



Top Stories

9/22/2015—The Department of Interior (DOI) [announced](#) it will not list the sage grouse, a type of bird found in the western United States, as “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act. DOI was court-mandated to make a decision on the sage grouse by Sept. 30. Along with the announcement, DOI released final federal land management plans for the areas in the west that host sage grouse habitats on their lands. For more information see [NCSL’s Info Alert](#).

returning, \$1.27 billion was set aside for carbon capture and storage projects in California, Illinois, Louisiana and Texas that did not materialize. The other \$1.2 billion comes from unspent DOE funds for close to 8,000 other projects throughout the agency.

9/23/2015—USDA [announced](#) it will extend the deadline for dairy coverage under the Margin Protection Program until Nov. 20. The voluntary program provides financial assistance to farmers when the difference between the price of milk and feed costs dips below the specified coverage level.

From the Administration

9/28/2015—The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) updates to the Agricultural Worker Protection Standards. Some of the revisions include disallowing farmworkers under age 18 from handling pesticides, and requiring employers to train their workers in pesticide use. The standards have not been updated since being enacted 20 years ago. In almost every state, the state agriculture department will have responsibility for enforcing the rule, except in California, New York and New Jersey where the state environmental protection agency will have that authority.



9/16/2015—President Obama [announced](#) more than \$120 million dedicated to increase the scale of solar energy in 24 states across the country, through various federal initiatives. Such initiatives include supporting local governments, providing funds for Concentrating

Solar Power plants and funds for research and development of photovoltaics.

9/16/2015—DOE [released](#) the results of a national evaluation of the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The evaluation determined that WAP provides cost-effective energy savings and health and safety benefits to American families.

9/16/2015—President Obama [announced](#) a new national goal to reduce the amount of food waste that Americans send to

9/30/2015—The Department of Energy (DOE) sent back \$2.48 billion to the U.S. Department of Treasury, as part of the \$31.8 billion DOE received from the stimulus package in 2009. DOE was required to send the unused money back to the Treasury by the end of fiscal year 2015. Of the money that DOE is

landfills by 50 percent by 2030. The goal will attempt to limit methane emissions from landfills and provide more food to low income individuals. According to EPA, landfills are the third-largest source for methane emissions. USDA confirms that nearly a third of the U.S. food supply is thrown away each year, and suggests that it could given to families in need.

9/15/2015—DOE [awarded](#) \$5 million to 11 states under State Energy Program completeive grants. The money went to state projects for energy planning and innovative energy practices.

9/9/2015—DOE [established](#) a team to craft outreach strategies for communities interested in storing nuclear waste. The team is also performing technical analysis of “various components of an integrated waste management system.”

From the 114th Congress

9/17/2015—The U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce committee passed [H.R. 702](#), legislation to repeal the ban on exporting crude oil. The bill would also expand federal royalty revenue sharing with states. A floor vote has not yet been scheduled.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

9/29/2015—The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation [announced](#) \$3.3 million in grants to help address declining monarch butterfly populations. The grants will be matched by recipients and used to restore 33,000 acres of monarch habitat.

9/28/2015—Shell Oil Co. [announced](#) it will halt drilling in the Alaskan Arctic because its exploratory drilling in the area yielded “disappointing” results. Shell did find indications of oil and gas in the exploratory well, but the amounts were not sufficient enough to warrant further drilling. The company has already spent close to \$7 billion on the project.

9/28/2015—Six of the largest U.S. financial institutions, including Bank of America, Citigroup and Wells Fargo, released a [statement](#) calling for action from government and private

businesses to address climate change. Bank representatives say that putting a price on carbon emissions is necessary to increase investments in clean energy.

9/22/2015—The National Association of State Agriculture Departments (NASDA) [urged](#) Congress to adequately fund implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). NASDA stated that FSMA will not be able to be implemented without the involvement of the states, but that states are unable to implement the programs without federal funding.

9/21/2015—The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition published a [useful series](#) on the Food and Drug Administration’s FSMA implementation. The first of the multi-part series looks at who is subject to the rules and issues with implementation.

9/4/2015—The federal court in North Dakota that previously [granted](#) 13 states an injunction to halt implementation of the Clean Water Rule, issued an order limiting the scope of his injunction to just those 13 states. The previous injunction created confusion for other states wondering if they had to comply with the Clean Water Rule or were also exempt.

NCSL Resources

NCSL co-hosted DOE’s Tribal Energy Summit in Washington D.C. Sept. 23-25. For more details on the meeting see [NCSL’s blog](#).

Registration is now open for [NCSL’s Capitol Forum](#), held in Washington D.C. Dec.8-11, complete with our annual Lobby Day and professional development for legislative staff.