



## Top Stories

**4/28/2015**—The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee [approved](#) S. 697, a bill that would modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act which regulates harmful chemicals used in products and manufacturing. The bill, which was amended in the markup to take into account concern on state pre-emption and co-enforcement, gathered bipartisan support to pass 15-5. Under the bill, the EPA would be given broad authority to undertake safety assessments of chemicals in commerce and regulate them as necessary. The House will hold a markup of a similar, though less extensive, TSCA reform bill in the Energy and Commerce Committee on May 14.

## From the 114th Congress

**4/28/2015**—The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [released](#) its analysis of H.R. 1732, a bill that would stop a rule proposed by EPA to define which waters in the United States would require a permit under the Clean Water Act.



CBO's report states the bill would cost \$5 million during the next five years and would likely reduce the number of permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**4/29/2015**—The House Energy and Commerce Committee passed the [Ratepayer Protection Act](#) that would allow states to delay compliance with EPA's greenhouse gas emissions regulations, still in the proposal phase, if the rule is being challenged in the courts. A state could also neglect compliance

if its governor determined that compliance would cause "significant adverse effects." No time frame has been announced for when or even if the bill will be considered on the House floor.

## From the Administration

**4/27/2015**—The United States [officially](#) took the reins as chair of the [Arctic Council](#), an international coalition consisting of the eight countries that have territories in the Arctic, for a two-year term. During that time the U.S. is expected to focus on climate change issues in the region and oil and gas development.

**4/23/2015**—During a speech at Michigan State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced](#) new voluntary actions the agency will take to partner with farmers, ranchers and forest land owners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The new initiative consists of 10 building blocks through which USDA will offer incentives for voluntary carbon reduction. Some of these areas include soil health, nitrogen stewardship, livestock partnerships and more.

**4/22/2015**—Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made his official state visit to the United States, where he discussed climate change and other issues with the president. The president said he plans to work with the prime minister to address climate change and environmental degradation and to deliver secure, affordable, sustainable and safe energy.

**4/21/2015**—President Obama [released](#) two executive orders related to climate change resilience in electric infrastructure. The first order directs USDA to provide \$72 million in loans for

six new rural electric infrastructure projects, including enhancements in rural solar power and smart grid projects. The second order creates a public-private partnership to increase energy infrastructure resiliency against climate change. The Partnership for Energy Sector Climate Resilience includes 17 companies and held its first meeting April 30.

## From the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

**4/24/2015**—Speaking at an energy conference, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy [said](#) the agency will soon reveal the results of its review on groundwater concerns from hydraulic fracturing. According to McCarthy, the analysis will include best management practices and engineering strategies but will not suggest that industry invest in any new technologies.



**4/23/2015**—EPA announced it is developing a computer system for states to use when submitting its State Implementation Plan under proposed regulations to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The automated system was designed to be similar to

TurboTax and is currently being beta tested. The system will not allow states to submit its plan if any items are missing, and gathers all relevant documents to be ready for a state as its submitting the plan, according to the EPA.

**4/21/2015**—EPA [declared](#) it will deny all remaining requests from stakeholders to reconsider certain aspects of its Mercury and Air Toxics Standards for power plants. The agency stated the remaining requests do not meet criteria for reconsideration.

**4/14/2015**—EPA [released](#) data from its Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions, showing a 2 percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 2012 levels. However, there has been a 9 percent drop in emissions since 2005. The data itemized emissions by sector, finding that power plants were

the largest source, accounting for 31 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions and the transportation sector was the second largest.

**4/11/2015**—EPA will release a final rule by the end of April that will prevent companies from discharging wastewater from shale drilling into publicly owned water treatment plants. EPA first proposed the rules in 2011, and on March 30 the Office of Management and Budget completed its review of the rule, the last hurdle before the final rule is published.

**4/10/2015**—EPA [proposed](#) a settlement with the American Petroleum Institute and the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers regarding deadlines for supplying the annual requirements of the Renewable Fuel Standard program. Annual volume standards for 2014 and 2015 will be provided before the end of the year under the proposed consent decree.

**4/8/2015**—EPA [updated](#) its list of areas in the country that are either in or out of compliance with the 2012 fine particulate matter standards. Counties in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana were switched from nonattainment to attainment areas, while five counties in Georgia were added to the list of areas in compliance.

**3/26/2015**—EPA [announced](#) they are extending the public comment period until May 29, 2015, for its proposed requirements for implementing the agency's National Ambient Air Quality Standards, originally introduced March 10, 2015. Additionally, the agency will hold a public hearing on the proposal April 29 at its Washington, D.C., headquarters.

## From the United States Department of Interior (DOI)

**4/25/2015**—The Bureau of Land Management [released](#) a timber harvest plan for the 2.5 million acres it administers in western Oregon. The plan, which was met with tepid responses from county leaders in Oregon, outlines five alternatives for management of the land, naming one as its preferred option. The plans vary on the different areas that should be set aside

for logging, recreation and forest reserves. The plan will be open for public comment for 90 days.

**4/21/2015**—DOI along with EPA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [announced](#) the Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative partnerships that will focus efforts on four areas across the country to conserve and restore lands and waters. The lands and waters are located in Florida, Hawaii, Washington and the Great Lakes region.

**4/22/2015**—The National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Geological Survey released a [report](#) that calculates the value of national parks in storing carbon. The report found that national parks in the continental U.S. store 14.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide each year.

**4/22/2015**—NPS released a [report](#) that shows a record number of visitors to national parks throughout the country in 2014, totaling \$29.7 billion in economic activity. The report also finds that for every \$1 invested in the National Park Service \$10 is returned to the U.S. economy.

**4/21/2015**—The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the population of greater sage grouse does not require the protection of the Endangered Species Act in Nevada or California. Secretary Sally Jewell credited the states' Bi-State Action Plan, which partnered with federal, state and private entities to maintain sage grouse habitat.

**4/13/2015**—Jewell [announced](#) the proposal of new regulations to improve human and environmental protection from offshore oil spills. In response to investigations of the Deepwater Horizon incident, priorities of this new rule include improving standards for blowout preventers, well design/control, and drilling safety in general. The proposed regulations will be open for public comment until June 15, 2015.

## From the Courts



**4/24/2015**—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia [rejected](#) an appeal by a California trucking company related to the administration's vehicle emissions standards. The court found that the trucking company failed to show how a ruling in its favor would address the alleged injury. The trucking company argued the vehicle emissions standards were too stringent.

**4/16/2015**—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia [heard](#) oral arguments in three combined cases that challenge EPA's proposed greenhouse gas emissions regulations. The central question tying the cases together is whether EPA has the authority to regulate power plants under the Clean Air Act. Typically courts will not rule on regulations until they are finalized; as of late no decision has been reached.

## Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

**4/23/2015**—The U.S. Geological Survey [analyzed](#) data from the National Seismic Hazard Maps and found that more than 140 million people live in temblor zones. The data found an increase in seismic activity risk in the continental United States.

**4/21/2015**—NOAA [expanded](#) its flood mapping tool, originally developed just for New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania, to now cover the entire East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. The "[Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper](#)" is an interactive tool that lets the public select their location and view how the infrastructure of a specific area would be affected under various flood scenarios.

**4/21/2015**—The North American Energy Reliability Corporation (NERC) [assessed](#) EPA's Clean Power Plan, and reported that parts of the energy industry will require additional time to meet

the greenhouse gas emission standard, if the rule is finalized. NERC recommends that EPA alter its compliance dates to take into account the amount of time it takes for utilities to construct new generation plants and transmission lines. In its study, NERC also warned of reliability issues if the dates are not altered.

**4/20/2015**—A Chinese Government [report](#) states the government could feasibly transition to a 100 percent renewable energy portfolio by 2050. The study found that wind, solar, hydropower, biomass and geothermal energy could produce 60 percent of China's total energy and generate 85 percent of its electricity in 35 years. This has global implications, as China is currently the world's largest energy producer and consumer.

**4/20/2015**—The tech giant Apple released its [2015 Environmental Responsibility Report](#), in which the company pledged to combat climate change. The report found that 73 percent of Apple's emissions come from manufacturing its products. The company stated it will design future products to be less carbon-intensive to manufacture.

## NCSL Resources

NCSL's NRI Committee began its [2015 Spring Webinar Series](#) on April 30. The committee will host a webinar almost every Friday through June (for exclusions – [check website](#) for specific dates). Topics include: EPA regulations, general aviation, falling oil prices, invasive species, food safety and more. [Register online for free!](#)



[Registration](#) is open for NCSL's 2015 Legislative Summit taking place Aug. 3-5 in Seattle. See [the website](#) for more details and resources from last year. [Click here](#) to find resources from past meetings including session presentations, information, videos and more!

### **NCSL Staff Contacts**

Ben Husch  
Committee Director  
202-624-7779  
[Ben.husch@ncsl.org](mailto:Ben.husch@ncsl.org)

Melanie Condon  
Policy Specialist  
202-624-3597  
[Melanie.condon@ncsl.org](mailto:Melanie.condon@ncsl.org)