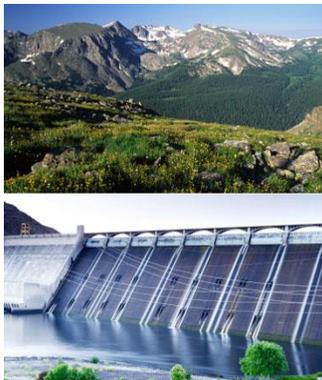




Top Stories

9/23/2015—NCSL and the Environmental Council of States sent a [letter](#) to Senate leadership expressing support for S. 697, a bill to modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), but requesting additional changes be made to support state sovereignty. NCSL's concerns are over language on state preemption, the state waiver process and resource allocation. A separate TSCA modernization bill passed the House in July, and it is expected that the Senate bill will come up for a vote before December. TSCA has not been modernized since it was enacted in 1976.



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](#).



not likely the bill will become law this year, as the White House [issued](#) a veto threat against the legislation.

9/22/2015—Senate Democrats, including Minority Leader Harry Reid, [released](#) wide-ranging climate and energy legislation that proposes to reduce the nation's carbon emissions by at least 2 percent annually through 2025. The legislation also includes eliminating tax incentives for oil companies and instituting fees for oil and gas wells. The announcement coincided with Pope Francis' visit to the United States where he called for action on climate change.

9/18/2015—Fifty-three U.S. Senators, including 12 Republicans, sent a [letter](#) to Senate leadership urging for an extension of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), set to expire on Sept. 30. The LWCF is used for the federal government to acquire

new lands, secure conservation easements on private lands and ensure grants to states to invest in recreation.

9/17/2015—A group of 11 House Republicans [introduced](#) a resolution requesting increased studies and options on how to address climate change. The resolution includes mitigating human activities that contribute to climate change. The majority of the Republican members in the U.S. House do not believe climate change is caused by humans.

From the 114th Congress

9/25/2015—The U.S. House of Representatives passed [H.R. 348](#), legislation that would increase the speed of environmental reviews for energy projects. The RAPID Act would establish deadlines for proposed energy and infrastructure projects that must undergo National Environmental Policy Act reviews. It is

From the Administration

9/25/2015—During his state visit to the United States, Chinese President Xi Jinping [reaffirmed](#) his commitment to work with the

United States to combat the effects of climate change. China also pledged \$3 billion to help other developing countries deal with climate change issues.

9/18/2015—The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued [a notice of violation](#) to the car manufacturer Volkswagen for installing software in its diesel-powered cars that circumvented EPA emissions standards for air pollution. EPA determined that almost 500,000 cars had this software installed. As a result, up to 40 times the federal standard for NOx emissions, a component in urban smog, could have been emitted into the atmosphere. Volkswagen is liable for potentially billions of dollars in penalties from the Clean Air Act and other civil injunctions. In light of this incident, EPA [announced](#) it is making changes to its diesel emissions testing protocol, adding on-road testing to its current lab test requirements.

9/16/2015—President Obama [announced](#) a new national goal to reduce the amount of food waste Americans send to 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. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stated that nearly a third of the U.S. food supply is thrown away each year, and could go to families in need.

9/15/2015—USDA, DOI and the White House Office of Management and Budget sent a [letter](#) to Congress urging the body to fix the way wildfire disasters are currently funded. The departments requested that Congress fund wildfires like natural disasters, such as it is outlined in the bipartisan Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, currently introduced in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. NCSL [supports](#) this position and urges Congress to minimize the risk of fire transfers from prevention and mitigation programs.

8/27/2015—U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief Tom Tidwell [ordered](#) a freeze on non-fire spending in the agency to ensure enough money is available to meet the projected shortfall in the wildfire funding accounts, due to an active wildfire season. This is the eighth time since 2002 that USFS has had to borrow money from other accounts within its budget to cover wildfire

costs. These transfers can be highly disruptive to USFS's mission of stewardship and preventive care.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

9/15/2015—The U.S. Navy settled with a group of environmentalists and agreed to limit its training activities off the coast of Hawaii and Southern California in order to keep sonar and explosives testing out of important marine mammal habitats. The Navy's latest five-year plan of sonar and explosives testing estimated it would kill 155 whales and dolphins as well as 9.6 million instances of varying degrees of harm.

9/9/2015—The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals [denied](#) a request from West Virginia and 15 other states to prevent implementation of the Clean Power Plan. The court ruled that the petitioners did not satisfy the stringent requirements needed for a court to issue extraordinary writs, such as this request.

9/2/2015—The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas [vacated](#) a decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to list the lesser prairie chicken as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The court held that FWS failed to consider ongoing conservation efforts for a species before listing it. Five states—Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas—have conservation land management plans in place to protect the prairie chicken and prevent it from being listed under the ESA.

NCSL Resources

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