



NCSL

Environment Federal Update

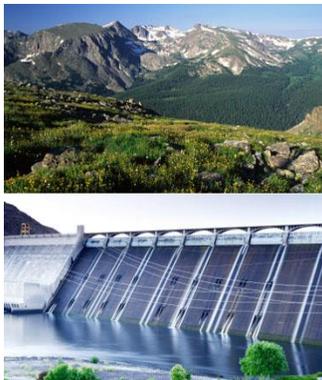
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Top Stories

11/18/2015—U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo Ellen Darcy released a [memo](#) to agency personnel related to the Sixth Circuit decision to stay the Waters of the U.S. rule. The memo directs agency personnel to continue to improve implementation of Clean Water Act permitting programs in light of the ongoing court cases regarding the legality of the rule.

11/17/2015—The U.S. Senate [passed](#) a resolution disapproving the Clean Power Plan. Based on authority given to Congress under the Congressional Review Act, the resolution, if signed into law, would prohibit the Clean Power Plan from going into effect. President Obama [issued](#) a veto threat of the resolution, which would require approval of two-thirds of each chamber to override. Even with this veto threat, the U.S. House is expected to vote on its own resolution of disapproval that passed the Energy and Commerce committee on Nov. 18. In late October the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit [issued](#) an order documenting the schedule for the many requests being made by state officials to stay the rule. The order requires all those who want to ask for a stay to do so by Nov. 5 and directs EPA to file a final response to those requests by Dec. 23. It is likely the court will not decide on whether to grant a stay until early 2016.



11/6/2015—President Obama [announced](#) he is rejecting the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline, citing concerns that it

would adversely impact efforts to combat global warming.

From the Administration

11/23/2015—The White House [announced](#) the 2016 greenhouse gas targets and sustainability plans for all federal agencies. The targets have the agencies reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their operations to 41.8 percent below 2008 levels by 2025. The steps the agencies will take to reduce their emissions vary from NASA reducing emissions by 17 percent at the Johnson Space Center in Houston to the Department of Homeland Security installing solar power plants at its facilities in California and Puerto Rico.



11/23/2015—The Department of Interior (DOI) [issued](#) a Call for Information and Nominations to assess the offshore wind energy industry's interest in commercial wind leases off the coast of South Carolina. The announcement is the first step forward in developing offshore wind energy in the state.

11/17/2015—EPA [proposed updates](#) to the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule aimed at reducing summertime emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) from power plants that contribute to “downwind ozone problems in the eastern half of the U.S.” Specifically, the updates identify reductions for power plant NOx emissions in 23 states that can be achieved using existing control technologies. EPA will hold a public hearing on the updates on Dec. 17 in Washington D.C.

11/16/2015—EPA [announced](#) it will hold a workshop in 2016 to discuss the role of biomass in achieving the goals set under the Clean Power Plan. The goals of the workshop are for states with well-developed forestry and land management practices to share their experiences and to foster constructive dialogue about how states can best include biomass in their compliance plans. Specific details on times and the location of the workshop have not been released.

11/13/2015—DOI Secretary Sally Jewell, on behalf of the United States, signed an [agreement](#) with Mexico for international cooperation in using land-surface satellite images for the benefit of effective land use planning and sustainability. Secretary Jewell was in Mexico attending the summit of the Group on Earth Observations.

11/13/2015—DOI [announced](#) that due to conservation efforts by states and landowners working with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel is no longer at risk of extinction. The fox squirrel, found in the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia area of the country, was one of the first species to be listed on the Endangered Species List nearly 50 years ago.

11/12/2015—EPA and USDA are [partnering](#) with industry sponsors to launch the Nutrient Recycling Challenge, a competition aimed at developing affordable technologies that recycle nutrients from livestock waste. The competition will be in four phases where developers will turn their concepts into designs that will eventually be used in pilot projects. Phase I began on Nov. 16 and ends Jan. 15. Final awards will be announced in January 2017.

10/30/2015—The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy [released](#) a plan to coordinate government and industry responses to solar storms that have the potential to disrupt power and telecommunications equipment on the Earth. The main strategic goals of the plan include: establishing benchmarks for space-weather events, enhancing response and recovery, improving protection and mitigation efforts, and improving assessment and modeling of the impacts to critical infrastructure.

10/30/2015—DOI [announced](#) additional 2015 Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for 1,900 local communities totaling \$34.5 million. The PILT program remits federal money to states and localities with a large amount of federal land in their bounds.

From the 114th Congress

11/4/2015—The U.S. Senate [passed](#) a resolution disapproving the EPA's Waters of the U.S. Rule. Under the authority of the Congressional Review Act the rule would be nullified if the resolution passes both chambers and is signed into law. The resolution has been sent to the House, however, the president has threatened to veto the resolution if it gets to his desk.

10/29/2015—Four Senate Republicans, Kelly Ayotte (N.H.), Mark Kirk (Ill.), Lindsey Graham (S.C.) and Lamar Alexander (Tenn.) [launched](#) the Energy and Environmental Working Group in an effort to bring together members of the Republican party to discuss climate change and protecting the environment.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

11/10/2015—The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [submitted](#) its domestic plan on climate change to the United Nations ahead of the Paris climate summit in December. The plan focuses on how the country can diversify its economy through investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency and natural gas, not just petroleum. This represents the first time Saudi Arabia has committed itself to address climate change.

NCSL Resources

Registration is still 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.