



## Top Stories

**3/23/2013** – The Senate passed its [FY 14 Budget Resolution](#) after nearly 13 hours of votes on amendments. The plan calls for \$975 billion in new revenue over the next 10 years. On March 21 the House passed its own [budget resolution](#) that projects a \$7 billion budget surplus by 2023.

**3/22/2013** – Because of the budget reductions brought on by sequestration, the Department of Interior [notified](#) 36 states that it will have to withhold mineral revenues to states from production on federal land, possibly through Sept. 30, 2013.

**3/21/2013** – Congress passed a [continuing resolution](#), averting a government shutdown and providing funds for the government through Sept. 30, 2013, which takes into account the across-the-board cuts due to [sequestration](#). The resolution rescinds unobligated funds from certain EPA grant programs.

## From the 113th Congress

**3/23/2013** – As part of more than 100 non-binding, budget-neutral yet symbolic amendments to the Senate budget plan, an amendment to move forward with construction of the



Keystone XL pipeline passed [62-37](#). The vote, which picked up 17 Democrats, indicates bipartisan support for the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline.

**3/21/2013** – The Congressional Research Service (CRS) produced an updated [study](#) on legislation dealing with coal ash disposal. CRS found that legislative proposals would promote

uncertainty and would not give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) strong authority in regulating the dump areas.

**3/21/2013** – Senators Lisa Murkowski (R- Alaska) and Mary Landrieu (D-La.) [introduced](#) the Fixing America's Inequities with Revenues (FAIR) Act. The bill would authorize 37.5 percent of revenues for all offshore energy producing states while onshore states that produce renewable energy on federal lands would receive 50 percent of revenues, just as they currently receive in oil and gas revenues.

**3/18/2013** – The Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) unanimously passed [S. 601](#), the 2013 Water Resources Development Act, which establishes an innovative pilot program for financing water infrastructure projects, authorizes money for dams and levee projects, and directs all funds in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund go to dredging and port projects, amongst other items. The bill will be scored by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and could be on the Senate floor as early as April, according to Majority Leader Harry Reid (D- Nev.)

**3/18/2013** – Senator Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) [placed](#) a hold on the nomination of Gina McCarthy to be the new administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The senator will keep his hold on the nominee until the EPA releases a time line on producing a draft environmental impact statement on two flood projects in his state.

## From the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

**3/29/2013** – EPA issued a [proposed rule](#) for Tier 3 Motor Vehicle Emission and Fuel standards, which is designed to reduce air pollution from cars and trucks. The proposed rule would set new emission standards and cut allowable sulfur content in gasoline from 30 ppm to 10 ppm by 2017.

**3/27/2013** – EPA [began](#) assessments on 23 commonly used chemicals to better understand any associated environmental or health related risks. The assessments are part of EPA's Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Work Plan, which aims to evaluate risks of commonly used chemicals and enhance EPA's chemical management program.

**3/26/2013** – EPA [produced](#) a comprehensive study of thousands of miles of rivers and streams in the United States and found that 55 percent are in poor condition as habitats for fish and wildlife species.

**3/25/2013** - Through a public request for nomination process, EPA selected the [outside experts](#) who will serve on a Scientific Advisory Board to review its [draft study](#) on the effect of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water.

**3/15/2013** – EPA's annual [report](#) on the fuel economy of vehicles sold in the United States showed 2012 had the highest fleet-wide increase in fuel economy in history, at 23.8 mpg, an increase of 16 percent.

**3/8/2013** – The EPA put out a [request for nominations](#) to fill a Scientific Advisory Board panel of outside experts who will review its draft report on the effects of small water resources on larger downstream waters. The report analyzes scientific evidence on the ecological effects that small streams and isolated wetlands may have on large navigable waters.

**3/7/2013** – EPA [scheduled](#) two meetings with states to discuss the next steps in addressing the transport of air pollution across state boundaries. The meetings will occur in April, one in North Carolina and the other in Denver, Colo.

**3/6/2013** – EPA employees were officially notified of possible [furloughs](#) of up to 13 days. The furloughs are in direct response to the \$472 million the agency will lose because of sequestration this fiscal year.

**3/5/2013** – EPA [sent](#) revised Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) for new sources to the White House for review. The revisions lower the allowable limit on emissions during the startup and shutdown periods for power plants. EPA expects to finalize the revisions by the end of March.

## From the United States Department of Energy

**3/15/2013** – DOE, along with two of its national laboratories, [released](#) a report on its Transportation Energy Futures project, finding that the transportation sector has the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and petroleum use by 80 percent by 2050.

**3/8/2013** – DOE [released](#) a draft environmental impact statement on its program to lease federal land for uranium mining. DOE found that potential impacts from moving forward with uranium mining are “negligible to moderate.”

## From the United States Department of Interior

**3/26/2013** – The U.S. Forest Service released a [final rule](#) to accelerate projects that take place on federal forests and grasslands and require an environmental assessment or impact statement, including timber sale approvals and restoration projects. The rule reforms the public objection comment process on draft decisions.



**3/22/2013** – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [released](#) a draft rule on royalties given from oil shale development on federal lands. The draft rule opens 700,000 acres of federal land for oil shale development, and requires developers demonstrate

workable technologies that can environmentally and economically yield petroleum, before being awarded access to the lands.

**3/1/2013** – DOI [issued](#) draft environmental impact statement for proposed oil and gas lease sales off the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in the Eastern Planning Area. DOI is seeking public comment on the leases, scheduled for 2014 and 2016.

## From The Administration

**3/22/2013** – The Obama administration [released](#) updated policy to the 30-year-old guidelines for funding federal water projects, placing greater importance on environmental considerations. The guidelines relate to construction of dams, levees, locks and other projects. The policy was released simultaneously with draft [guidelines](#) on how water projects should be chosen and how water resource funds should be directed.

**3/22/2013** – The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology [released](#) a six-point strategy on how to address climate change with requirements for both mitigation and adaptation. The report suggests continued investment in clean energy and energy efficiency technology and a focus on national preparedness for extreme weather conditions.

**3/15/2013** – President Obama released his [Blueprint for a Clean and Secure Energy Future](#), which outlines his policies on an all-of-the-above energy strategy. The blueprint calls on Congress to create an Energy Security Trust; plans to double renewable electricity generation by 2020; increases Department of Interior energy project permitting; commits to safer and cleaner production of natural gas, amongst other plans.

## From the Courts



**3/29/2013** – EPA [petitioned](#) the U.S. Supreme Court to review a lower court decision that struck down the Cross-State Air

Pollution Rule (CSAPR), which attempted to put stricter limits on nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide in 28 states to combat air-pollution.

**3/25/2013** – The U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia made a [decision](#) in the lawsuit by the state of Alaska against a Clinton-era rule that prohibited logging and road-building on 58 million acres of federal forests. The court decided the lawsuit challenging the rule, which was enacted in 2001, was filed too late.

**3/20/2013** – The U.S. Supreme Court [upheld](#) EPA's policy on regulating stormwater runoff from logging roads in its decision in *Decker v. Northwest Environmental Defense Center*. The Supreme Court ruled that logging roads are not industrial point-source pollution and do not require a Clean Water Act permit.

**3/18/2013** – The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of *Pacific Rivers Council v. US Forest Service*, previously decided in the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. The case disputes a federal management plan on 11 federal lands in the Sierra Nevada region that the lower court felt did not take into account effects on fish species.

**3/14/2013** – EPA filed a [motion of dismissal](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia regarding a lawsuit from a group of environmentalists challenging EPA's usage of the Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) in lieu of a new Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR), which EPA is currently working on. The plaintiff felt EPA should not have reverted back to CAIR when the court vacated CSAPR in August of 2012. This case is unrelated to the EPA petition for the US Supreme Court to review the original vacatur of CSAPR.

## Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

**3/26/2013** – A partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Council on Environmental Quality, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies released a [strategy report](#) on dealing with

changing climate on natural resources and fish and wildlife species.

**3/20/2013** –The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [reported](#) that jobs associated with renewable energy, pollution reduction, conservation and recycling and environmental compliance (defined as green energy jobs) grew four times as much as other jobs in 2011. Though they only accounted for 2.6 percent of employment in 2011, they grew at a rate of 4.9 percent, versus the 1.2 percent growth of total jobs. Because of budgetary cuts necessitated by sequestration, this report is the last BLS will provide on measuring green jobs.

**3/19/2013** – The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) released their [2013 Report Card](#), evaluating 16 infrastructure categories throughout the nation. ASCE gave the overall infrastructure of the United States a D+ grade, but some areas did improve, including solid waste systems and rail. ASCE estimated \$3.6 trillion is needed by 2020 to improve the nation's infrastructure.

**3/13/2013** – The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a [report](#) on the progress federal agencies have made to improve the permitting process for development of renewable energy sources on federal land.

**3/13/2013** – The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a [report](#) on financing issues in state revolving funds (SRF) related to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The study reviewed three proposed approaches to fund the SRF, and identified potential issues within each proposed funding mechanism.

**2/27/2013** – An U.S Energy Information Administration (EIA) [report](#) showed emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide from power plants have dropped to the lowest level in more than 20 years. EIA found this was due to pollution control equipment and the rise of natural gas.

## NCSL Resources



The 2013 [NCSL Spring Forum](#) will take place May 2-4 in Denver, Colo. [Register Online](#) before April 15 to receive the early bird reduced special rate for legislators and staff. See the full [agenda](#) online!

Please visit the NCSL [Federal Deficit Reduction Overview](#) page and the [Continuing Resolution Update](#) page for updated federal budget information.

Visit our [Environment Newsletter Archives](#) page to see past issues of our Environment Update

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