nov. 2, 6 and 7, in California on Nov. 3, in Oregon on Nov. 7, and in Colorado on Nov. 9. The announcement comes after the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada found that BLM’s designation of Sagebrush Focal Areas in its 2015 greater sage-grouse plan amendment for Nevada was illegal. DOI then [terminated](#) its 2015 proposal that would have prevented mining activities on nearly 10 million acres of sage grouse habitat in western states including Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming. Additionally, DOI is requesting comments on the near 100 federal land use plans, impacting 10 western states, that were implemented in 2015 as part of an agreement with states in lieu of listing the sage grouse as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

10/16/17 – EPA Administrator Pruitt announced the appointment of [Jim Gulliford](#), a former executive director of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, as Region 7 administrator, overseeing Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. [Doug Benevento](#), an Xcel Energy executive, was appointed to be the administrator for EPA's Region 8, which oversees Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana and both North and South Dakota. Additionally, [Cosmo Servido](#), a former director of environmental affairs for the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority in Pennsylvania, was appointed to be the Region 3 administrator, overseeing Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. New York Assemblyman, [Pete Lopez](#), was appointed to Region 2 administrator, serving New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

10/13/17 – The White House announced the nomination of [Kathleen Hartnett White](#) to be the chair of the council on environmental quality. White currently serves as a distinguished senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

10/6/17 – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) [issued](#) a final rule to address the use of Outer Continental Shelf sand, gravel, and/or shell resources for shore protection, beach restoration, or coastal wetlands restoration projects by federal, state, or local government agencies, and for use in construction projects authorized by or funded in whole or in part by the federal government. The final rule describes the negotiated noncompetitive agreement process for qualifying projects and codifies new and existing procedures.

10/5/17 – The president [announced](#) the nomination of Andrew Wheeler as deputy administrator for the EPA. Wheeler spent four years at EPA's office of pollution prevention and toxics, and currently is a principal at a consulting firm providing guidance on federal regulatory and legislative environmental and energy issues.

10/4/17 – DOI [proposed](#) suspending, for 18 months, enforcement of a 2016 methane venting and flaring final rule that Congress failed to repeal using the Congressional Review

Act. The rule is currently in effect, although the agency has stated it plans to rewrite it as there is concern that the final rule analyses, "may have underestimated costs and overestimated benefits."

9/27/17 – EPA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) [found](#) that the agency failed to perform the recommended amount of inspections for imported pesticides. The OIG found that only 73 of 46,280 shipments were inspected in 2016, significantly lower than EPA's goal of 2 percent, or 926 inspections.

From the Courts

10/11/17 – The Supreme Court of the United States [announced](#) its intent to hear oral arguments about federal involvement in two water disputes, the first between the federal government, Texas, New Mexico and Colorado concerning water withdrawals from the Rio Grande River, and the second involving Florida's lawsuit against Georgia over the use of water from the Apalachicola River.

9/27/17 – The U.S. and Mexico [signed](#) a Colorado River water-sharing pact, called Minute 323, aiming to establish procedures to reduce off-take during times of drought. The pact will carry forward for another nine years.