



Top Stories

8/17/2015—The federal government gave [final approval](#) for the Royal Dutch Shell oil company to drill below the ocean floor for oil in the Arctic Ocean off Alaska's coast. The approval for Shell came after the company added a piece of equipment that would stop possible well blowouts.

8/3/2015—President Obama unveiled the final version of the [Clean Power Plan](#), which aims to regulate the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from both future and existing power plants. Under the final rule, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assigned each state a unique emission reduction target that it must meet based on a specific formula, with an overall goal of reducing carbon emissions by 32 percent nationwide by 2030. A state can choose to reduce its emissions as it sees fit, and has the option to comply individually or as part of a multi-state plan. If a state fails to submit a plan or if EPA determines the state plan is insufficient, the state will be subject to a Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) imposed by the EPA within two years of noncompliance. A final FIP has not been issued, but the EPA [proposed two different plans](#) on Aug. 3. One plan would assign a cap on emissions and allow for the trading of emission credits and the other would require a state to meet an average emissions rate across its power generation units. For more information on the Clean Power Plan and how states are reacting, [see our website](#).



8/18/2015—EPA [proposed](#) a number of new draft rules for the oil and natural gas industry aimed at combating climate change and reducing air pollution. Specifically the rules are intended to reduce volatile organic chemicals and methane emissions from new hydraulically fractured wells, and find and repair leaks. The rules also attempt to reduce such emissions by covering “downstream” equipment used for the distribution of natural gas. EPA will take [comment](#) on the proposal for 60 days after it

is published in the Federal Register. For more details see [NCSL's Info Alert](#).

From the Administration

8/24/2015—President Obama [announced](#) \$1 billion in federal loan guarantees to help grow small-scale clean energy projects and reduce electricity-related greenhouse gas emissions. The loans are for projects related to the expansion of rooftop solar, energy storage, capturing methane gas from wells and smart grids to improve energy efficiency.

8/15/2015—The U.S. Commerce Department [approved](#) limited oil export trading with Mexico, easing the U.S. ban on crude exports that has been in place for decades. In the trade deal, Mexico's state-run oil company will trade its heavier crude for the lighter U.S. crude.

8/5/2015—The U.S. Forest Service [released](#) a report showing that, for the first time ever, it is spending more than 50 percent

of its budget on suppressing wildfires, and projects it will spend more than two-thirds of its budget to battle wildfires in the future. The agency is concerned that little will be left for forest restoration or watershed and landscape management. During NCSL's 2015 Legislative Summit in August, the conference passed the [Wildfire Funding resolution](#), which urges the federal government to change the way it currently funds wildfires and align it with how natural disasters are funded.

From the 114th Congress

8/5/2015—The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved [S. 1324](#), the Affordable Reliable Electricity Now Act that would exempt states from submitting an implementation plan under the Clean Power Plan until judicial review of the rule is completed.

7/30/2015—The U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed a bipartisan comprehensive energy bill, [the Energy Policy Modernization Act](#). The bill would reauthorize a number of energy programs that assist states and provide a loan guarantee program for states to promote energy development. The legislation includes amendments related to permitting and approving the exportation of liquefied natural gas.

7/14/2015—The U.S. House Agriculture Committee [approved](#) H.R. 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act. The bill, introduced by Representatives Mike Pompeo (R – Kan.) and G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.) would preempt states from requiring genetically modified organisms (GMO) labels on food items. It would also create a voluntary program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to certify non-GMO foods.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

8/25/2015—The National Chicken Council released [biosecurity recommendations](#) to its members for avoiding avian influenza in their flocks. Over the past several months avian influenza has reduced chicken flocks by 48 million birds. NCSL recently passed a bipartisan [resolution](#) at its 2015 Legislative Summit

urging the federal government to increase funding for state and federal agencies to continue development of biosecurity containment strategies.

8/21/2015—A federal court in North Dakota granted the state, along with 12 other states an [injunction](#) to halt the Clean Water Rule implementation until all lawsuits against it have been decided. The rule was set to be implemented on Aug. 28. As of print date, there are similar federal suits being heard in Georgia and West Virginia. In total, 31 states are suing EPA in some capacity related to the Clean Water Rule.

8/20/2015—The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit rejected a motion by 15 states to consolidate their challenge to the EPA's Clean Power Plan with a challenge that was thrown out earlier this year. This motion, which was rejected, would have allowed the states to retain the panel of judges from their original challenge. The case was initially thrown out not for substantive reasons but because the rule had not yet been finalized.

7/6/2015—The National Association of State Directors of Agriculture (NASDA) sent a [letter](#) to the U.S. House Appropriations Committee emphasizing the need for enhanced Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), National Agriculture Statistics Service and avian flu funding. The current appropriations bill contains \$41.5 million for FSMA implementation, compared to the \$109 million requested by NASDA.

NCSL Resources

NCSL successfully completed its 2015 Legislative Summit in Seattle. Find links to session resources, such as PowerPoints, handouts, audio and video recordings [on our website](#). The NRI Committee approved five resolutions (two of which were new) and one policy directive. You can see all our policies [online](#).