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Attached is the daily news report for March 16.

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DAILY NEWS REPORT - UTAH

UTAH – TOP STORIES – MARCH 16, 2017

1. **Zinke finalizes Greens Hollow coal lease, would secure Utah's oldest mine**

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 15 | Brian Maffly

Federal officials have finalized a 55 million-ton coal lease in a deal that ensures continued operations of Utah's oldest and most productive coal mine, a move heralded as a sign of the Trump administration's pro-energy policies to come.

2. **Interior Department to withdraw Obama-era fracking rule, filings reveal**

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 15 | Juliet Eilperin, The Washington Post

The Trump administration plans to withdraw and rewrite a 2015 rule aimed at limiting hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," on public lands, the Interior Department indicated in court filings Wednesday.

3. **Response from the Representative**

The Richfield Reaper, March 15 | Carl Albrecht

In response to the letter to the editor in the March 9 Reaper edition, entitled, "Public land assault," may I provide the following information in response to Mr. Dennis McDougale's letter, and to your other readers.

4. **Gretchen Bleiler: Colorado and Utah need to wake up**

The Aspen Times, March 15 | Gretchen Bleiler, Writers on the Range

I grew up snowboarding in two of the best states for the sport: Colorado and Utah. The world-class ski mountains in these neighboring states were key factors that allowed me to represent our country in two Olympics and numerous X Games. But today, I have to own up to disappointment with these places I love so much. Now, the two rivals for terrain and powder are competing again. This time, though, unless something changes, it's a race to the bottom about who can be more environmentally backward.



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5. Zinke: Interior Department in the 'energy business'

The Deseret News, March 15 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — Newly confirmed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke approved a \$22 million coal lease for central Utah on Wednesday and made it clear his agency is in the "energy business."

6. Interior Secretary Zinke celebrates 114 years of national Wildlife Refuge System

The St George News, March 15 | Written by or for St. George News

WASHINGTON — The National Wildlife Refuge System recently celebrated its 114th anniversary. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), national wildlife refuges are a national network of public conservation lands that provide access for hunting, fishing, education, and recreation opportunities as well as vital habitat for thousands of species. The refuges are also an economic boon to local communities.

7. Commission holds open forum for public comments on GSENM

Southern Utah News, March 16 | Carol Sullivan

Commissioner Dirk Clayson read a statement of Kane County Commission's appreciation and recognition of skill and benefits to the community of local BLM employees. He said BLM employees have been an asset to the commission.

8. Chaffetz asks DOE to prioritize UMTRA funding

The Moab Sun News, March 16 | Staff Report

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) should realign its spending priorities by putting its field projects like the Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project ahead of additional funding for its operations in Washington, D.C.



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9. Utah politicians move to repeal EPA's regional haze rule

The Moab Sun News, March 16 | Rudy Herndon

Utah's congressional delegation moved this week to undo a federal mandate that requires two coal-fired power plants upwind of Moab to spend up to \$700 million on additional pollution-control technologies.

10. See the stars at Cedar Breaks, Utah's newest dark-sky park

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 16 | Brian Maffly

From the rim of Cedar Breaks National Monument on clear, moon-less nights, around 5,000 stars can be seen above this deep-red geological amphitheater.

E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – TOP STORIES

1. Obama's energy legacy: Oil, natural gas production on federal lands tanked

The Washington Times, March 15 | Valerie Richardson

From 2008 to 2016, major indicators of federal onshore and natural gas operations declined, including the number of leases, acres leased, permits approved and wells being drilled, according to the Western Energy Alliance in Denver.

2. Pentagon Grows, While E.P.A. and State Dept. Shrink in Trump's Budget

The New York Times, March 16 | Alan Rappeport and Glenn Thrush

WASHINGTON — President Trump will send a budget to Congress on Thursday that sharply reorders the nation's priorities by spending billions of dollars on defending the southern border and bolstering the Pentagon while severely cutting funds for foreign aid, poverty programs and the environment.

3. Hunters And Anglers Cross Political Lines To Fight For Public Lands

Oregon Public Broadcasting, March 16 | Jes Burns

Hunters, fishermen and environmental activists: it's not often these groups are mentioned in the same breath. But recently they're finding themselves standing shoulder to shoulder over the issue of public lands.



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4. Op-ed: Congress should stop trying to diminish public lands

The Hill, March 16 | Lukas Ross

Weeks before former Congressman Ryan Zinke rode a horse to his new job as secretary of the Interior, the House leadership's agenda for public lands was starting to become clear.

5. OIL AND GAS: Enviros attack Trump team's plan to scrap fracking rule

E & E News, March 16 | Ellen M. Gilmer

Supporters of an Obama-era hydraulic fracturing rule are mobilizing to oppose the Trump administration's newly announced effort to scrap the regulation.

6. INTERIOR: Zinke appoints BLM acting head at agency in 'energy business'

E & E News, March 16 | Pamela King

Tucked inside an approval of a multimillion-dollar coal lease in central Utah, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced his selection of Bureau of Land Management careerist Mike Nedd as the agency's new acting director.

7. WILDLIFE: 'All hands on deck' against invasive species

E & E News, March 16 | Corbin Hiar

Senators from both sides of the aisle expressed interest yesterday in collaborating on legislation to combat the growing threats to wildlife from poaching and invasive species.

8. INTERIOR: Zinke talks energy, infrastructure in meeting with Perry

E & E News, March 16 | Corbin Hiar

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke sat down yesterday for a fireside chat with Energy Secretary Rick Perry.



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9. **REGULATIONS: Senate could vote next week to kill BLM methane rule — Cornyn**

E & E News, March 16 | Kellie Lunney

The Senate could vote next week on a measure to kill a Bureau of Land Management rule curbing greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas flaring, venting and leakage on public and tribal lands, according to a top Republican.

10. **BUDGET: Trump plan takes ax to EPA, environmental spending**

E & E News, March 16 | Robin Bravender and George Cahlink

President Trump's proposed budget takes a hatchet to federal environmental and energy spending.

11. **ALASKA: USGS maps critical minerals deposits**

E & E News, March 16 | Dylan Brown

A new tool has for the first time charted where vast reserves of invaluable minerals may lie beneath the far reaches of Alaska.

12. **EPA: An end to 'regulatory rampage' or a 'declaration of war'?**

E & E News, March 16 | Kevin Bogardus and Sean Reilly

President Trump is proposing U.S. EPA's most draconian budget cuts in decades.

EPA would receive \$5.7 billion for fiscal 2018 under the administration budget blueprint released today. That equals a 31 percent cut, or \$2.6 billion, from fiscal 2017 funding levels and could result in roughly 3,200 fewer jobs at the agency.



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UTAH – FULL STORY

1. Zinke finalizes Greens Hollow coal lease, would secure Utah's oldest mine

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 15 | Brian Maffly

Federal officials have finalized a 55 million-ton coal lease in a deal that ensures continued operations of Utah's oldest and most productive coal mine, a move heralded as a sign of the Trump administration's pro-energy policies to come.

The owner of the Sufco mine in Sanpete and Sevier counties delivered the winning bid of nearly \$23 million last January in a process billed as competitive even though no other bids were submitted on the 6,175-acre Greens Hollow tract under the Fishlake and Manti-La Sal national forests.

"The United States has more coal than any other nation on Earth, and we are lucky to be at a time in our history that we have the technology available to responsibly mine coal and return our land to equal or better quality after," Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said in a statement. "For many communities and tribes in Utah, Montana, New Mexico and other states across the West, coal on public lands has been both a boon and a missed opportunity. With the potential for thousands of jobs and millions in economic opportunity, the Interior Department is committed to balancing the development and conservation of these resources."

Environmental groups blasted the lease, issued by the Bureau of Land Management, as a sweetheart deal that cheats taxpayers who own the coal and furthers the world's climate crises by releasing millions of tons of greenhouse gases once the coal is mined and burned. WildEarth Guardians' administrative appeal is still pending.

"The validity of the leases hasn't been resolved yet. It is unfortunate BLM is moving forward," said Jeremy Nichols, WildEarth's energy policy director. "They are bending over backwards for the coal industry like never before."

Also Wednesday, Zinke named a career BLM manager to succeed director Neil Kornze in an acting capacity. The appointment of Michael Nedd, the agency's assistant director for energy, minerals and realty management, was meant to signal Zinke's "focus on creating responsible energy jobs on public lands where appropriate."



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In the coming days, the Trump administration is expected to make good on a campaign promise of lifting an Obama-era moratorium on coal leasing, which had been imposed while the Interior Department reforms the federal coal program to ensure the public receives a fair return on any mining on public lands.

Greens Hollow is one of four major federal coal leases in the pipeline in Utah, including one near Bryce Canyon National Park needed to keep Alton's Coal Hollow mine going.

Canyon Fuels Co., now owned by Bowie Resource Partners, proposed the Greens Hollow lease a decade ago so it's Sufco mine could continue its underground longwall operations, extracting high-Btu, low-sulfur coal. This lease is expected to return \$194 million in royalties and taxes. Sufco is under contract to supply PacifiCorp's nearby Hunter and Huntington power plants through 2020.

While the lease could keep Sufco's 600 miners employed and was endorsed by four neighboring counties, Nichols questioned whether it would be good for the landscape, the planet or the treasury.

"The BLM continues to turn its back on the climate consequences of issuing coal leases," he said. "Greens Hollow coal is directly under priority habitat for sage course. To do an underground mine, they have to put in ventilation shafts and build roads and power lines."

The Interior Board of Land Appeals denied his group's request for a stay while it considers the appeal.

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2. Interior Department to withdraw Obama-era fracking rule, filings reveal

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 15 | Juliet Eilperin, The Washington Post

The Trump administration plans to withdraw and rewrite a 2015 rule aimed at limiting hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," on public lands, the Interior Department indicated in court filings Wednesday.

The move to rescind the 2015 regulation, which has been stayed in federal court, represents the latest effort by the new administration to ease restraints on oil and gas production in the United States. Interior's Bureau of Land Management issued the rule in an effort to minimize the risk of



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water contamination through the practice, which involves injecting a mix of chemicals and water at high pressure into underground rock formations in order to force out oil and gas.

Under the proposal, companies that drill on federal and tribal lands would be subject to stricter design standards for wells and for holding tanks and ponds where liquid wastes are stored. They also would be forced to report which chemicals they were pumping into the ground.

But last June, U.S. District Judge Scott Skavdahl in Wyoming ruled that Interior had exceeded its congressional mandate in choosing to regulate the controversial drilling practice. While Obama administration officials appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit, the appeals court asked BLM on March 9 if the agency's position had changed now that Trump is in office.

On Wednesday, Justice Department lawyers representing Interior and BLM asked the court to "continue the oral argument and hold these appeals in abeyance pending a new rulemaking" on the issue. The attorneys noted that Interior officials were already reviewing the regulation to mesh with Trump's agenda.

"As part of this process, the Department has begun reviewing the 2015 Final Rule (and all guidance issued pursuant thereto) for consistency with the policies and priorities of the new Administration," the motion reads. "This initial review has revealed that the 2015 Final Rule does not reflect those policies and priorities."

The department will "soon" be issuing a notice in the Federal Register to announce it will be rescinding the rule and writing a new one.

The Interior Department could not be immediately reached for comment Wednesday night.

Industry officials welcomed the move, saying federal officials should have shown more deference to state regulators in the first place.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with the new administration to eliminate red tape and encourage investment in federal, American, oil and gas projects, said Erik Milito, the American Petroleum Institute's upstream and industry operations group director. "Under the strong environmental stewardship of state regulators, hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling on state and private lands have opened up a new era of energy security, job growth, and economic strength."



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But environmentalists said hydraulic fracturing poses serious risks to groundwater and has been linked to earthquakes, prompting the need for nationwide rules.

Michael Saul, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement that the decision "highlights Trump's desire to leave our beautiful public lands utterly unprotected from oil industry exploitation."

"Backing away from these modest rules is doubly dangerous given the administration's reckless plans to ramp up fracking and drilling on public lands across America," Saul said. "Federal rules are critical because state rules in places like Oklahoma have been appallingly slow to confront air pollution, man-made earthquakes and other serious harms caused by oil companies."

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3. Response from the Representative

The Richfield Reaper, March 15 | Carl Albrecht

In response to the letter to the editor in the March 9 Reaper edition, entitled, "Public land assault," may I provide the following information in response to Mr. Dennis McDougale's letter, and to your other readers.

I believe there is confusion on the part of Mr. McDougale that may mislead others.

First of all, HJR 8 by Rep. [Rebecca] Edwards and Sen. [Ann] Millner, in the legislature, was a nonbinding resolution.

The resolution simply stated that if any land in the future was transferred to the state and sold, that 50 percent was to go into a fund to help pay educators more and retain them in the system. Given the current teacher shortage, a worthy goal.

The other resolution your readers need to be aware of is HCR 001, by Rep. [Keven] Stratton and Sen. [David] Hinkins, which declares Utah as a public lands state.

This resolution states that Utah is a premier public lands state and asserts that local management of Utah's public lands would result in greater opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, and access, as well as economic opportunities for rural Utah. In other words, multiple-use.



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I would ask all your readers to also look at HB 407, sponsored by Rep. [Mike] Noel and Sen. [Margaret] Dayton, entitled Utah Public Land Management Act Amendments, (a law). This is a good bill and outlines multiple-use of the lands, particularly for grazing, hunting, fishing, trapping, etc.

I voted for both resolutions and HB 407. Anyone who knows me knows that I am an outdoors guy. I love the mountains, hunting, fishing, four-wheeling, etc. I'm a multiple-use guy.

Growing up, my dad was involved in timbering and mining. I'm not going to vote to lock up these public lands, nor am I going to vote to a mass sell-off if any are acquired.

If you have concerns with the bill, please call me. There was an excellent article in The Salt Lake Tribune on HB 407 on Saturday, March 11. I would encourage all to read it. Thank you.

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4. **Gretchen Bleiler: Colorado and Utah need to wake up**

The Aspen Times, March 15 | Gretchen Bleiler, Writers on the Range

I grew up snowboarding in two of the best states for the sport: Colorado and Utah. The world-class ski mountains in these neighboring states were key factors that allowed me to represent our country in two Olympics and numerous X Games. But today, I have to own up to disappointment with these places I love so much. Now, the two rivals for terrain and powder are competing again. This time, though, unless something changes, it's a race to the bottom about who can be more environmentally backward.

In Utah, despite exploding use of public land for recreation, top elected officials want to eliminate or reduce in size the newly created Bears Ears National Monument, financially starve federal land-management agencies and transfer public lands to state ownership to prioritize extractive uses. As a result, Peter Metcalf, the former CEO of Utah-based Black Diamond Equipment, and Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard called for the Outdoor Retailer trade show to move to another state. In what became a master class in how to wield power, the show, which brings in \$45 million to the local economy, will leave the state for good. Clearly, Utah, where elected officials are so unfriendly to the very natural resources that are the source of the outdoor industry's profit, doesn't deserve the show. So where should it go?

Colorado Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper told The Denver Post that the gear show ought to come to his state. Indeed, Colorado is friendlier to public lands than Utah is. Hickenlooper



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launched an initiative to improve public-land access statewide as well as a \$100 million plan to develop trails across the state.

But Colorado doesn't necessarily deserve the show, either. There, sniffing the political winds just after Donald Trump's election, Hickenlooper backed off a proposed executive order on climate change that, while lacking legislative teeth, set out a clean-energy vision for the state. It advocated for reduced carbon emissions and carbon goals that exceed those of the clean-power plan. He made this politically motivated move at the same time that other progressive states — Colorado's competitors for leadership on clean energy as well as for skiers — anted up in opposition to Trump's appointment of climate deniers to key posts like the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo plans to revamp the state's energy grid, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee proposed a carbon tax to tackle the state's budget crisis and California Gov. Jerry Brown suggested that his state could launch climate-monitoring satellites if NASA can't.

There is still an opportunity for Colorado to lead under Hickenlooper but, as temperature records blow past norms and as Aspen hosts a balmy World Cup Finals, time is running short.

Climate change poses a far greater threat to the outdoor industry than even the privatization of the public lands. As just a small example of the impact, consider that in the unusually warm winter of 2016, profits at North Face dropped in part because people really didn't need cold-weather clothes. Never mind the feast or famine we're seeing in California around snowfall and rain, or the horrific starts to the European ski seasons lately with their deadly avalanches.

Colorado's proposed executive order wasn't a mandate, and it wasn't even legally binding. Instead, it was a vision of the possible. But Hickenlooper caved in to the same forces pushing for public-land privatization in Utah — the oil and gas industry.

Colorado and Utah have had a good run with oil, gas and coal. Those fuels powered our economies, created jobs and provided the cheap energy to make the snow-sports business thrive. We owe fossil fuels a huge debt, and as a professional snowboarder, I acknowledge this. But coal is fading away of its own accord (China recently canceled 104 planned coal-fired power plants), and oil and natural gas face growing competition from electric vehicles and wind energy. In fact, Elbert County just welcomed a billion-dollar wind development, including a new transmission line, making Colorado a locus for American's fastest-growing profession: wind technician.

The writing is on the wall. The old extractive order is behind us. We need to find new, lower-carbon ways to fuel our economies — whether that means the snow-sports industry or the travel



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business, manufacturing or high-tech. And the state that wins the prize of the Outdoor Retailer trade show ought to be a clear and fearless leader on both land and climate issues.

If Colorado and Utah are unwilling to adapt, both will lose out, not just to competing states that capture environmentally minded trade shows and the clean-energy economy, but in the race to provide viable national political leaders for the future.

Gretchen Bleiler is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). She is an Olympic silver medalist and four-time X Games gold medalist who lives in Aspen and serves on the board of Protect Our Winters.

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5. **Zinke: Interior Department in the 'energy business'**

The Deseret News, March 15 | Amy Joi O'Donoghue

SALT LAKE CITY — Newly confirmed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke approved a \$22 million coal lease for central Utah on Wednesday and made it clear his agency is in the "energy business."

The move by Zinke — his first official action impacting Utah's natural resources on federal lands — unlocks 56 million tons of recoverable coal in Sevier and Sanpete counties long sought by Bowie Resources to prolong the life of SUFCO, Utah's largest coal mine locally operated by Bowie's subsidiary, Canyon Fuel Co.

In other action that Zinke says signals a new focus on energy development on public lands where "appropriate," he appointed Mike Nedd as acting director of the national BLM.

Nedd was described as a career employee and was assistant director for energy, minerals and realty management, holding that position since 2007.

Zinke was blunt about the pivotal change.

"Let me make one thing clear, the Interior Department is in the energy business, and Mike is an energy guy who understands the balance we must strike when developing resources and creating jobs on our public lands. It is my hope that working together he will help identify areas where we can expand responsible mineral development while still conserving habitat and wildlife."



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Jeremy Nichols with WildEarth Guardians — one of the environmental groups that fought the Greens Hollow lease — called Zinke's decision a "travesty."

"I think what they are saying with this announcement is that they are not here to serve the American people. These are public resources, these are public lands. They are not the coal industry's...This shows that whatever the coal industry wants, it will get, no matter the cost," Nichols said.

Nathaniel Shoaff, an attorney with the Sierra Club, blasted the decision as well.

"Today Secretary of the Interior Zinke sold out Utah to please a single, out-of-state coal company. Despite low demand in the U.S. and international markets for the coal Utah is already mining, Zinke has now placed over 6,000 acres of public land in jeopardy," he said.

Zinke said the new lease will support nearly 1,700 mining and related jobs.

"The United States has more coal than any other nation on Earth, and we are lucky to be at a time in our history that we have the technology available to responsibly mine coal and return our land to equal or better quality after," Zinke said.

"For many communities and tribes in Utah, Montana, New Mexico and other states across the West, coal on public lands has been both a boon and a missed opportunity. With the potential for thousands of jobs and millions in economic opportunity, the Interior Department is committed to balancing the development and conservation of these resources. The Greens Hollow lease sale is a sign of optimism for the Trump administration and the pro-energy and pro-growth economic policies to come," he said.

The Greens Hollow Lease has been sought by the SUFCO mine in Salina Canyon since 2005. The tract is on land owned by the Forest Service, which issued a record of decision in 2015. The Bureau of Land Management manages the leases for the coal and issued its own approval at the same time.

Although the Interior Department issued a three-year moratorium on any new coal leases in January 2016, the decision did not apply to leases that had already gone through the environmental review process with a resulting decision.

Environmental groups that include the Sierra Club and the Grand Canyon Trust appealed the lease of the 6,175-acre tract last year, citing potential impacts to habitat for the imperiled greater sage grouse. The lease was finalized in a winning bid in January.



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The lease is expected to extend the life of the mine for nearly nine years. The SUFCO mine is one of the longest, continuously running longwall mines in the country.

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6. Interior Secretary Zinke celebrates 114 years of national Wildlife Refuge System

The St George News, March 15 | Written by or for St. George News

WASHINGTON — The National Wildlife Refuge System recently celebrated its 114th anniversary. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), national wildlife refuges are a national network of public conservation lands that provide access for hunting, fishing, education, and recreation opportunities as well as vital habitat for thousands of species. The refuges are also an economic boon to local communities.

“This past Saturday, I visited the National Bison Range in Moiese, Montana, to speak with refuge managers and get a better understanding of both the habitat and the management of the range.” U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said. “In addition to the range, the Refuge System has millions of acres of public lands and waters that provide quality hunting and fishing in addition to other recreation activities.”

Zinke said wildlife refuges are “an incredible asset to the national economy,” bringing tourism and recreation jobs as well as revenue from spending in local communities.

“At the same time, refuges offer a place where families can carry on cherished outdoor traditions while making the important connection between people and nature,” Zinke said. “It worries me to think about hunting and fishing becoming activities for the land-owning elite. Refuges are an important part of making sure that doesn’t happen”

Hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities contributed more than \$144.7 billion in economic activity across the United States, according to the FWS’s most recent National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, published every five years.

More than 90 million Americans, or 41 percent of the United States population age 16 and older, pursue wildlife-related recreation. The report Banking on Nature shows that refuges pump \$2.4 billion into the economy and support more than 35,000 jobs.



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President Theodore Roosevelt created the first national wildlife refuge in 1903 at Pelican Island, Florida. Now, 114 years later, the Refuge System is the world's largest network of conservation lands and waters, managing more than 850 million acres, including seven national monuments of which two are marine, 566 national wildlife refuges, and 38 wetlands management districts.

National wildlife refuges protect wildlife habitat on dramatic landscapes that range from Alaska wilderness to Montana's native grasslands and from Texas lagoons to woods and ponds within Philadelphia city limits.

More than 460 national wildlife refuges and wetland management districts are open to the public, hosting some 50 million visitors every year – almost all offer free admission year-round. There is at least one national wildlife refuge in every state and U.S. territory. Use the online zip code locator to find one close to you.

“Refuges are intrinsic parts of the communities that surround them, contributing to the local economies, serving as recreational epicenters for residents and visitors, and keeping local ecosystems healthy and resilient,” Refuge System Chief Cynthia Martinez said. “What better way to celebrate these national treasures on this anniversary than by visiting your nearest refuge?”

Under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, the Service permits hunting and fishing along with four other types of wildlife-dependent recreation: wildlife photography, environmental education, wildlife observation and interpretation, when they are compatible with an individual refuge's purpose and mission.

Many of America's beloved wildlife species depend on national wildlife refuges for their survival. And refuges provide a range of vital ecosystem services, including storm buffering and flood control, air and water purification, and the maintenance of robust populations of native plants and animals.

Refuges also provide an important connection with the outdoors for young people. There is a refuge within an hour's drive from most major metropolitan areas. The Service's Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, launched in 2013, is providing new opportunities for residents of America's cities to learn about and take part in wildlife habitat conservation.

No matter where you live, you can enjoy nature at a refuge near you.

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7. Commission holds open forum for public comments on GSENM

Southern Utah News, March 16 | Carol Sullivan

Commissioner Dirk Clayson read a statement of Kane County Commission's appreciation and recognition of skill and benefits to the community of local BLM employees. He said BLM employees have been an asset to the commission.

Clayson went on to discuss what he called a 'disconnect of knowledge' regarding problems, impacts to cultural values and heritage within the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM), as well as the need for finding common ground.

"We need to fix problems. There will be programs in the next several commission meetings to educate the public on issues. People want us to take a stand to fix issues. We want to find some harmony and find some common ground. We need to get to the bottom of real issues," said Clayson.

The commissioners have had discussions with the BLM about downsize mapping. They cannot participate opinion wise or take action without instructions from Washington, D.C. However, they are willing to help with information, current maps, etc.

A Power Point program consisting of a variety of maps of the GSENM was presented. They consisted of: Monument management zones from the original Monument plan. The Frontier Zone consists of about 4 percent reas of livestock and grazing. The issue is encroachment of pinon and juniper, vegetation and watershed.

"Being a grazer in the Monument, there is always pressure with a feeling of being moved out, said rancher Bruce Bunting. He lauded the improvement by the Field Office and said they have had a positive impact with wildlife and watershed. "Ranchers want to maintain the health of an allotment," Bunting added.

Commissioner Clayson added, "I don't see conflicts between tourism and the ranching industry. The everyday tourist likes to see cowboys."

Kane County Office of Tourism Director Camille Johnson said, "When I meet with tour operators, they are anxious to learn about cowboy and western heritage for tours."

Several maps in the presentation had to do with GSENM vs Kane County roads, RS2477 roads that existed before the 1976 FLPMA Act, and roads that do not allow ATVs. Clayson went on to



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say the number one adversary with roads is the Department of Justice and SUWA. "They never come to the county to speak with commissioners and use misinformation."

On the RS2477 road issue, with the long drawn out legal process, some of Kane County witnesses have died.

Victor Cooper said, "I am surprised by the number of roads closed. I am a member of SUWA and am one of the few members who live here. I took SUWA to task over the ATV campaign. There is inflammatory language on both sides. How do we find the middle? Mike Noel is not helping. People come to see the west. We are 90 percent in agreement and argue over the 10 percent."

Currently, the Travel Council is working on maps with points of interest in the county and GSENM, in part, to help the hundreds weekly who do not get the coveted permits to hike the Wave, and to promote Kane County tourism. Another map displayed was the GSENM and its size in comparison to the surrounding national parks.

The commissioners opened the meeting to comments and discussion. Martin Hepler said he appreciated the presentation and explanations. It helps us move toward common ground.

Emily Shraff said, "I appreciate your presentation, but where are your experts?" Clayson responded with a long list of agencies and individuals contacted and their input.

Doug McNeer asked, "You have not talked about extraction. Would the county consider another resolution stating no extraction in the Monument?" Clayson responded, "I don't see economic viability or feasibility. I am surprised at so many comments about extraction of coal. Alton Coal is struggling and the Navajo Power Plant in Page is planning to shut down."

He went on to say the commission would discuss a possible resolution.

Jim Page stated, "Senator Orrin Hatch is not helping when he said we should go after the Kaparowitz. Many are concerned."

Rich Cenge suggested using experts from various environmental groups. "We need to be large enough to accept views and expertise from other groups."

Clayson responded, "We welcome them with an onsite tour. I will commit to talking to the Utah delegation on their messaging regarding coal."



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Commissioner Jim Matson is a strong advocate of the Antiquities Act. He said, “We need to protect our antiquities and science research.”

Bert Harris, Kane County Roads Department, said, “Everyone likes to travel the roads, but we don’t have the opportunity to use gravel for our roads because the gravel pits are in the Monument. Right now, we can’t get a permit for gravel. We are getting increased traffic on the roads. We need gravel. Another point, these places are not going away, they are still BLM land.”

After everyone who wanted had a chance to speak, Commissioner Clayson concluded, “Our main objective is we would like to see land management with local input and less from Washington, D.C.”

Jim Page told the commissioners, “We appreciate the demeanor of this meeting. Thanks for conducting a well behaved meeting with interaction.” Other attendees echoed what Page said.

Moving to other county business, Ron Wilson, Five County Association of Governments, introduced Bevan Killpack for wild land fire and prevention programs. Wilson said Five County AOG realizes counties need help with their community programs to prepare for wild fires. Killpack was hired to do this and help counties get their plans done. Killpack said, “I watched a home burn in New Harmony. I don’t want to see that again.”

Commissioner Clayson said he is excited to have the extra coordination.

Commissioner Matson added, “At the recent Shingle Fire, if there had been a shift in the wind, it would have taken about one half of the Kane tax base. This program is an important program.” Killpack said he is impressed with Kane County.

The commissioners approved the 2017 Wild Land Fire Plan. Part of the plan is in connection with the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands Fire Protection System Kanab Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. This includes the removal of invasive species in several areas. They are working closely with Kanab City for the removal of Tamarisk, Russian Olive and Cottonwood from the bridge on Kanab Creek Drive south to the Arizona border. Earl Levanger said, “We want to get the public involved.”

Since all of the needed rain will bring more dry grass this summer, the commissioners asked Bert Harris, if the roads department is certified. Harris replied the road crew is currently in the process of getting certified with the State Forest. Certification meaning they can use heavy equipment at a fire if needed.



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The commission approved Resolution R 2017-3, a resolution of the County Commission of Kane County approving the execution of an interlocal agreement relating to the dissolution of the Glen Canyon Special Service District and the assumption of the ownership and operating of its water system by the Glen Canyon Special Service District of Big Water. The district was formed in 1979, and is now run by Big Water. Big Water has all financial obligations regarding bonds, etc. The vote was Matson and Clayson aye, with Lamont Smith absent.

In other county business, the commissioners approved closing the Shooting Range March 24 and 25, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., for 4-H Leader and Range Safety Officer Training, and April 8, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., for a Southern Utah Shootout.

The Kane County Employee Manual updates will be reviewed by the commissioners before action is taken.

At the public input section, Victor Cooper said regarding the downsize issue, "If this county had supported the GSENM, the county would be farther along." Cooper also wanted to know how much money the county has spent in lawsuits against the federal government. Commissioner Clayson replied that has been presented many times. He will get the information out again.

Laurel Beesley said she was against changes in the Monument, "People want a rugged experience." She added that the people do not feel their voices have been taken into account.

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8. **Chaffetz asks DOE to prioritize UMTRA funding**

The Moab Sun News, March 16 | Staff Report

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) should realign its spending priorities by putting its field projects like the Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project ahead of additional funding for its operations in Washington, D.C.

That is the message from Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, to U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

In a letter to the DOE's new administrator, Chaffetz urged the department to keep its commitment to quickly clean up Cold War-era sites like the Moab UMTRA Project, instead of increasing funds for its national headquarters.



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Crews are currently more than halfway through the process of moving an estimated 16 million tons of uranium mill tailings and debris from the former Atlas Mill site about 4 road miles north of downtown Moab to a long-term disposal cell near Crescent Junction.

However, the DOE's budget justification for the current fiscal year called for a 14 percent cut to its Non-Defense Environmental Cleanup account, while its headquarters requested an 8 percent funding increase.

Chaffetz informed Perry that the environmental cleanup fund is essential because it supports the Moab project.

“Removal of these tailings from the former national defense site will eliminate a massive hazard from the doorsteps of Moab residents and the 25 million downstream water users in places such as Las Vegas and Los Angeles,” he wrote.

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9. **Utah politicians move to repeal EPA's regional haze rule**

The Moab Sun News, March 16 | Rudy Herndon

Utah's congressional delegation moved this week to undo a federal mandate that requires two coal-fired power plants upwind of Moab to spend up to \$700 million on additional pollution-control technologies.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, introduced resolutions that would repeal the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) June 2016 plan to reduce haze-forming nitrogen oxide emissions from the Hunter and Huntington plants in Emery County.

Speaking with the support of the state's delegation, Chaffetz said that the agency exceeded its statutory authority when it rejected the Utah Division of Air Quality's (DAQ's) plan to regulate those emissions. In doing so, he said, it imposed significant costs on the utility's customers, without any “discernible benefit” to the public.

“Utah has developed a state implementation plan that complies with the statute without driving up the price of power,” Chaffetz said in a prepared statement. “That’s a significant accomplishment. By rejecting EPA’s regional haze rule, we enable Utah to implement its existing plan to address air quality without imposing costly and unnecessary new burdens that raise the cost of living for all who consume power.”



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"The great state of Utah already has proposed a perfectly safe and effective nitrogen oxide regulation regime," Lee added. "The EPA's costly new regulations would add hundreds of millions to the power bills of working families and all for an imperceptible change in visibility."

If Congress approves the delegation's joint resolution and President Donald Trump signs it into law, Moab resident Marc Thomas and Grand County Council member Mary McGann fear it would hamper efforts to clean up the air around Moab.

The 1,320-megawatt Hunter Plant near Castle Dale and the 895-megawatt Huntington Plant near the town of the same name are directly upwind of Moab, and the EPA found that Canyonlands National Park is most affected by emissions from the two plants.

Thomas – a member of the Sierra Club – said that everyone from National Park Service officials to local elected leaders and residents spoke in favor of the EPA's plan during a 2016 public hearing on the issue.

"Obviously, in our area, we strongly support the rule and believe it benefits air quality and visibility at our national parks," Thomas said.

McGann said she was not surprised when she first heard that Chaffetz and Lee introduced their plans to repeal the regional haze rule, although she said she's disappointed in their "lack of foresight."

"To me, it's irresponsible not to use the best technology that's available to protect our air," she said.

Rocky Mountain Power has already spent an estimated \$500 million on pollution-control technologies at the two Emery County plants. Under the EPA's regional haze plan, the company would be required to install additional controls on four generating units at the plants that would remove an estimated 80 to 90 percent of nitrogen oxide – or 9,885 tons per year – in each plant's exhaust gas by converting it into nitrogen and water.

By the EPA's own estimates, Lee said, implementation of the plan will result in 5 to 10 percent rate increases, and Rocky Mountain Power External Communications Director Paul Murphy said his company would pass those increases on to its customers.

"It would cost an additional \$700 million, but it would not make any difference as far as I can see with regional haze or visibility," Murphy said.



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McGann said that she's willing to pay more for her power each month – or use less of it – as long as those costs lead to improved air quality around Moab.

“I will conserve more, or pay extra, to preserve our air, and many people feel the same way,” she said.

Castle Valley resident Bill Rau, meanwhile, said that Lee's position on the issue minimizes the effects that regional haze can have on people's health.

“For the record, Lee's statement shows how little concern the Utah delegation has for clean air in the state and the health of residents and hundreds of thousands of annual visitors to the southeastern Utah region who will be impacted by reducing the causes of (poor) air quality,” he said.

Agencies disagree on approaches to curb regional haze

The EPA and the DAQ both agree that emissions from the two plants likely contribute to regional haze and reduced visibility at places like Canyonlands' Island in the Sky District.

But the two agencies have differed in their approaches to curbing the plants' emissions of nitrogen oxide. After years of reviews, the EPA last June partially approved and partially disapproved the DAQ's plan to reduce those emissions – which the state calculated largely by factoring in the 2015 closure of the outdated 172-megawatt Helper coal-fired power plant near Price, as well as prior improvements to Hunter and Huntington.

Both Rocky Mountain Power and the DAQ have appealed the EPA's haze rule, taking their legal challenge to the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. The court has not yet issued a ruling on the state's request to stay the rule, and DAQ Director Bryce Bird said that until it does, the state's haze plan remains in effect.

“It is the state's position that the plan developed and submitted by the state met the requirements of the Clean Air Act and the regional haze rule,” Bird said.

Former DAQ scientist Colleen Delaney, who worked as the lead on the agency's plan to control emissions from the two plants, has noted that the state spent more than 15 years working to address the issue of regional haze pollution.

“You miss something if you just look at the current action without seeing what's been done before,” Delaney told the Moab Sun News in late 2014.



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According to the DAQ, Rocky Mountain Power has reduced sulfur dioxide emissions from the two plants by about 66 percent since 2008; nitrogen oxide emissions dropped by about 40 percent during the same period. Releases of mercury and particulate matter from both plants are also on the decline, according to Delaney.

Still, the National Park Service's Intermountain Region office in Denver has pointed to studies which found that "anthropogenic" – or human-caused – haze obscures the views at Canyonlands 83 percent of the time. Beyond southeastern Utah, the EPA says that human-caused haze from power plants and other sources has reduced the views at national parks in the West from a distance of 140 miles to somewhere between 35 and 90 miles.

In addition to affecting the region's sweeping vistas, the EPA has said that nitrogen oxides and other chemicals in haze pose potential threats to people who suffer from respiratory problems such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis. Nitrogen oxides react with ammonia, moisture and other compounds to form small particles, which can penetrate sensitive parts of human lungs, causing or worsening breathing difficulties. Haze-forming pollution can also aggravate heart disease, according to the EPA.

In a place that's renowned for its unique landscapes and dramatic views, Thomas said he's concerned that without further air quality regulations, the region could lose the very things that brought him and his wife Judi Simon from Chicago to Moab.

At first, Thomas said, his wife was "not all that interested" in moving to southeastern Utah – that is, not until he took her to the Green River Overlook at Island in the Sky.

"That view is what made her fall in love with the beauty of this area," Thomas said.

But when guests visit them nowadays, he said, they no longer take them to the overlook because regional haze often mars the views there.

"The signature view that made this area no longer exists," he said.

For her part, McGann said that she believes the delegation's actions are short-sighted, comparing them to recently enacted congressional efforts to dismantle the EPA's stream protection rule.

"This is our home," she said. "It's the only one we have, and I know I don't want my home filled with pollutants."



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Bird, however, said the DAQ has documented improvements in air quality at Canyonlands since the state first developed its plan in 2003 – and especially since the Helper Plant shut down two years ago.

“We have seen the worst-visibility days improving, as well as the best-visibility days, from those controls that were put in place,” he said.

Rocky Mountain Power and the State of Utah are still waiting for a final ruling on their appeals of the EPA's ruling: According to Murphy, they filed their most recent paperwork on Friday, March 10, without consulting Chaffetz' or Lee's office in advance.

“We didn't contact any of the legislators about the action they're taking, but it is in line with the actions we're taking through the courts,” Murphy said.

While the EPA approved the rule during former President Barack Obama's administration, it's unclear at this point if President Donald Trump or new EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt plan to defend their predecessors' decision.

“We don't know whether or not the EPA would want to reconsider its ruling,” Murphy said.

When all is said and done, though, Murphy believes the appeal will succeed.

“We think the science supports Rocky Mountain Power's and the state's position,” he said.

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10. **See the stars at Cedar Breaks, Utah's newest dark-sky park**

The Salt Lake Tribune, March 16 | Brian Maffly

From the rim of Cedar Breaks National Monument on clear, moon-less nights, around 5,000 stars can be seen above this deep-red geological amphitheater.

On a recent tour, Dave Sorensen, one of the park's "dark rangers," described how the forces of erosion have hollowed out the iron-rich sediments left by Lake Claron.

"Since the lake has been gone this area we know as Cedar Breaks has been eroding out for the last 20 million years. It erodes at a rate of 1 to 4 feet a century. To a geologist, that's a very rapid rate," Sorensen said. "Cedar Breaks will continue getting larger and larger as times go by."



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In the very short-term, the star-encrusted view above could also erode as the forces of urbanization bring more artificial light to the Cedar Valley. To raise awareness of one of nature's greatest displays, Cedar Breaks has been designated an International Dark Sky Park, the seventh in Utah to win this honor. Park officials invite the public to a star-gazing celebration Saturday night at Brian Head Ski Resort, which has partnered with Cedar Breaks on astronomy events in the winter when the town is humming with activity while the park is snowbound.

"It's something everybody enjoys," said Brian Head owner John Grissinger. "For city people, you can't see the stars. You don't know it. Everybody here is amazed, but if you don't bring awareness people don't understand the importance of protecting dark skies. There is very little of it left."

Aside from the light emitted from flames, darkness was the norm at night for most of humanity's existence. But in the 137 years since electric light bulbs hit the market, artificial lighting has become so invasive that it is now considered "pollution." Today, about 80 percent of Americans can no longer see the Milky Way from their homes thanks to the luminous glow hanging over every city.

In the past decade, the value of dark skies have gained more recognition, which the Tuscon, Ariz.-based International Dark-Sky Association has been promoting with designations and lighting technologies that use spectra that minimize disruption to the darkness and direct light away from the sky.

President Barack Obama called out dark skies in his Dec. 28 proclamation setting aside Bears Ears National Monument in San Juan County.

"The star-filled nights and natural quiet of the Bears Ears area transport visitors to an earlier eon. Against an absolutely black night sky, our galaxy and others more distant leap into view," states the proclamation. But this celebration of starry views did not impress Utah legislative leaders, who cited Obama's references to seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon, such as skunks, soil and stars, to back their claim the monument designation was not warranted. San Juan County leaders rejected a proposal to apply for designation as a dark-sky community, fearing that it would pave the way for unwanted restrictions on lighting.

But plenty of others believe dark skies are a precious resource and are trying to figure how to restore it, along with our ability to wonder and solve entrenched problems vexing the world today, according to University of Utah metropolitan planning professor Stephen Goldsmith.



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"One of the crises of our time is a crisis of imagination. We used to look up and ask, 'Who am I?' Instead of looking up, we're looking down at our phones, looking for constellations in our apps. Preserving the dark skies allows us to reconnect with our Milky Way," said Goldsmith, who co-directs the U.'s new Consortium for Dark Sky Studies with physics professor Dave Kieda.

Cedar Breaks now joins six other Utah parks that are official Dark Sky Parks. The others are Natural Bridges and Hovenweep national monument, Canyonlands and Capitol Reef national parks, Goblin and Dead Horse Point state parks, and Weber County's North Fork Park. Many others have applications pending.

The IDA confers three tiers of certification--gold, silver and bronze--depending on the darkness of its night skies. Cedar Breaks won the silver, while its sister Utah monument Natural Bridges, located in the new Bears Ears National Monument, earned the world's first Dark Sky Park honor with a gold in 2007.

The Colorado Plateau is at the very heart of what Goldsmith calls the Starry Way, the Interior West's mountainous region running through Utah where light pollution is the least pervasive thanks to remoteness and high elevation.

"Ninety percent is public land, it's high and dry, low population. You couldn't make a more perfect recipe for dark skies," said Bettymaya Foott, coordinator for the Colorado Plateau Dark Sky Cooperative. She has written dark-sky designation applications for a dozen Utah state parks, many of them on the Wasatch Back close to urban centers.

A few years ago, Cedar Breaks climbed aboard the dark-sky bandwagon and began offering weekly star-gazing events.

"Our mission is to preserve the natural and cultural resources and we realize that the night sky that an increasing number of people are coming to national parks specifically to see. It's getting harder to see in other places," said Zach Schierl, Cedar Breaks dark-sky coordinator. "A lot of people are seeking out dark skies when they go on vacations and they are coming here to southern Utah. A lot are experiencing a sky darker than they've ever seen before. It has a really powerful impact."

Schierl developed Cedar Breaks' "Master Astronomer" program that he is currently teaching at Southern Utah University and hopes to expand around the state. The summertime programs he leads have grown in popularity, now drawing between 200 and 300 park visitors.

At 10,000 feet above sea level, the Markagunt Plateau is the top step of the Grand Staircase, the landscape that falls away to the southeast and bottoms out in the Grand Canyon. Eroding from



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the Markagunt's top layer, Cedar Breaks forms the leading edge of the Colorado Plateau where it meets the Great Basin. It is sculpted from the same lakebed deposits that produced Bryce Canyon's famed hoodoos, towers and walls to the east.

Looking up, Dave Sorensen's favorite astronomical feature visible from Cedar Breaks is a deep-sky object called M42, or also known as the Orion Nebula, found in the constellation named for the mythical hunter Orion. This cluster of nascent stars and luminous gases can be found in the hunter's sword hanging from the southside of his familiar three-star belt.

Preserving such views is central to the National Park Service's mission, but the agency can't accomplished that goal on its own, according to Goldsmith. Nearby cities have a role to play. Utah park gateway towns of Torrey and Springdale have already enacted lighting ordinances to protect dark skies, while Moab and Page, Ariz. have ordinances in the works. Cedar City is beginning to consider steps to curb stray lighting.

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E&E/NATIONAL NEWS – FULL STORY

1. **Obama's energy legacy: Oil, natural gas production on federal lands tanked**

The Washington Times, March 15 | Valerie Richardson

From 2008 to 2016, major indicators of federal onshore and natural gas operations declined, including the number of leases, acres leased, permits approved and wells being drilled, according to the Western Energy Alliance in Denver.

The energy advocacy group used figures released Wednesday from the Bureau of Land Management for fiscal year 2016 to finalize its report.

“Who needs the Keep-It-in-the-Ground movement when you have the federal government doing the job itself,” said Alliance President Kathleen Sgamma. “Every major indicator of oil and natural gas activity on federal lands is down.”

Rep. Rob Bishop, Utah Republican and House Natural Resources Committee chairman, said Wednesday that production on federally managed lands “was all but impossible under the Obama administration,” citing bureaucratic red tape and fewer leases offered.



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The FY2016 figures reflect “the lowest amount of leased acreage for the years statistically available, since 1988,” with leased acreage during the eight-year period falling by 20 million, the committee said.

“These numbers reflect steadfast efforts by the Obama administration to squelch responsible energy development,” Mr. Bishop said.

Ms. Sgamma referred to the “keep-it-in-the-ground” mantra of the environmental movement, which has pushed in recent years to block oil, natural gas and coal operations on public lands in the name of reducing greenhouse gases.

Production of natural gas on federal lands actually declined by 15 percent on federal land during the years of the Obama administration, while production on private lands increased during the same period by 66 percent.

“There’s a reason federal production lags far behind private and state lands. The redundant regulation and red tape over the past eight years have had their intended effects,” said Ms. Sgamma. “We look forward to working with Interior Secretary [Ryan] Zinke to realize President Trump’s vision of encouraging American energy development and job creation.”

The Republican-controlled Congress has taken aim at the Obama administration’s energy regulations, including the BLM’s venting-and-flaring rule, which was announced by former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell a week after the November election.

This rule to prevent waste of our nation’s natural gas supplies is good government, plain and simple,” said Ms. Jewell in a Nov. 15 statement. “We are proving that we can cut harmful methane emissions that contribute to climate change, while putting in place standards that make good economic sense for the nation.”

The House passed a disapproval motion Feb. 3 to overturn the rule, which is now before the Senate.

“This God-awful rule is aimed right at North Dakota in an effort to destroy the Bakken,” said Rep. Kevin Cramer, North Dakota Republican, in a statement. “The rule does nothing to help the environment, plus states and the EPA already have authority over flaring and venting.”

The price of natural gas fell during the Obama administration, causing an industry contraction, but “if natural gas prices alone explained the drop on federal lands, then private lands would have a similar drop,” said Ms. Sgamma.



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“They obviously have not. The drop of natural gas production on public lands can be attributed primarily to the additional red tape and bureaucratic delays from the federal government,” she said.

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2. Pentagon Grows, While E.P.A. and State Dept. Shrink in Trump’s Budget

The New York Times, March 16 | Alan Rappeport and Glenn Thrush

WASHINGTON — President Trump will send a budget to Congress on Thursday that sharply reorders the nation’s priorities by spending billions of dollars on defending the southern border and bolstering the Pentagon while severely cutting funds for foreign aid, poverty programs and the environment.

The budget would fulfill Mr. Trump’s campaign promise to shock Washington by slashing the government work force — but it is virtually ensured to be discarded by Hill Republicans who see many of Mr. Trump’s cuts as too rushed, indiscriminate and reckless.

“You can’t drain the swamp and leave all of the people in it,” Mick Mulvaney, the White House’s budget director, said during a briefing on Wednesday.

The budget would cut the Environmental Protection Agency by 31 percent, the State Department by 28 percent and Health and Human Services by 17.9 percent. Funding to several smaller government agencies that have long been targets of conservatives — like the Legal Services Corporation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts — would be axed entirely.

The chances of Mr. Trump’s first budget passing Congress in its current form are slim. Many of the proposals would be nonstarters for Democrats, and some would be problematic for Republicans. The proposed \$54 billion increase in military spending — a 10 percent increase — would also require a repeal of spending caps imposed by the 2011 Budget Control Act; Democrats oppose such a move without equal spending increases for domestic programs.

The most significant cuts would be at the E.P.A., which the Trump administration has accused of overreach. The president wants to trim \$2.6 billion from the agency’s budget, in part by cutting about 3,200 positions, about a fifth of the department’s work force.

If enacted, the proposal would cut the agency’s budget to its lowest level in 40 years, adjusted for inflation. That would mean eliminating funding for climate change research, closing state



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environmental programs and ending regional projects like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has bipartisan support.

Mr. Trump would also cut funding to the United Nations for its climate change efforts, and curb contributions to its peacekeeping efforts. Contributions to the World Bank would be cut by \$650 million, and economic and development assistance would be “refocused” to countries of greatest strategic interest to the United States.

The brunt of the cuts at the Department of Health and Human Services would be at the National Institutes of Health, the country’s medical research hub. The \$403 million currently used for training nurses and other medical professionals would also be eliminated.

Mr. Trump’s team also proposed a wide array of cuts to public education, Amtrak and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, including eliminating the \$3 billion Community Development Block Grant program, which funds popular programs like Meals on Wheels, housing assistance and other community assistance efforts.

Much of the money saved by these cuts would go to national security programs.

Besides the military, the Department of Homeland Security would also receive an infusion of cash. An additional \$2.8 billion would go largely to pay for a wall along the border with Mexico and the hiring of 500 Border Patrol Agents and 1,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers next year. The budget also calls for the hiring of 20 lawyers in the Justice Department who would work to obtain land along the border for the wall.

The White House is expected to make a supplemental request of \$1.5 billion on Thursday to get work started on the wall this year.

Government funding for the current fiscal year will run out on April 28, and the 2018 budget needs to be in place by October. Democrats in Congress warned this week that there could be a government shutdown if Republicans insisted on including funding for the wall in their request.

The \$1.1 trillion plan is a “skinny budget,” a pared-down first draft of the line-by-line appropriations request submitted by first-term administrations during their first few months. A broader budget will be released in the spring that will include Mr. Trump’s tax proposals as well as the bulk of government spending — Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other entitlement programs.

Mr. Trump’s version is even skinnier than usual, a result of Mr. Mulvaney’s drawn-out confirmation process in the Senate.



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As reports of Mr. Trump's cuts trickled out over the last month, some Republicans made their concerns known. Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina declared the proposed cuts to the State Department "dead on arrival," and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida said that foreign aid was a small investment that played an important national security role.

Mr. Trump's proposed cuts to the E.P.A. are a magnitude greater even than those envisioned by congressional Republicans, many of whom forcefully oppose the agency's regulatory agenda. Last year, the House spending subcommittee that controls the agency's budget proposed funding the agency at \$8 billion, cutting just \$291 million from President Barack Obama's request.

The E.P.A. administrator, Scott Pruitt, who as Oklahoma's attorney general spoke out against some of the agency's core missions, went to the White House on Wednesday to request a smaller cut after the budget office first presented its preferred spending level. He pressed for about \$7 billion, according to a person familiar with the talks. Instead, the White House slashed his budget even further, to about \$5.7 billion.

At the State Department, news of the proposed cuts — rumored for weeks — were met with a mixture of disbelief and defiance. Much of the senior staff on the building's seventh floor was recently reassigned, and nearly all of the department's top political posts remain unfilled.

With so few senior leaders, a top-to-bottom departmental overhaul would be difficult.

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson is expected to be given wide latitude in how to apportion any cuts. Having spent his career at Exxon Mobil, Mr. Tillerson barely knows the department, and he has so far been unable to choose a deputy steeped in the ways of Foggy Bottom.

Under a 28 percent cut, the department's \$54 billion budget would go down to \$39 billion, a number the department has not seen in inflation-adjusted terms since the Iraq and Afghanistan wars added enormous costs in staffing and security.

Many veteran diplomats said that injecting money into the Defense Department while slashing the State Department made little sense, since the functions of the two go hand in hand.

"We learned in both Iraq and Afghanistan that our military needs an effective civilian partner if victories on the battlefields are going to be converted into a sustainable peace," said Stephen J. Hadley, Mr. Bush's national security adviser. "And only a sustainable peace ensures that post-conflict states do not return again to becoming safe havens for terrorists."



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Steve Bell, a budget expert at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said Mr. Trump's proposed cuts were the most severe in more than a half century. "When we passed the Reagan budget, we did not have cuts in the domestic programs anywhere near this size," said Mr. Bell, who was staff director of the Senate Budget Committee from 1981 to 1986.

Mr. Mulvaney acknowledged that lawmakers of both parties were likely to resist changes that would affect pet projects in their states. However, he said that Mr. Trump's budget was a sign that the president is a man of his word.

"We went to what the president said during the campaign," Mr. Mulvaney said, "and we turned those policies into numbers."

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3. **Hunters And Anglers Cross Political Lines To Fight For Public Lands**

Oregon Public Broadcasting, March 16 | Jes Burns

Hunters, fishermen and environmental activists: it's not often these groups are mentioned in the same breath. But recently they're finding themselves standing shoulder to shoulder over the issue of public lands.

Despite having an avid hunter in Ryan Zinke leading up the Interior Department, which oversees the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service, there's a sense that calls to sell off or transfer public lands are gaining traction.

Sportsmen and women consider hunting and fishing in these wild places to be their right – one that earlier generations led by President Theodore Roosevelt fought to secure more than a century ago.

"Hunters and anglers are the first conservationists," says Jesse Salsberry, Northwest Outreach Coordinator of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Talk long enough with the leadership of sportsmen's groups and you'll hear variations on this refrain.



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“Those are folks on landscape that see things and recognize things and have deep appreciation for wildlife,” says Mark Holyoak, Communications Director of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Groups like these often separate what they stand for: “conservation,” with what environmental groups want: “preservation.” (It is an over-generalization to be sure; many environmental groups advocate for both.) Conservation is about sustainably managing natural resources for human or other use. Preservation is about protecting natural resources from human impact.

Despite the divergence between environmental and sportsmen’s groups, many of the goals are similar, like healthy land and water that support wildlife.

But when it comes to speaking up for these goals, it’s the environmental groups that have taken the bullhorn most often.

Language of the wild

Hunters have been more familiar with different kinds of horns - like the elk call being demonstrated by Dan Kloer at the Jackson County Sportsmen’s Show in southern Oregon.

The owner of Deep Timber Sounds, based near La Grande, Oregon, is an expert on hunting calls - from duck to turkey to the high-pitched bugle he’s belting across the expo center through a reeded pipe resembling a camouflaged garden hose.

“You gotta really understand the language of the elk,” he explains to interested hunters who crowd his booth.

Recently though, it’s the language of public lands policy that hunters and anglers are looking to master. Even if it isn’t comfortable territory.

“I’m not supposed to get into political issues,” says Ken Hand, regional director of the Mule Deer Foundation. “But we have to. You can’t very well stay out of it. I believe in keeping public land public - that’s my view point and actually that’s the viewpoint of the Mule Deer Foundation too.”

This renewed urgency comes as elected officials in the West have pushed state and federal legislation to transfer federal lands to the states. Both Washington (House Bill 1103) and Oregon (House Bill 3444) currently have state legislation introduced aimed at transferring federal land into state control.



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Hunting and fishing groups oppose what they see as a land grab by the states.

“We’ve seen too many times across many different states that when states have land, their main purpose for having land is to make money off of it,” Holyoak says. “We can see in Utah and Arizona and Idaho and other places where they’re chopped up in little pieces and sold bit by bit.”

This threat has caught the attention hunters and fishermen and prompted them to take a metaphorical break from the woods.

Stepping up

Corvallis hunter Matt Dickason still hunts or goes fishing at least eight days every month. Still he decided to get involved after following the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge early last year and the growing political dialog around public lands.

“I didn’t realize that there was such a push to sell off federal public land or even transfer it to states,” he says. “Even in last two months, I’ve been blown away by the amount of bills ... at the federal and state level.”

He started following the work of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and decided to join. The group has seen a 25 percent increase in membership since the election. Dickason also joined Ducks Unlimited.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers has worked extensively on the public lands issue. They were among a group of sportsmen’s organizations pressuring and eventually persuading Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, to withdraw legislation that would have transferred 3 million acres of federal land to the states.

Angela Haralson also recently joined BHA. The Portland resident taught herself how to hunt in college, wandering the deserts of Nevada. Now she hunts or goes fishing whenever she can, and even plans her vacations around hunting.

“I hunt everything. So for me it’s become just an ingrained part of who I am,” she says.

Haralson looked to Backcountry Hunters & Anglers because of its non-partisan approach.



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“They will cross lines and work with what you would maybe typically call the eco-groups,” she says. “And I think they’re doing that in order to affect change.”

In early March, several of Haralson’s fellow group members joined more than 2,000 people, many from from environmental, outdoor recreation and tribal groups, at a rally supporting public lands in Idaho.

Dickason agrees with this approach.

“I think it’s important enough... as hunters and fishermen and hikers and mushroom pickers, we’re a force to be reckoned with all together,” he says.

Many sportsmen’s groups say they are interested in partnering with more traditional environmental groups on issues they have in common. Environmental groups have expressed similar willingness to join forces.

Keeping public lands public is that sweet spot where their goals overlap.

Divided or together?

Yet, not all hunter groups are game for a Kumbaya moment with environmentalists.

Dominic Aiello is Director of the Oregon Outdoor Council, a hunting advocacy group funded by outdoor manufacturers.

“When you have multiple user groups like this, and we have a sector that is unwilling to compromise but asking others to constantly compromise, you have a very volatile relationship,” Aiello says. “We’re at a point where we no longer want to work and compromise because it just doesn’t work.”

He has been highly critical of environmental groups on a variety of issues – including their handling of public lands issues. He blames a group of environmental groups for the decision to sell Oregon’s Elliott State Forest to a private timber company and Indian tribe, arguing their lawsuits against timber sales forced the state’s hand.

Those same groups and other environmental and hunting and fishing groups have been extremely active is opposing the sale.



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The sentiment that Aiello expresses feels similar to the voter anger and frustration that helped put Donald Trump in the White House.

It's expressed in the anti-Obama, anti-wolf, and politically pro-gun T-shirts and decals scattered around the sportsmen show in southern Oregon.

Even within hunting and fishing groups, these deep political divides threaten to stymie the larger purpose.

Elizabeth Higgs is a member of Middle Rogue Steelheaders, a fishing club that does habitat restoration on Oregon's Rogue River.

"We all love the river and that's what we find in common, so we kind of look past the politics," she says. "We just don't talk about the politics. We talk about the fish."

And it could be this decision to put the politics aside to focus on preserving public lands that is putting the proverbial bullhorn firmly in the grasps of hunters and fishermen.

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4. **Op-ed: Congress should stop trying to diminish public lands**

The Hill, March 16 | Lukas Ross

Weeks before former Congressman Ryan Zinke rode a horse to his new job as secretary of the Interior, the House leadership's agenda for public lands was starting to become clear.

It began in January with a tweak to the budget process, proceeded with a flurry of bills and congressional resolutions, and is all but certain to be super-charged by President Trump through executive actions.

The GOP agenda aims to plunder as much of our public lands as possible for fossil fuel development—and if that becomes politically impossible, to hand them over to states or localities to do the dirty work.

Exhibit A is an arcane rule change designed to undervalue the lands themselves. Pushed through by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah), it would require the Congressional Budget Office to ignore the fiscal impact of land sales. Lost revenue from grazing



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fees, timber sales, and mineral royalties would no longer be considered when calculating the cost to taxpayers of land giveaways.

Although Bishop would claim that warnings of an impending land sale were overblown, it only took another few weeks for Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) to introduce legislation calling for the sale of a Connecticut-sized chunk of public land.

The controversy was immediate, especially in the West, and Chaffetz abandoned his own bill. Curiously, the outcry didn't register with Bishop, who is officially requesting \$50 million in the budget to offset losses to taxpayers from land transfers beginning next year.

Next came the Congressional Review Act, a powerful tool that Congress is using to reverse Obama-era regulations. Everything from gun control to digital privacy is in danger, but some of the most substantial targets are protections for public lands.

Last week, in a move widely seen as favoring fossil fuel development, the Senate cleared a resolution decreasing the input of local communities into land use planning. Even as support among the GOP is eroding, congressional leaders are pushing to end an Obama administration regulation that charges royalties for natural gas flaring and venting—a problem expected to cost taxpayers \$800 million over the next decade.

More votes could be on the horizon. The notoriously fossil-friendly Western Caucus has a hit list of regulations it would like to see reversed under the Congressional Review Act. Stiffer civil penalties for oil companies lying about royalty payments, new standards to ensure that oil and gas from public lands is accurately measured, and protections against oil drilling in national parks are all potentially in the cross-hairs.

But the final plank of the agenda is the executive branch, where the damage has only just begun.

In a move that could prove illegal, the Interior Department froze implementation of a regulation to keep coal companies from cheating taxpayers. The so-called “valuation rule” is mainly meant to stop companies from dodging royalties by selling minerals through internal subsidiaries. Reversing it could send coal companies and other polluters as much as \$85 million a year.

But the biggest attack is expected very soon: the lifting of the moratorium on federal coal leasing and a review of the entire coal program.

Coal mined from public lands is arguably the starkest example of corporate welfare in the country. For decades, the program has handed some of the world's largest coal companies minerals at less than fair market value. Thanks to gimmicks like royalty-relief and no-bid lease



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expansions, the effective rate for public coal is only 4.9 percent, well below the statutory minimum of 12.5 percent for surface mines.

This is a raw deal for taxpayers, but also for the climate. The program is responsible for a full 13 percent of our carbon dioxide emissions. Putting a moratorium on new coal leases is one of the most important pieces of Obama's climate legacy.

The GOP plans are undoubtedly extreme. But it cannot be emphasized enough that they are very unpopular. While the fossil fuel industry certainly feels entitled to the minerals beneath our lands at giveaway prices, most Americans put a higher value on our natural heritage. Recent polling confirms that majorities across the West oppose land sales and oppose expanding extraction on public lands, which means the good news is that everyone is seeing through the plans proposed by GOP leaders.

Lukas Ross is a climate and energy campaigner with Friends of the Earth, a global network representing more than two million activists in 75 different countries. Previously he was a research fellow at the Oakland Institute, a California-based think tank specializing in land investment and sustainable agriculture. He holds a masters in politics from Cambridge University, England, and a joint degree in international relations and film studies from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

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5. **OIL AND GAS: Enviros attack Trump team's plan to scrap fracking rule**

E & E News, March 16 | Ellen M. Gilmer

Supporters of an Obama-era hydraulic fracturing rule are mobilizing to oppose the Trump administration's newly announced effort to scrap the regulation.

Hours after government officials notified a federal court yesterday that they are working to rescind the fracking rule, a filing by environmental groups urged a panel of judges to allow litigation to move forward as scheduled.

Earthjustice attorney Mike Freeman, who is representing the groups, said the Interior Department's new plan to roll back the rule is purely partisan.

"This is a political decision intended to circumvent the rule of law and deliver a gift to the oil and gas industry at the expense of public safety," he told E&E News. "What the Trump



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administration wants is to go back to using outdated 30-year-old regulations that BLM itself recognizes failed to address threats to public health from modern fracking."

Justice Department lawyers representing Interior have asked the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to delay oral arguments scheduled for Wednesday in the government's ongoing appeal over the fracking rule and put the case on hold while the administration works to rescind the regulation.

A decision by the government to back away from the case would have major consequences, as the district court ruling at issue in the appeal found that Interior does not have authority to regulate fracking at all.

The embattled rule sets new requirements for well construction, wastewater management and chemical disclosure for fracked wells on public and tribal lands. It was the Obama administration's marquee effort to address impacts from the rapid expansion of the use of fracking and horizontal drilling for oil and gas development. The rule has been tangled in litigation from industry, states and tribes since its March 2015 release and has never taken effect.

In yesterday's [court filing](#), Interior said it began reviewing the rule in response to President Trump's January executive order on streamlining the regulatory process.

"As part of that process, the Department is reviewing the 2015 Rule (and all guidance issued to implement that rule) for consistency with the policies and priorities of the new Administration," Richard Cardinale, chief of staff to Interior's assistant secretary for land and minerals management, said in a filing. "The initial review has revealed that the 2015 Rule does not reflect those policies and priorities."

Interior will kick off a rulemaking process within 90 days to rescind the regulation. Agency officials did not respond to requests for more information on that process.

'Disturbing' development

Supporters of the fracking rule expressed outrage yesterday at Interior's plan. Former Deputy Secretary David Hayes, who served at Interior during the Clinton and Obama administrations and helped craft the rule, said rolling back the regulation undermines the federal government's ability to oversee public lands.

"Some elements of the oil and gas industry obviously asked the Interior Department to step away from fracking regulation, and this administration has shown a disturbing propensity to do what some in the oil and gas industry want them to do," he said in an interview. "The reason it's



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particularly disturbing is that a fundamental responsibility of the federal government as a steward of the public lands is at issue here."

Hayes noted that the creation of the fracking rule was a "tremendous undertaking" and that the rule "got better and better" throughout the long rulemaking process.

"To have all that work wiped away is certainly disappointing, but it's not the amount of work that's the issue," he said. "It's the principle here."

Hayes joined former agency officials from both Republican and Democratic administrations in an amicus brief last year that urged the 10th Circuit to reinstate the fracking rule after a district court in Wyoming struck it down (Energywire, Aug. 22, 2016).

Earthworks policy director Lauren Pagel said the Trump administration's plan "prioritizes billionaires and big business over the public interest," and Center for Biological Diversity attorney Michael Saul added that the decision is a red flag for the priorities of newly installed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

"It undermines the suggestion that Secretary Zinke might have been a kinder, gentler sort of Trump appointee," he said. "Really, he's backing away from a long overdue and very modest effort to deal with some of the admittedly huge challenges with the growth of hydraulic fracturing on BLM lands."

Oil and gas industry advocates, meanwhile, cheered Interior's move to scrap the rule as an acknowledgement of its costly requirements.

"Obviously we had the lower court ruling, which was very clear that BLM did not have authority for this rule, and rather than continue to fight in court over that, I think the Trump administration wisely decided that this rule just needed to be rescinded," Western Energy Alliance President Kathleen Sgamma said. "States are effectively regulating fracking, and BLM does not need to duplicate."

BakerHostetler attorney Mark Barron, who is representing the Western Energy Alliance and the Independent Petroleum Association of America in the case, agreed, noting that he's "pleased that they're reconsidering a rule that was not well-considered in the first place."

Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman (R), one of the rule's first challengers, also praised the news.



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"The current administration understandably does not support the Bureau of Land Management hydraulic fracturing rule that we sued to enjoin in 2015, and we expect the upcoming 10th Circuit argument will be canceled," she said in a statement, adding that the rule "intrudes on Colorado's sovereignty" over development within its borders.

Next steps in court

The 10th Circuit is expected to quickly decide on the Trump administration's request to delay next week's scheduled oral arguments. What happens after that is uncertain, but the court recently indicated it would be open to supplemental briefing if the government's legal position has changed (Energywire, March 10).

Freeman said the environmental intervenors in the case will continue pushing the court to hear the appeal regardless of Interior's plans to rescind the rule because the case deals with much broader questions of federal authority.

"Any decision by BLM to rescind the Rule will necessarily be informed by whether it has legal authority to manage oil and gas development on public lands," the groups told the court last night. "The agency's reversal of position does not eliminate the need for appellate review here."

The U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming's decision to strike down the fracking rule last summer was sweeping, finding that Interior lacks authority to regulate fracking. The court rejected Interior's arguments that it has a duty to address environmental concerns for activity taking place on government-held lands.

"I would argue that [the ruling] was an extreme outlier of a decision, and I think it was very vulnerable in the court of appeals," Saul said. "Definitely a grave concern I have is that they're going to attempt to back out of this case in a way that leaves that ruling in place and undermines future efforts to deal with the huge challenges posed by the expansion of hydraulic fracturing on BLM lands."

Continuing a legal defense of a rule the federal government no longer supports would put Earthjustice in an awkward but not unprecedented legal position. In 2001, for example, environmental lawyers defended the Clinton-era Forest Service "roadless rule" after the George W. Bush administration announced plans to reconsider it.

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6. INTERIOR: Zinke appoints BLM acting head at agency in 'energy business'

E & E News, March 16 | Pamela King

Tucked inside an approval of a multimillion-dollar coal lease in central Utah, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced his selection of Bureau of Land Management careerist Mike Nedd as the agency's new acting director.

Nedd's selection signals an increased focus on energy development on public lands where appropriate, according to an Interior news release yesterday.

"Let me make one thing clear, the Interior Department is in the energy business and Mike is an energy guy who understands the balance we must strike when developing resources and creating jobs on our public lands," Zinke said in the statement. "It is my hope that working together he will help identify areas where we can expand responsible mineral development while still conserving habitat and wildlife."

Nedd has served as BLM's assistant director for energy, minerals and realty management since 2007. He has worked for the bureau since 1991 and was previously an officer and enlisted soldier in specialized military units, such as the Army Special Operations.

Striking the balance between energy development and conservation is a difficult task — but it's one at which Nedd has already proved himself adept, said Western Energy Alliance President Kathleen Sgamma.

"We've been working with him for many years," she said. "He's a dedicated civil servant. He's a great choice for acting director."

Conservation groups were concerned about Interior's decision to announce Nedd's selection alongside the approval of a \$22 million coal lease on Utah's Greens Hollow tract.

"Mr. Nedd's job has been focused on energy development," said Nada Culver, director of the Wilderness Society's BLM Action Center. "We're not sure how to take that message. We're at the same time hopeful that his years of experience at the bureau have shown him the importance of all of the multiple uses that BLM manages for, not just fossil fuels."

BLM in January accepted Canyon Fuel Co. LLC's bid for nearly 56 million tons of coal in central Utah. The lease sale had been subject to a 30-day antitrust review by the Justice Department (Greenwire, Jan. 17).



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"The United States has more coal than any other nation on earth, and we are lucky to be at a time in our history that we have the technology available to responsibly mine coal and return our land to equal or better quality after," Zinke said. "For many communities and tribes in Utah, Montana, New Mexico, and other states across the west, coal on public lands has been both a boon and a missed opportunity."

Zinke added, "The Greens Hollow lease sale is a sign of optimism for the Trump Administration and the pro-energy and pro-growth economic policies to come."

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7. **WILDLIFE: 'All hands on deck' against invasive species**

E & E News, March 16 | Corbin Hiar

Senators from both sides of the aisle expressed interest yesterday in collaborating on legislation to combat the growing threats to wildlife from poaching and invasive species.

"I think this is an area where we'll be able to do some very good work together," Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) said during an Environment and Public Works Committee hearing.

Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said he called the meeting to "set the stage for developing bipartisan legislation that will promote new, innovative solutions to better battle and manage invasive species, conserve wildlife, and limit illegal poaching of rare and valuable species."

Ranking member Tom Carper (D-Del.) said the committee would act to "make a smoother path ahead" for wildlife. "This is an all-hands-on-deck situation."

Illegal wildlife trafficking is worth more than \$7 billion every year and is pushing many iconic animals to the brink of extinction. Invasive species also threaten wildlife populations and do trillions of dollars' worth of economic damage globally.

As part of the effort to counter the twin scourges, the senators received on-the-ground reports from state, federal and international wildlife experts about technologies and techniques they are using to protect wildlife (E&E Daily, March 13).

Several witnesses spoke about the potential of lower-cost unmanned aerial vehicles in the fight against poaching. Drones, as UAVs are commonly called, could help wildlife managers monitor hard-to-reach populations.



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Witnesses also advocated for wider use of thermal imaging cameras that aid in detecting and stopping poachers, who often work under cover of darkness.

The cameras have helped African rangers "see poachers a mile away in the dead of night," said Carter Roberts, CEO of the World Wildlife Fund, a conservation group.

Thermal cameras could even be mounted on drones, Roberts said. WWF, he noted, is helping to demonstrate the anti-poaching potential of the two technologies now in Malawi (Greenwire, March 14).

Raising awareness about the connection between ivory and other rare wildlife products and poaching is also important, Roberts said.

He urged continued support for the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, a coalition of businesses and nonprofits focused on reducing trafficking (Greenwire, Jan. 18).

Other witnesses noted that wildlife forensic tools can be used to combat both poaching and invasives. Advanced genetic testing, for example, can help determine the origin of a trafficked wildlife product and detect the presence of invasive fish in water samples.

Pesticides that target particular invasives have also proved effective. David Ullrich, chairman of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, told lawmakers about how the use of a chemical cocktail and increased trapping had reduced the prevalence of blood-sucking sea lampreys by up to 90 percent in some areas.

Jim Kurth, the acting director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, also touted the effectiveness of the agency's invasives "strike force" and cooperative agreements with landowners to improve their management of pests.

All of those tools and tricks, however, require funding.

President Trump's initial budget request for the federal government is due out today. Early reporting indicates that it could decimate support for environmental programs such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which Ullrich credited with keeping Asian carp out of that vast ecosystem (E&E Daily, March 13).

"We are very concerned. You've got to keep on top of them, otherwise they are going to come back and take over," he said, referring to invasives like the lamprey. "They just don't go away."



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8. **INTERIOR: Zinke talks energy, infrastructure in meeting with Perry**

E & E News, March 16 | Corbin Hiar

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke sat down yesterday for a fireside chat with Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

"Good to have @SecretaryPerry over this evening," Zinke said in a tweet sent at 5:51 p.m. yesterday. "Talking energy, infrastructure, and maybe a little football."

The brief message to the Interior leader's 10,900 followers on Twitter included a photo of the two recently confirmed secretaries standing shoulder to shoulder on the windy balcony of Zinke's top-floor office, which overlooks the snow-covered National Mall.

Zinke, who attended the University of Oregon on a football scholarship, followed with another tweet 16 minutes later.

"Alright... @SecretaryPerry was right," he wrote in a post featuring a roaring fire in Zinke's wood-paneled office. "It's a little chilly outside."

The Interior Department didn't respond to a request for more information about the previously unannounced meeting.

But Zinke may have been discussing the Department of Energy's tribal energy loan guarantees. The Interior secretary promised Sen. Al Franken last week that he would work with the Minnesota Democrat to find funding for the dormant loan program (E&E Daily, March 9).

Zinke has also repeatedly promised to fight for more money to repair Interior's crumbling roads, bridges and buildings — perhaps even at the expense of some DOE programs.

"We're behind in infrastructure," he told Interior's employees in his first full day on the job. "I'm going to ask the president for the whole enchilada to make sure that we focus on rebuilding our parks and make sure that our refuges out there have what we need" (Greenwire, March 3).

On football at least, Perry — a former cheerleader at Texas A&M University — could have had the upper hand. The Aggies were ranked 42nd in the country at the end of last season, 45 spots ahead of Zinke's Ducks, according to CBS Sports.



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DOE also didn't respond to a request for comment on Perry's trip to the Stewart Lee Udall building. The Energy secretary, however, seemed happy with his visit.

"Thanks for the invitation @SecretaryZinke," he tweeted at 7:58 p.m. "I enjoyed our discussion!"

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9. **REGULATIONS: Senate could vote next week to kill BLM methane rule — Cornyn**

E & E News, March 16 | Kellie Lunney

The Senate could vote next week on a measure to kill a Bureau of Land Management rule curbing greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas flaring, venting and leakage on public and tribal lands, according to a top Republican.

"We're still whipping that," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) told E&E News yesterday. "Hopefully, we'll take that up next week."

He was referring to [S.J. Res. 11](#), the companion bill to the House-passed [H.J. Res. 36](#), which would repeal the Obama administration's venting and flaring standards to reduce methane emissions.

Cornyn, who is a co-sponsor of the resolution, said supporters are "optimistic" that they will have the votes to pass the BLM methane rule disapproval resolution, but added that they weren't quite there yet (E&E Daily, March 8).

But the resolution's sponsor, Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), sounded less certain yesterday about the measure. Barrasso said he didn't know when it would come to the floor and ignored a question about whether he had enough votes to ensure its passage.

The Senate is out today and tomorrow, and will return next week.

The House voted to kill the BLM rule in February in a 221-191 vote, mostly along party lines. Three Democrats voted in favor, and 11 Republicans were against it.

The measure to overturn the BLM methane rule is one of several such resolutions that Republicans in both chambers have introduced using the 1996 Congressional Review Act to roll back Obama-era regulations that they argue are burdensome and illustrative of the federal government's overreach on energy and environmental issues.



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Last week, Congress voted along party lines to eliminate another BLM rule meant to help the agency better plan for using 245 million acres of federal land (E&E Daily, March 8).

But senators' positions on the resolution to repeal the methane rule are not falling as cleanly along party lines. For instance, Politico recently reported that Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina will not vote for the resolution.

Sens. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) are still undecided, and as of late last month, Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) continued to weigh arguments on both sides. Manchin's West Virginia Senate colleague, Republican Shelley Moore Capito, is a co-sponsor of S.J. Res. 11.

Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), who supports overturning the BLM methane rule, said the only instance in which he wouldn't vote for a resolution repealing Obama-era rules is if a better "regulatory fix" exists. "You know, some of these regulations have some good provisions in them, so we don't want to freeze them out totally," Tillis said. "But most of them need to be repealed."

Republicans generally have argued that in addition to the methane rule being burdensome and ineffective, U.S. EPA — not BLM — has the authority to curb emissions under the Clean Air Act.

But Democrats counter that the resolution is a gift to wealthy GOP donors and that methane reductions have occurred in other energy production arenas, like transportation, but not in public land extraction (Greenwire, Feb. 3).

The American Council for Capital Formation, a nonprofit economic policy group advocating for pro-growth energy and environmental policies, launched an ad campaign this week in several key states, including West Virginia, Ohio and Colorado, urging the Senate to support the disapproval measure to repeal the methane rule. "The rule is a classic case of a federal agency overstepping," Robert Dillon, vice president of communications at ACCF for policy research, wrote in a Tuesday blog post.

"It is redundant, as states have rules in place that minimize methane emissions, and industry has deployed technologies to reduce emissions. In many cases, BLM's rule conflicts with these effective state regulations," wrote Dillon, a former staffer for Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).

Conrad Schneider, advocacy director for the Clean Air Task Force, said that if proponents of the resolution had the votes to pass it in the Senate, they already would have brought it to the floor.



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Schneider argued that the more senators learn about the BLM rule, the less likely they are to oppose it because it "simply requires common-sense measures to prevent squandering the public's energy resources." Schneider called the oil and gas industry's arguments against the BLM rule "incoherent" because "they say that the regulations are not needed because they are already using best practices on the one hand, but on the other hand, if they have to abide by the rule's requirements, it will mean they can't operate economically. They can't have it both ways."

In February, the head of the Colorado Petroleum Council told reporters in a conference call that the group is urging the Senate to overturn the "flawed and redundant" rule, saying it "doesn't improve upon successes in U.S. methane emissions reductions and could negatively impact American consumers, local revenues and energy security, as well."

At the time, Executive Director Tracee Bentley said that "America's oil and gas producers have reduced methane emissions by 21 percent from 1990 to 2015 at the same time they increased gas production by over 45 percent."

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10. **BUDGET: Trump plan takes ax to EPA, environmental spending**

E & E News, March 16 | Robin Bravender and George Cahlink

President Trump's proposed budget takes a hatchet to federal environmental and energy spending.

The White House proposed a dramatic cut of about 31 percent to U.S. EPA, even more than many had anticipated. The budget aims to cut climate change and environmental enforcement programs, slash EPA's workforce by 3,200 jobs and leave the agency with its lowest funding levels since the George H.W. Bush administration.

Those cuts, the administration said in its proposal, reflect "the success of environmental protection efforts, a focus on core legal requirements, the important role of the states in implementing the nation's environmental laws, and the president's priority to ease the burden of unnecessary federal regulations that impose significant costs for workers and consumers without justifiable environmental benefits."

The Interior and Energy departments would see big cuts, too. Trump is proposing a 12 percent hit to Interior's budget and a 5.6 percent cut to DOE, where cash would be shifted away from certain energy projects toward the department's defense programs.



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Overall, the new administration's budget plan for fiscal 2018, which begins Oct. 1, aims to beef up defense spending by \$54 billion, while slashing domestic spending by that same amount. The White House also released today a supplemental spending proposal for the last six months of fiscal 2017.

The fiscal blueprint, dubbed a "skinny budget," only offers top-line spending figures for each agency and highlights programs that would see major increases or cuts in the coming fiscal year. A more detailed budget is due in May that will contain line-by-line spending for agencies as well as projections for tax revenue and entitlement spending.

Many of the steep cuts proposed by the White House will face hurdles clearing Congress, but Trump's budget outline reflects many of the energy priorities the president touted on the campaign trail and since taking office.

"We wrote it using the president's own words. We went through his speeches, we went through articles that had been written about his policies. We talked to him. We turned those policies into numbers," Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney told reporters yesterday.

'Significant' cuts to EPA

EPA would receive \$5.7 billion in fiscal 2018 under Trump's request — down \$2.6 billion, or 31 percent, from current funding levels.

Mulvaney said yesterday that EPA would see some of the most "significant" cuts of any agency but insisted that its core functions could still be "satisfied."

The blueprint would eliminate funding for the Obama administration's signature climate change rule — the Clean Power Plan — and discontinue spending on international climate change programs, climate change research and partnership programs, and related efforts.

The budget also "reorients" EPA's air program to "protect the air we breathe without unduly burdening the American economy."

EPA's enforcement office would see its budget cut by nearly \$130 million. The administration said it would concentrate EPA's enforcement on programs that are not delegated to states. The Office of Research and Development's budget would also be slashed.

The cuts would mean staff reductions of about 3,200 workers at the agency, according to the White House, representing a sizable chunk of EPA's current staff of about 15,000 employees.



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Mulvaney, however, said the agency would have some flexibility in deciding its staffing levels. He said Trump, unlike past presidents, would leave it up to the agencies to decide what layoffs might be required to carry out his budget plans.

"We've worked very closely with [EPA Administrator Scott] Pruitt. He's done a tremendous job to try and prioritize things over at the EPA," Mulvaney said.

One program that would see an increase is EPA's drinking and wastewater infrastructure programs, which the White House said further Trump's commitment to improving infrastructure.

Emphasizing energy production at Interior

The Interior Department would receive \$11.6 billion under Trump's plan, a 12 percent cut from current spending levels.

"The budget requests an increase in funding for core energy development programs while supporting DOI's priority agency mission and trust responsibilities, including public safety, land conservation and revenue management," the outline says.

"It eliminates funding for unnecessary or duplicative programs while reducing funds for lower priority activities, such as acquiring new lands," it says.

A top priority in the blueprint is boosting energy development on public lands.

Trump seeks to increase funding for Interior's efforts that "support environmentally responsible development of energy on public lands and offshore waters." Investment in the National Park Service's deferred maintenance projects would also see a boost.

DOE

The Energy Department would see narrower cuts than some other agencies, in part due to a boost in defense spending within that department.

Trump has requested \$28 billion for DOE, down \$1.7 billion — or 5.6 percent — from current spending levels.

That includes an 11 percent increase for the National Nuclear Security Administration and cuts to other DOE programs deemed unnecessary by the new administration.

The budget for DOE "emphasizes energy technologies best positioned to enable American energy independence and domestic job-growth in the near to mid-term," the blueprint says.



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The budget would provide \$120 million to restart licensing activities for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository and \$6.5 billion to advance nuclear waste cleanup efforts.

The White House seeks to eliminate DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) office, the Title 17 Innovative Technology Loan Guarantee Program and the Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing Loan Program. The administration said, "the private sector is better positioned to finance disruptive energy research and development and to commercialize innovative technologies."

Congressional caution

Trump's proposed cuts are far from final, and lawmakers in both parties insist that Congress will have the final say on the budget.

"There's always a few surprises, but you to have remember this is only a proposal. Congress I don't believe has ratified any president's budget" without changes, said Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), a senior appropriator, ahead of the budget's public release today.

Other appropriators, citing concerns about the cuts for EPA and foreign aid, have suggested the proposal might not have the votes to pass the House and almost certainly would not have the 60 votes needed to overcome a Senate filibuster.

"There is a lot of talk early on, if you visit with [lawmakers] privately, they just don't think the cuts are going to be as severe as proposed," said Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), the ranking member on the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee.

Udall noted that cuts to Interior would hit rural areas in the West that tend to be Republican strongholds. He said conservatives on Capitol Hill probably would reject those reductions.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), the ranking member on the Environment and Public Works Committee, said backers of EPA need to stress that the cuts would lead to less clean air and drinking water. He also said he would emphasize that the EPA budget has already been cut back over the past several years.

Carper said he expects Democrats to push back hard against proposed cuts in science funding.

"The idea of walking away from science and not being guided by science is crazy. We can't do that, it would be foolish," he said.

Conservative critics of EPA, however, are already cheering the cuts.



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"It'd be a good deal to me," said Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), a senior EPW Committee member who has long battled EPA. Inhofe, a close ally of Pruitt, suggested that layoffs at EPA might even help the agency better focus its mission.

"They need to get back to the job they are supposed

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11. **ALASKA: USGS maps critical minerals deposits**

E & E News, March 16 | Dylan Brown

A new tool has for the first time charted where vast reserves of invaluable minerals may lie beneath the far reaches of Alaska.

The U.S. Geological Survey and Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys joined forces to create an online system for pinpointing potential deposits of so-called critical minerals.

Geologists yesterday published maps of Alaska, already a hotbed for interest in mining the building blocks of infrastructure and modern technologies.

National security concerns about heavy reliance on foreign countries to supply certain materials triggered legislation to prioritize domestic mining. Rep. Mark Amodei's (R-Nev.) [H.R. 520](#), accompanied by Sen. Dean Heller's (R-Nev.) [S. 145](#), would streamline and time-limit mine permitting, sparking some environmental fears (Greenwire, Jan. 16). Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) has proposed a dedicated loan program for critical minerals mining with [H.R. 1407](#) (E&E Daily, March 8).

The online tool combs through public databases of geologic information to illustrate the places with mining potential.

"Some of the areas that showed high potential were already known, but many of these areas had not previously been recognized," USGS geologist and study lead author Susan Karl said.

The study highlights six groups of critical minerals found in certain rock types, spanning everything from copper, silver and gold to platinum, uranium and rare earth elements.

Currently imported exclusively from China, the rare earths are used in everything from missile systems to cellphones.



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The Alaska study also reveals areas in need of further exploration in a state covering more than 663,000 square miles — one-sixth of the American landmass.

"We have so much left to learn about the basic geologic framework of Alaska, and now we have a great new geospatial tool to help make our research efforts more efficient and effective," said Jamey Jones, a USGS geologist and study co-author.

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12. **EPA: An end to 'regulatory rampage' or a 'declaration of war'?**

E & E News, March 16 | Kevin Bogardus and Sean Reilly

President Trump is proposing U.S. EPA's most draconian budget cuts in decades.

EPA would receive \$5.7 billion for fiscal 2018 under the administration budget blueprint released today. That equals a 31 percent cut, or \$2.6 billion, from fiscal 2017 funding levels and could result in roughly 3,200 fewer jobs at the agency.

If enacted, EPA's budget would be on par with funding levels during the George H.W. Bush administration, while its workforce would be of similar size to what it had during the early years of the Reagan administration.

Myron Ebell, director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute's Center for Energy and Environment and the leader of Trump's EPA transition team, praised the plan from Trump's Office of Management and Budget.

"In general, we support the OMB's budget numbers. The EPA has been on a regulatory rampage, and one of the surest ways of getting it under control is to cut its funding substantially," Ebell said in an email to E&E News.

Ebell noted that he was "ridiculed" for suggesting "that an overall ten percent cut, which would not touch the state grants and would therefore be a twenty percent cut on the federal side, would be a good place to start in FY 18."

He added, "I guess that makes me a moderate, no?"

Environmental groups said Trump's blueprint would not go far on Capitol Hill as lawmakers decide what to fund and by how much in the federal government over the year.



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David Goldston, director of government affairs for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Trump's budget plan should be rejected even as a starting point for negotiations between Congress and the administration.

"This is a statement, a declaration of war against the environmental functions of and conservation functions of the federal government, that will have real impact on health, on lands, on air and water quality in rural areas and cities alike," he said in a conference call with reporters. "So in some ways, by being this extreme, the White House has actually made the battle easier for us."

Under Trump's plan, climate change work by EPA would disappear. Agency funding for the Clean Power Plan, international climate change programs, climate change research and similar efforts, costing over \$100 million, would be discontinued.

The president's proposal would also rein in "administrative costs" for the Superfund program, taking it down by \$330 million from fiscal 2017 to \$762 million.

EPA's enforcement office would see funding slashed as well by \$129 million, giving it a budget of \$419 million for fiscal 2018. The agency's research and development office would be cut by \$233 million, giving it funding of \$250 million.

"The agency is on a starvation diet. They are now taking away our bread and water," said John O'Grady, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Council 238, which represents thousands of EPA workers. "There is no way that the agency, with those kinds of cuts, can do its job to protect human health and the environment."

Other EPA programs would simply be zeroed out, like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Chesapeake Bay program. Those efforts will be met with serious pushback from Capitol Hill, with lawmakers in both parties opposing those cuts.

Smaller programs would also be cut, such as Energy Star for boosting energy efficiency for home appliances. Industry groups will want that program to stay afloat at EPA.

"The program provides an easy way for consumers to identify the most efficient products on the market, and we feel that provides enough value to justify the program's continuation in some form," said Steve Yurek, CEO of the Air-Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute, in a statement.

Trump would also eliminate entire smaller agencies under his budget plan, including the troubled Chemical Safety Board. The board, which investigates industrial chemical accidents, has been



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beset by mismanagement and retaliation against whistleblowers in recent years, leading to the resignation of then-Chairman Rafael Moure-Eraso in 2015.

EPA's proposed budget cuts are even deeper than originally reported last month, when they were expected to be 24 percent, or \$2 billion, leading to a \$6.1 billion budget. [The New York Times](#) reported yesterday that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt pushed back against the White House on those cuts, asking for a \$7 billion budget, only to face further slashing of his agency's funds in response.

Hill fight?

Asked for reaction to Trump's budget plan, EPA representatives didn't respond to messages from E&E News. Several outside the agency, however, were vocal in their opposition to the proposal.

The proposed cuts "will result in devastating consequences for Americans," said Harold Wimmer, president of the American Lung Association. "Rather than making public health a priority, it places the health and safety of all Americans at risk."

"It is a sad day for our country when the Administration's budget for EPA undercuts funding for essential environmental programs so severely," Bill Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, said in a news release today. "If such cuts are realized, many more people will die prematurely and get sick unnecessarily due to air, water and waste pollution and other environmental issues."

Based on the proposed percentage cuts for all of EPA's categorical grant programs, the money for state air quality management grants would plunge 45 percent, from almost \$228 million this year to \$127 million, Becker said in a follow-up email.

But many if not all of those programs enjoy support from various quarters of Capitol Hill.

In a separate statement, Clint Woods, executive director of the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies (AAPCA), which also represents various state and local air regulators, said the final enacted figures in recent years for both total EPA appropriations and air quality management grants "have virtually never been the same as the president's request."

AAPCA's members "look forward" to working with Congress, EPA and the White House "to ensure adequate resources for administering core Clean Air Act responsibilities under a framework of cooperative federalism," Woods said.



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Just the threat of elimination of funding for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program, which furnishes grants for replacement or retooling for older diesel engines, has already drawn opposition from industry and some lawmakers (Greenwire, March 7).

While the OMB blueprint is silent on that issue, the White House did acknowledge that it wants to zap funding for the targeted airshed grant program, which steers money to areas with particularly severe problems with ozone and particulate matter pollution.

Last year, the Obama administration had also sought to zero out funding for the program, which received \$20 million in fiscal 2016. Lawmakers in both chambers balked.

The House instead voted for \$40 million; Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), chairwoman of the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, which approved \$20 million, touted the airshed program as helpful for Fairbanks' efforts to reduce pollution from wood stoves.

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