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1. House Dems to hold forum bashing Trump review

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

House Democrats will host a forum Thursday to criticize the Trump administration's ongoing review of the status of dozens of national monuments, just days before Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's interim report on the assessment is due Saturday.

<http://bit.ly/2saMLCD>

2. Officials push Trump to lift uranium ban near Grand Canyon

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Officials in Arizona and Utah are pushing the Trump administration to lift a ban on new uranium mining near the Grand Canyon that was implemented under President Obama.

<http://bit.ly/2qR7He3>

3. Cabinet officials due on the Hill to defend spending plan

E&E News Staff

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Top Trump administration officials are due on Capitol Hill this week to defend the White House's fiscal 2018 budget request, which calls for deep across-the-board cuts. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's planned appearance before the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee is so far the most high-profile on energy and environment issues.

<http://bit.ly/2qZ6CA3>

4. Bernhardt disputes role in scandals, rejects ethics questions

Corbin Hiar, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

President Trump's pick for the second most powerful position at the Interior Department is offering few assurances to Senate Democrats concerned about his potential conflicts of interest, according to documents obtained by E&E News on Friday.

<http://bit.ly/2qTdDr3>

5. Nominee questions agency's role in addressing warming

Brittany Patterson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

President Trump's pick for the Interior Department's second-in-command believes that man has an influence on the climate but doesn't believe that the agency should adjust its policies because of it.

<http://bit.ly/2qUSkFx>

6. Senators to cast vote on Trump's energy picks

Hannah Northey, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is slated to vote on four of President Trump's energy nominees tomorrow and likely approve the candidates for a full floor vote.

<http://bit.ly/2rMY5Vb>

7. Tribes, activists slam Zinke for ignoring warming in Alaska

Brittany Patterson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

When President Obama visited Alaska in 2015, he toured the Inuit village of Kotzebue, whose very existence is threatened by climate change, and vowed to "do more" to protect communities from rising seas.

<http://bit.ly/2svSqAH>

8. 4 energy and environment questions as Congress returns

George Cahlink, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

As Congress returns for a monthlong legislative stretch, Cabinet members will make long-awaited appearances, lawmakers and the White House will work to avoid financial crises, tax talks will heat up, and midterm election-watchers will seek clues about who's running.

<http://bit.ly/2rY1bXh>

9. Budget cuts rip into USGS impact research

Pamela King, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

On the surface, the Interior Department's efforts to study the environmental impacts of unconventional oil and gas development appear to have survived the Trump administration's massive budget cuts.

<http://bit.ly/2sKIjal>

10. Can U.S. clean energy still lead after Trump's Paris gambit?

E&E News staff

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

When President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement last week, his

critics said he effectively abandoned U.S. efforts to be the world's leading developer of clean energy technology.

<http://bit.ly/2qZkQkq>

11. Lawmakers to wade into contentious abandoned mine program

Dylan Brown, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

House lawmakers will get a head start this week on debating whether to reauthorize a program that charges coal mining companies a fee to help clean up abandoned sites.

<http://bit.ly/2qRmPYM>

12. Alaska delivers pricey wish list to Trump

Margaret Kriz Hobson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Alaska Gov. Bill Walker (I) sent a wish list to President Trump last month laying out the state's seven top infrastructure priorities, including building a road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, helping relocate a coastal village being hit by climate change and building a naval base in Alaska.

<http://bit.ly/2sxlkjs>

-

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1. House Dems to hold forum bashing Trump review

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

House Democrats will host a forum Thursday to criticize the Trump administration's ongoing review of the status of dozens of national monuments, just days before Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's interim report on the assessment is due Saturday.

Arizona Rep. Raúl Grijalva, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, will lead the session, "A Monumental Mistake: The Implications of President Trump's Executive Order on National Monuments," along with Reps. Nydia Velázquez of New York and Tim Walz of Minnesota. Velázquez is the ranking Democrat on the Small Business Committee, and Walz is the top Democrat on the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

In an announcement, Grijalva said the forum will focus on "preventing the damage" the Trump administration's public lands policies "would do to multiple, diverse American communities," as well as highlight the recreational, preservation and economic benefits of monument designations.

Trump issued an executive order in late April mandating a review of the status of dozens of national monuments created since 1996 that encompass more than 100,000 acres.

The order requires an interim report with specific recommendations for the Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah, before a final report in August.

Both state and federal Utah lawmakers have urged Zinke to recommend a wholesale revocation of the Bears Ears monument, which President Obama designated under the Antiquities Act of 1906 during his final weeks in office. Utah officials have likewise pushed for changes to the boundaries of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument created by President Clinton in 1996.

But Democrats have warned Zinke that only Congress has the authority to reduce the boundaries or revoke the status of national monuments, asserting in a letter last month that any attempts by the Trump administration to alter existing monuments could run afoul of the Constitution ([Greenwire](#), May 25).

Prior presidents have used the Antiquities Act to protect federal land with historic, scientific or cultural value more than 150 times, but to date no president has attempted to eradicate a designation made by one of his predecessors.

The Democratic hearing will also feature a panel of witnesses, including Hugo Tureck, a rancher and president of Friends of the Missouri Breaks in Montana; Megan Duffy, a store manager of Patagonia Washington; President of Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce Carrie Hamblen; Robert Garcia,

founding director-counsel of the City Project; and Sierra Club's Military Outdoors Initiative Director Robert Vessels.

The forum will be held at 3 p.m. EDT in Cannon House Office Building Room 340.

<http://bit.ly/2saMLCD>

2. Officials push Trump to lift uranium ban near Grand Canyon

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Officials in Arizona and Utah are pushing the Trump administration to lift a ban on new uranium mining near the Grand Canyon that was implemented under President Obama.

They say the 20-year ban, which started in 2012, is illegal and hurts the local mining industry.

Environmental advocates say mining in the area presents the risk of uranium-polluted water running into the canyon.

Previous uranium mining in the area has left dozens of Superfund sites.

Officials will also ask Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to remove public lands protections in Arizona and in southern Utah, including Obama's designations of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.

The letters will be sent this week (Joanna Walters, [London Guardian](#), June 5). — **NB**

<http://bit.ly/2qR7He3>

3. Cabinet officials due on the Hill to defend spending plan

E&E News Staff

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Top Trump administration officials are due on Capitol Hill this week to defend the White House's fiscal 2018 budget request, which calls for deep across-the-board cuts.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's planned appearance before the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee is so far the most high-profile on energy and environment issues.

The White House is recommending \$11.7 billion for the department, \$600 million less than the \$12.3 billion Congress gave Interior in the omnibus spending bill this year.

Comparing those figures amounts to about a 5 percent cut. But comparing the fiscal 2018 request with Interior's net discretionary budget authority of \$13.2 billion in the fiscal 2017 continuing resolution from earlier this year, it amounts to an 11 percent decrease.

Zinke will likely face pushback from Democrats and Republicans on the administration's proposed cuts to popular programs, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes system, which provides revenue to communities with non-taxable federal lands ([E&E Daily](#), May 26).

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The administration also wants to end federal revenue-sharing programs with several states and drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge starting in 2022. Lawmakers will likely seize on both issues.

Forest Service

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell is due to appear before the Senate Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, headed by Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski.

President Trump's budget envisions spending \$5.2 billion on the agency, which would amount to roughly a \$1 billion drop, affecting efforts to fight fires and manage pests.

Last month, top House appropriators said they were considering taking drastic measures related to wildfires as a way of pressing for a long-term solution (*E&E Daily*, May 26).

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will appear before the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee.

The biggest topic of debate will likely be the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, which the Trump administration is looking to jump-start.

The NRC recovers most of its budget in licensing fees, requesting just \$138 million from Congress. But the Trump plan would take \$30 million from the Nuclear Waste Fund to support Yucca.

The strongest voices against the project will not be at this week's hearing, as neither senator from Nevada sits on Senate Appropriations.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who does sit on the Energy and Water Subcommittee holding the hearing, has been firmly in favor of dumping nuclear waste at Yucca.

National Science Foundation

The House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee will examine an 11 percent proposed cut to the National Science Foundation that could hit a range of climate and energy programs.

Overall, NSF's funding would fall to \$6.7 billion. The amount would cover roughly 8,000 new research grants, compared with almost 9,000 during fiscal 2016.

The budget would slash funding by more than 40 percent for the Ocean Observatories Initiative, a network of sea sensors intended to advance research on issues like ocean acidification.

NSF's geosciences directorate would be cut more than 10 percent, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research would see a decline of about 15 percent.

Both the geosciences branch and NCAR are critical to work on climate change, said Andrew Rosenberg, director of the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"This is just astonishingly shortsighted economically," he said. Other budget reductions would affect engineering, polar, math, computing and behavioral science programs.

At a briefing last month, NSF Director Frances Córdova said NSF remained committed to its mission but decided to "reset" some investments closer to levels that would have been seen a decade ago. Córdova is scheduled to appear before the panel.

Some programs would see a funding increase, including the National Ecological Observatory Network, a planned continental-scale observational network to monitor everything from land-use changes to invasive species. It was a focus of multiple House hearings after reports surfaced of misused taxpayer funds (*E&E Daily*, Feb. 5, 2016).

Commerce and Labor

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is set to appear before the Senate Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, where lawmakers may ask about fishery and climate research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

During a hearing last month, Ross defended spending cuts, which would curtail work at Regional Climate Centers, but vowed to address the fish trade deficit (*E&E Daily*, May 26).

When it comes to the Labor Department, Secretary Alexander Acosta will appear before panels in both the House and Senate to defend the spending plan.

The Trump administration has yet to put forward a nominee to lead the Mine Safety and Health Administration, but the White House's fiscal 2018 request did outline a slight uptick in funding for the agency.

MSHA would receive \$375.2 million, compared with the \$373.8 million Congress gave the agency in the fiscal 2017 omnibus spending bill (*E&E Daily*, May 24).

The Obama administration, in its final budget blueprint, asked for \$397 million, but the GOP-led House Appropriations panel said decreased spending "reflects the declining need for various MSHA activities because of decreased mining across the country."

Trump, however, has long promised a resurgence for the industry driven by regulatory cuts that both coal and hardrock mining companies support.

Acosta's department has already delayed new examination requirements at non-coal mines. It has also moved to settle lawsuits over the Obama-era safety crackdown (*Greenwire*, May 23).

Concerning the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the budget would provide \$543.2 million, compared with \$552.8 million in the omnibus.

Separately, Senate appropriators will hold a hearing on the Army budget, which could involve questions about Defense Department energy programs.

Dems want more hearings

This year's appropriations process has been particularly irregular. Lawmakers spent months crafting fiscal 2017 spending bills before turning their attention to the next fiscal year. And Trump was late in releasing his full budget proposal.

Amid uncertainty about whether all relevant committees will call administration officials to justify their spending plans, House Energy and Commerce Democrats called on the majority to schedule such hearings.

"Holding hearings concerning the President's proposed budget affords this Committee the opportunity to better understand the proposed changes to the budget, the needs of these agencies and the potential impacts on the American public and the country as a whole," they wrote.

Schedule: The House Labor budget hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 10 a.m. in 2358-C Rayburn.

Witness: Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta.

Schedule: The House National Science Foundation budget hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 10 a.m. in 2359 Rayburn.

Witness: NSF Director Frances Córdova.

Schedule: The Senate Forest Service budget hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 9:30 a.m. in 124 Dirksen.

Witness: Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell.

Schedule: The Senate Army budget hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 10:30 a.m. in 192 Dirksen.

Witnesses: Acting Army Secretary Robert Speer and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley.

Schedule: The Senate Nuclear Regulatory Commission budget hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 2:30 p.m. in 138 Dirksen.

Witnesses: Commissioners Kristine Svinicki and Stephen Burns.

Schedule: The House Interior budget hearing is Thursday, June 8, at 9:30 a.m. in 2007 Rayburn.

Witness: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

Schedule: The Senate Commerce budget hearing is Thursday, June 8, at 10 a.m. in 192 Dirksen.

Witness: Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross.

Schedule: The Senate Labor budget hearing is Thursday, June 8, at 10 a.m. in 138 Dirksen.

Witness: Acosta.

Reporters Manuel Quiñones, Dylan Brown, Sam Mintz, Kellie Lunney and Christa Marshall contributed.

<http://bit.ly/2qZ6CA3>

4. Bernhardt disputes role in scandals, rejects ethics questions

Corbin Hiar, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

President Trump's pick for the second most powerful position at the Interior Department is offering few assurances to Senate Democrats concerned about his potential conflicts of interest, according to documents obtained by E&E News on Friday.

The legal services and lobbying that David Bernhardt, a former top George W. Bush administration Interior official, has done for energy and water development companies as the top natural resources lawyer at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP was a major focus of his confirmation hearing for deputy Interior secretary last month ([Greenwire](#), May 18).

That work — for which he was paid more than \$80,000 last year alone — was also a recurring topic in questions for the hearing record submitted by Democratic members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The panel will vote tomorrow on whether to move his nomination to the Senate floor ([see related story](#)).

Bernhardt's [responses](#) suggest he isn't concerned about securing broad bipartisan support, Democratic staffers said. Bernhardt can clear committee and — thanks to a change in filibuster rules last Congress — secure confirmation from the full Senate with only the votes of the Republican majority.

The deputy nominee repeatedly declined to commit to taking steps to alleviate concerns about conflicts of interest besides those required by the Office of Government Ethics (OGE). Bernhardt justified his defiant stance by pointing back to [ethics agreements](#) struck with top Obama administration Interior officials.

"There is a striking degree of consistency between the ethics agreement that I provided to and that was certified by [OGE General Counsel David] Apol, and the agreements provided by other nominees to positions within the Department of the Interior who also worked in large private law firms representing similar clients, and in some cases the same clients," he wrote.

Bernhardt, who briefly led the Interior transition effort in the immediate aftermath of President Trump's election victory, also declined to provide the committee with records of his communications with lawmakers, the executive branch or the transition team after another former Bush administration official took control of the department's changeover ([Greenwire](#), Nov. 21, 2016). Such disclosures, he argued, were not necessary for the Senate to consider a presidential nominee.

Furthermore, Bernhardt denied that he had any involvement with the appearance of a controversial proposal by Cadiz Inc. — a major client of Brownstein Hyatt — to build a 43-mile-long water pipeline in southern California on the "President-Elect's Priority List of Emergency and National Security Projects."

"I do not know if that is a document developed by the Presidential transition," he added.

Abramoff ties

Bernhardt's responses to questions about his Bush administration service at Interior may cost him Democratic votes as well. For instance, he claimed to "have no relationship" with Jack Abramoff and said he does "not believe I ever met him."

But Abramoff emails posted ahead of Bernhardt's confirmation hearing by the Center for Western Priorities, a progressive nonprofit group, suggest that Bernhardt attended at least one intimate dinner in September 2001 with the disgraced super lobbyist and his clients.

In one [message](#), Abramoff told colleagues he and a client would be sitting at a table with former Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Bernhardt. Abramoff then asked his co-workers to "confirm that you can be at this very important dinner."

Bernhardt, in his responses, also suggested he had little to do with erroneous testimony that Norton submitted to the Senate Energy panel that lent support for oil and gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"A whole host of entities" at Interior were involved in creating that testimony, which his office ultimately submitted to the committee. Bernhardt added that "at the time I was just learning about ANWR and I was not then serving as the Secretary's primary policy counselor on the issue."

Few policy promises

On policy issues, Bernhardt didn't make many firm commitments. He claimed that Interior isn't required to combat climate change. Bernhardt also declined to support fully funding and making permanent the Land

and Water Conservation Fund, a federal and state land-buying program that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke strongly backed during his time in Congress.

LWCF is set to expire after September 2018. It is currently authorized to receive up to \$900 million per year from offshore oil and gas royalties, although the administration's budget request only asked for it to get \$64 million in fiscal 2018 (*E&E Daily*, May 24).

Bernhardt hinted at supporting reforms to how the conservation and recreation program is funded. "Should I be confirmed, I would look forward to working with Secretary Zinke, you, and your colleagues to reauthorize the program, including identifying stable, diverse and long-term funding mechanisms to keep the fund viable for generations to come," he said.

One notable promise Bernhardt made was to work with Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) on a long-term solution for a rural schools grant program. During the Bush administration, Wyden filibustered Bernhardt's nomination for Interior solicitor over the issue (*E&E Daily*, Sept. 11, 2006).

<http://bit.ly/2qTdDr3>

5. Nominee questions agency's role in addressing warming

Brittany Patterson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

President Trump's pick for the Interior Department's second-in-command believes that man has an influence on the climate but doesn't believe that the agency should adjust its policies because of it.

In written responses to questions from members of Congress, David Bernhardt stuck largely to the script regarding climate change. The nominee for Interior deputy secretary was peppered with questions about it by Democratic members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Bernhardt, a former top George W. Bush administration Interior official and lawyer, said he agrees with scientists that the burning of fossil fuels contributes to climate change but that he does not believe the agency has a role to play in reducing their use.

"I am not aware that Congress has ever provided that direction to the Department of the Interior," Bernhardt told Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.).

Public lands managed by the Interior Department account for about 40 percent of all coal mined in the United States and about 20 percent of the oil and gas produced.

When asked whether climate change should be factored into regulatory analyses, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes or future policies, Bernhardt repeated the statements he had made at his confirmation hearing last month.

"As I indicated at my hearing, I will consider the science on climate change and the applicable law in recommending policy decisions that are consistent with the administration's agenda and the law, should I be confirmed," he said multiple times.

Sanders continued his line of questioning, asking how Bernhardt — who would carry out the agency's policies — would work to address climate change at the agency.

"I will work to understand it better and pursue adaptive management strategies, as appropriate," Bernhardt said.

The nominee stated multiple times that he supports an "all of the above" energy strategy that includes renewable energy development as well as more traditional coal, oil and gas.

He also indicated that Interior would work closely with the Forest Service to prevent forest fires and promised to evaluate Interior's own fire suppression programs.

Bernhardt offered few assurances to Senate Democrats concerned about his potential conflicts of interest. The topic dominated his confirmation hearing and was prominent in the written questions submitted by members of the committee (*E&E Daily*, June 5).

The committee is scheduled to vote tomorrow on whether to move his nomination forward. Bernhardt would only need Republican support in the full Senate in order to be confirmed.

Reporter Corbin Hiar contributed.

<http://bit.ly/2qUSkFx>

6. Senators to cast vote on Trump's energy picks

Hannah Northey, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is slated to vote on four of President Trump's energy nominees tomorrow and likely approve the candidates for a full floor vote.

On tap are Dan Brouillette to serve in the second-highest post at the Energy Department and David Bernhardt for the job of deputy Interior secretary. Also up for a vote are Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson to fill two Republican vacancies on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

While voicing angst over Trump's steep budget cuts across the federal government and questions about climate change, senators in the confirmation hearings for the candidates appeared to be moving toward swift confirmation.

Members of the Senate panel last month said Brouillette couldn't be held responsible for Trump's fiscal 2018 budget proposal that threatens to scrap the agency's loan guarantee and advanced research programs and severely cut funding for nuclear, fossil and renewable research (*Greenwire*, May 25). But the nomination of Bernhardt, a former Capitol Hill aide and lobbyist, has generated controversy (*E&E Daily*, May 19). He fielded some tough questions from ENR ranking member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and other Democrats during his May confirmation hearing about potential conflicts of interest because of his lobbying work on behalf of energy interests.

Bernhardt also addressed allegations of mismanagement at Interior when he served during the George W. Bush administration — including a drug and sex scandal at what was then known as the Minerals Management Service and political interference in endangered species decisions (*Greenwire*, May 18). Bernhardt, who has served as chairman of the natural resources department at the law firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP, previously promised if confirmed to "not participate personally or substantially in any particular matter involving" his former clients or "specific parties in which I know the firm is a party or represents a party" for one to two years, unless he receives authorization to do so. He elaborated in questions for the record obtained by E&E News on Friday (*see related story*).

Senators are also eager to approve the two pending FERC candidates — Chatterjee, a longtime aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), and Powelson, a former Pennsylvania regulator — and restore the agency's ability to approve high-profile natural gas pipelines, export terminals, and other projects and looming decisions. FERC has been operating for several months without a quorum.

Exactly when Trump will nominate a candidate to lead the commission, most likely Jones Day energy lawyer Kevin McIntyre, is unclear, as is the identity of the Democratic nominee with whom he could be paired.

Reporter Kellie Lunney contributed.

Schedule: The markup is Tuesday, June 6, at 9:30 a.m. in 366 Dirksen.

<http://bit.ly/2rMY5Vb>

7. Tribes, activists slam Zinke for ignoring warming in Alaska

Brittany Patterson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

When President Obama visited Alaska in 2015, he toured the Inuit village of Kotzebue, whose very existence is threatened by climate change, and vowed to "do more" to protect communities from rising seas.

When President Trump's Interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, toured the state last week, he laid his hands on an oil pipeline and then promised to fill it.

"The president has tasked me to prepare our country to be energy dominant," Zinke told a crowd at the Alaska Oil and Gas Association's annual meeting last week in Anchorage. "The only path for energy dominance is a path through the great state of Alaska."

Zinke's Alaska trip, coming just as the president announced the United States would withdraw from a landmark global agreement to fight climate change, underscored the dramatic shift in the federal government's approach toward energy.

The 49th state is in many ways ground zero for climate impacts — from Newtok, an Alaska Native village in the Yukon River Delta that has been trying to relocate for decades as the permafrost erodes beneath it, to Kivalina, a coastal village located on an island separating the Chukchi Sea that is fast disappearing. The state is warming at a rate more than double the mainland U.S., and temperatures are expected to be 3 degrees Fahrenheit higher during the summer and 6 F warmer in the winter by 2060.

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Yet Zinke's trip marked the first one by a federal official in years where climate change was barely mentioned. Instead, the secretary vowed to revive oil and gas production, a goal of Trump's "America First" energy platform. He announced plans to update the government's resource assessment for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and to open new sections of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) to oil and gas leasing. Interior has already committed to rewriting the offshore oil and gas five-year leasing plan to incorporate lease sales in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas, areas Obama placed under protection and Trump recently undid using executive action (*Climatewire*, June 1).

Some Alaska Native communities say they are troubled by the sudden downplaying of climate change.

"It's just night and day, the difference between these visits," Princess Lucaj, who does community organizing with Native communities and is a member of the Gwich'in tribe of northern Alaska, said of the visit compared with Obama's.

"When Obama came up, he danced with our children, he restored the traditional name of Denali [National Park and Preserve], he went of his way to make us feel valued and respected," she said. "I didn't see any of that during this trip."

Others, particularly Republican lawmakers, say they are pleased by the focus away from climate change and toward fossil fuel extraction and "energy dominance."

A spokesman for Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) said the congressman believes the recent actions taken by the Interior "represent a fundamental shift, one from adversary to partner for Alaska and our many priorities."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) organized Zinke's four-day whirlwind tour of Alaska. He was accompanied by Sens. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), John Cornyn (R-Texas), Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.).

The delegation spent time with veterans and Interior employees in Anchorage and checked out sled dogs in Denali National Park. They visited the North Slope, touring a ConocoPhillips Co. oil operation in the NPR-A.

The group flew over ANWR, a potentially oil-rich, 19-million-acre expanse of wilderness, and later had a more than hourlong roundtable discussion with the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska.

AFN President Julie Kitka said in a statement the meeting was "productive." She said the group stressed to Zinke that the indigenous peoples of Alaska "are ready to partner with the federal government to boost Alaska's economy, help lift Alaska out of its economic recession, and take on more of the services and management currently done by the government."

AFN's 2016 federal policy [priorities](#) devoted multiple pages to the need for funding, investment and support in order to deal with the changing climate.

"We are finding ourselves on the front line of climate change," the document states.

Kitka told E&E News that in the meeting with Zinke, climate change was only discussed "in the context of emergency preparedness and response, and in the critical national interest in protecting village and regional infrastructure."

AFN's 2017 federal priorities [document](#) does not mention climate change.

'An attack on my homeland'

Esau Sinnok, a student at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and resident of Shishmaref, an Alaskan village located on the Chukchi Sea that last year voted to relocate due to climate change, praised Zinke for meeting with AFN, but noted the group does not speak for all tribes, and many are not in favor of oil and gas development.

"Alaska is being shown as this oil state with everyone supporting drilling, but it's not like that," he said.

Representatives from Shishmaref and the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope said they had not been invited or had a member present at Zinke's roundtable.

Bernadette Demientieff is a member of the Gwich'in tribe, which does not support oil and gas development in ANWR.

Traditionally, the Gwich'in people depend on the porcupine caribou for subsistence hunting. The caribou historically birth and nurse their young in the coastal plain of ANWR, including in the 1002 Area, which Zinke signaled for possibly opening up for oil and gas development.

"We have a spiritual and cultural connection to the porcupine caribou herd," said Demientieff, who serves as executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, a group of Gwich'in that advocates on behalf of its people against drilling.

She said the Department of the Interior did not reach out before signing the secretarial order last week that "in effect makes Alaska open to business."

Demientieff said she reached out to the secretary and invited him to speak with Native Alaskan tribes, especially those affected by increasing oil and gas development.

"Don't just talk to the people who are going to make money off of it," she said, breaking down into tears. "I'm scared. I feel like this is a direct attack on my homeland."

She said when Obama visited Alaska, she felt respected and appreciated that both he and then-Interior Secretary Sally Jewell took the time to "visit the communities we never thought anyone would visit."

The Interior Department did not respond to multiple requests for comment regarding some tribes' concerns they were not consulted or if the secretary had plans to visit villages affected by climate change.

Requests to meet denied



Obama Interior Secretary Sally Jewell focused on climate change during her trip to Alaska, including a tour of Kivalina, which may have to be relocated because of climate change. Department of the Interior/Flickr

In addition to Obama's visit to threatened Alaska communities, Jewell twice visited Alaska. During her second visit in February 2015, she toured Kotzebue and Kivalina at the invitation of AFN. Both communities are threatened by rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

"You felt the love, and you felt the connection. You just felt hope," Demientieff said. "It's just hard to have hope right now when they're doing this. It's like they don't care about what they're doing to us."

Speaking last month at a forum on energy policy hosted by the American Council for Capital Formation, Murkowski, who believes climate change is real and acknowledges its effects on Alaska, said she was unimpressed by Obama's visit of Kivalina and expressed concern that his international-focused climate agenda overlooked places like her state.

"I look to the visit President Obama made in 2015 where he went specifically to see some of the impacts of climate change," she said. "He flew over Kivalina, a community threatened by coastal erosion, and a lot of press about it. And then he left, took the pictures, but there was a billion dollars that was to be directed to the Green [Climate] Fund. Not a dime of that was going to be spent in a place like Alaska."

Zinke during his trip fielded multiple reporter questions about climate change and the Paris Agreement, but didn't offer anything concrete. He said he hoped to better partner with tribes, which told him they were open to development.

Peter Van Tuyn, an environmental lawyer with Besseney & Van Tuyn LLC based in Alaska, said the silence on climate change was one of the most striking differences between the two sets of visits.

"In the long term for Alaska, climate change is a huge threat for us, and for many of these communities already a day-to-day threat," he said. "Zinke didn't listen to a word about that as far as I can tell."

Conservation groups also noted a difference between the two administrations' visits. Multiple organizations said their request to meet with Zinke while in Alaska were denied.

Nicole Whittington-Evans, Alaska regional director for the Wilderness Society, said that was a big statement in and of itself.

"It's unfortunate when an Interior secretary, who really oversees millions of acres of conservation units, chooses not to meet with the conservation community and conservation leaders in the state," she said. "The fact that his first place he toured was the Arctic and he toured the oil fields is really indicative of his agenda."

Dan Ritzman, the associate director of regional campaigns for the Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign, noted there were many decisions made by the previous administration, especially in Alaska, that the Sierra Club and other green groups disagreed with.

Under Obama, the oil giant Royal Dutch Shell PLC acquired multiple leases in the Chukchi Sea. The U.S. became the No. 1 producer of oil and gas in the world during the last administration.

"There were plenty of times we didn't agree with them, but they still met with us and held open channels of dialogue," Ritzman said.

<http://bit.ly/2svSqAH>

8. 4 energy and environment questions as Congress returns

George Cahlink, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

As Congress returns for a monthlong legislative stretch, Cabinet members will make long-awaited appearances, lawmakers and the White House will work to avoid financial crises, tax talks will heat up, and midterm election-watchers will seek clues about who's running.

Here are four questions on energy and the environment:

What will Scott Pruitt say?

Congress is certain to hear this month from U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, Energy Secretary Rick Perry and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke for the first time since their confirmation hearings earlier this year.

All three are due before House and Senate authorizing and appropriations committees to defend President Trump's fiscal 2018 budget. Zinke is already on the agenda for this week ([see related story](#)).

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Pruitt, a pariah among Democrats for his fierce opposition to the Clean Power Plan, is likely to face bipartisan criticism over a proposal to cut the agency's budget by 31 percent. Both parties have said the plan is dead on arrival.

Pruitt is also likely to get plenty of questions about Trump's decision to exit the Paris climate accord. While Democrats will bash him for his anti-Paris advocacy, conservatives like home-state ally Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) will praise Pruitt.

Zinke will likely face queries, especially from House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah), about whether he will recommend the administration revoke or reduce 27 national monuments, including Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah.

Zinke will have an ally in Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) on a budget proposal to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for energy exploration, but she will likely take issue with other aspects of the spending plan.

Perry, a former Texas governor, has kept a relatively low profile as he has visited DOE sites around the nation hoping to learn about a department he previously admitted to having little knowledge about.

Perry's most pointed questions will come from appropriators over proposals to cut energy research that don't have much political support outside the White House.

Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), ranking member on ENR, will want an update from Perry on nuclear cleanup work at the Hanford Site in her state after a recent leak of radioactive materials there.

Is the border adjustment tax dead?

Congressional Republicans and the White House agree they want to move tax reform legislation. But it remains an open question whether a proposal riling the energy community will be a part of the package.

The administration and congressional leaders are likely to accelerate talks over the shape of their tax bill this month as they press toward what seems like a long-shot August deadline.

Lawmakers are sure to note the six-figure digital advertising campaign launched last week by the Koch brothers-backed American for Prosperity that pushes Republicans to move an overhaul without including what's been its most controversial proposal, a border adjustment tax.

The BAT, championed by House GOP leaders, would create a 20 percent tax on imports while exempting exports. Backers argue the policy shift is vital to raising \$1 trillion in revenue over the next decade that would allow them to make the deepest cuts in corporate and individual rates since the Reagan years.

Senate Republicans, including Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, however, have suggested the BAT won't fly in their chamber amid concerns it would unfairly hit oil importers and other manufacturers.

Members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus have also begun warning that the BAT could sink tax reform. The administration has offered reservations, too.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has signaled some openness in recent weeks to BAT "alternatives," but the man to watch for signs of a deal is House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas), who continues to press for the idea.

Will Congress skip energy and enviro spending bills?

The White House and Capitol Hill Republicans will be looking for ways over the next several weeks to avoid a politically treacherous fiscal meltdown this fall.

House Republicans are floating the idea of wrapping all 12 fiscal 2018 spending bills into an omnibus package that they would move before August recess.

The decision could help avoid a possible government shutdown when the new fiscal year begins Oct. 1. It would also sidestep messy floor fights over attaching riders to individual spending bills, particularly ones covering energy and water and Interior and EPA.

Conservatives could still balk at moving massive spending legislation, and Senate Democrats have the votes to filibuster any omnibus that ignores their funding priorities.

Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin surprised many observers recently by suggesting Congress will need to sign off on a clean increase of the nation's borrowing authority, also known as the debt ceiling, before its August recess.

Without an increase, the U.S. would default on billions in loans and risk starting a global financial crisis. But many lawmakers on Capitol Hill thought the increase would not be needed until fall.

Conservatives, including many members of the Freedom Caucus, have come out against Mnuchin's plan, saying they will require at least a framework for future cuts to go along with any debt increase.

Such sentiments echo Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, a former House hard-liner who directly contradicted Mnuchin in comments last week. He also wants spending adjustments.

If the 30 or so members of the Freedom Caucus hold together, they could force leaders to rely on Democrats to pass a debt ceiling increase.

But House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Friday that Democrats might not back even a clean raise if the GOP moves ahead with a tax plan that favors the wealthiest Americans.

Will Upton run?

Almost six months into 2017, many questions remain about next year's midterm elections.

Former House Energy and Commerce Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) continues to eye a possible challenge to the Great Lakes State's senior Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D) next year. It would surely be one of the most competitive and expensive races of the upcoming cycle.

Stabenow is already in campaign mode, and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee has run pre-emptive online ads against Upton.

The strength of his fundraising numbers for the first half of the year, due on June 30, could offer some hint as to whether he'll pursue the challenge.

So far, no sitting senators have announced they will not seek re-election in 2018, one of the longest stretches in recent history.

The biggest retirement questions surround the future of the longest-serving Republican, Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, the chairman of the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee.

The seven-term senator has danced around the issue, first saying he would retire and then suggesting he was eyeing another run. Hatch, 83, has floated 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney as his possible replacement.

Other potential retirees on the Democratic side are: Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California, 83; Tom Carper of Delaware, 70; and Bill Nelson of Florida, 74.

All three have said they expect to run and would be favorites to win, but they all have been subject to frequent speculation about those plans changing.

One definite retirement is coming at the end of the month, with House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) leaving Congress.

The House Republican Steering Committee will meet this week to pick his replacement, with Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) strongly favored to get the gavel.

<http://bit.ly/2rY1bXh>

9. Budget cuts rip into USGS impact research

Pamela King, E&E News reporter

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On the surface, the Interior Department's efforts to study the environmental impacts of unconventional oil and gas development appear to have survived the Trump administration's massive budget cuts.

"As demands for energy and mineral resources grow, USGS research and assessments become increasingly critical to understand the occurrence, quality, supply, and use of national and global resources," according to the U.S. Geological Survey's fiscal 2018 [budget justification](#).

Just how robust that research will be remains unclear.

The Trump administration proposed a \$922 million budget for Geological Survey programs, \$138 million below the 2017 continuing resolution baseline. The proposal includes \$74.4 million for the Energy and Minerals Mission Area, a \$1.5 million increase.

But that bump is the result of a funding transfer for carbon sequestration research. Effectively, the mission area's two arms, the Energy Resources Program (ERP) and the Mineral Resources Program (MRP), would receive 2 percent less funding in the next fiscal year, said Murray Hitzman, associate director of Energy and Minerals.

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How will those cuts affect USGS's ability to study hydraulic fracturing impacts?

"We're still trying to figure that out," he said.

Until this month, Hitzman led a [multiagency research collaborative](#) including Interior, U.S. EPA and the Energy Department to study unconventional oil and gas development. Leadership this month shifted to EPA, where the Trump administration has proposed trimming the budget by 30 percent. According to an agency spokeswoman, EPA received its last oil and gas research appropriation — \$3 million to study development in the Appalachian Basin — in fiscal 2016 ([Energywire](#), Feb. 15).

As part of the research collaboration, USGS is charged with measuring fracking's impact on air and water quality and human health.

The steepest reduction to the agency's fracking research capabilities comes in the form of a 20 percent cut to the agency's Environmental Health Mission Area. One of the mission area's divisions last year found a "definitive link" between water quality impacts and deep well injection of oil and gas wastewater ([Energywire](#), May 11, 2016).

That study was guided by the multiagency collaboration, USGS hydrologist Isabelle Cozzarelli said late last year. How that strategy could change under President Trump is "a big unknown," she said at the time ([Energywire](#), Dec. 13, 2016).

"We currently plan to continue much of the work we do as part of the multiagency collaboration (energy assessments, water studies, etc.)," USGS spokesman Alex Demas wrote last week in an email to E&E News. "Unfortunately, because it's a multiagency collaboration and therefore depends on the budget situations of three different departments, it's too early right now for me to be able to tell you with any certainty or clarity how the whole collaboration will work."

Energy and minerals

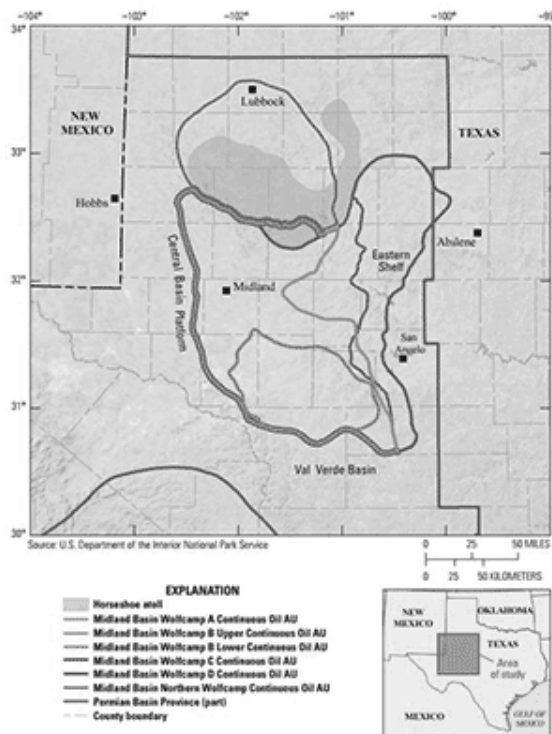
The Energy and Minerals Mission Area's primary oil and gas work is centered on resource assessments, such as the analysis last year that found 20 billion barrels of oil and 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in Texas' Wolfcamp Shale ([Energywire](#), Nov. 16, 2016).

A \$644,000 reduction to MRP and a \$290,000 cut to ERP reduce the agency's ability to conduct those studies, according to USGS's budget justification.

Among ERP's strategic actions for 2018 is a plan to "release USGS assessments of undiscovered, technically recoverable oil and gas resources in U.S. and non-U.S. basins," the document shows.

ERP is also funding research on the extent to which fracking is polluting groundwater in U.S. shale plays. Last week, a group of researchers wrote that they did not find evidence that extraction is currently a primary contributor to drinking water contamination ([Energywire](#), June 1). Industry pointed to Tuesday's [paper](#) as evidence that federal research on fracking has reached its limit.

Texas' Wolfcamp Shale



[+] USGS last year released its largest-ever estimate of continuous oil in the Permian Basin's Wolfcamp Shale. The Energy Resources Program, which conducted the assessment, would field an effective reduction under the proposed budget. Department of the Interior/National Park Service

"Hydraulic fracturing is safe, and the science on fracking's alleged drinking water impacts has been settled for some time," said Neal Kirby, spokesman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America. "We believe the research into the safety of hydraulic fracturing has been done, and no more American taxpayer dollars are needed to research the issue further."

Tuesday's study focused on a limited number of wells in southern shale formations and acknowledged it may take decades to fully understand fracking's effect on drinking water.

"In the past, it's been our experience that research can often lead to regulation," Kirby said. "We believe the states and private industry are in the best position to research and address these issues as they arise."

The Sierra Club cast a critical eye on the study — one of the first on fracking released by Trump's USGS.

"This slapdash report seems to be part of a troubling trend from this administration of attempting to erase science that is inconvenient for their friends in the fossil fuel industry," said Kelly Martin, deputy director of the Beyond Dirty Fuels campaign. "Whatever the claims made by this flawed and incomplete report, two things are clear: Donald Trump's dangerous beliefs have no place in government science, and fracking has no place in our communities."

Athan Manuel, director of the club's lands protection program, said environmentalists are watching USGS's findings moving forward.

"We want to be open-minded and read the research and see what it says, but we definitely assume the worst from this administration," he said.

If fracking is going to occur, its impacts should be studied by fact- and science-based entities like USGS, Manuel said. Shrinking the agency's budget — which is still subject to congressional approval — is a puzzling decision, he said.

"USGS does a lot with a little bit of money, and this is not the place we should be cutting," he said.

Environmental health

A \$4.3 million reduction to Environmental Health would push the mission area's focus to oil and gas, said Associate Director Geoff Plumlee.

"With the proposed budget, many different aspects of the USGS had to make a lot of tough decisions on what our core mission is," he said.

Plumlee's team could roll back studies of subsurface contaminant transport near known chemical spills and scale back work on legacy environmental pollutants.

If the proposed budget is approved, staff and resources would be rededicated to fracking science, Plumlee said.

"The main thing is that unconventional oil and gas remains a high priority for us," he said.

The mission area's Toxic Substances Hydrology Program has led research to understand how a brine spill in a North Dakota stream could be persisting in sediments, water and organisms.

If USGS steps back on its obligations on that project, state agencies could attempt to step in, said David Glatt, chief of environmental health for the North Dakota Department of Health.

"By putting our budgets together, we can come up with the information we need," he said. "It's really going to be critical that we prioritize and work together on what needs to be done."

No matter the president, proposed budgets are generally deemed dead on arrival in Congress, Glatt said.

He hopes lawmakers are able to swiftly decide on funding priorities for the coming fiscal year.

<http://bit.ly/2sKljal>

10. Can U.S. clean energy still lead after Trump's Paris gambit?

E&E News staff

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When President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement last week, his critics said he effectively abandoned U.S. efforts to be the world's leading developer of clean energy technology.

Clean energy is already a bona-fide global industry, one that drew \$349 billion in new investment in 2015, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Technologies such as conventional wind turbines and rooftop solar panels have established leaders and supply chains. But other technologies remain up for grabs, such as high-capacity energy storage, while a longer list of cutting-edge but far-fetched energy technologies compete for the money, time and space to develop.

"The United States will continue to be actively engaged in the development of global energy and the world leader in the development of next-generation technology," Energy Secretary Rick Perry said Thursday.

So if the United States completes its exit from the Paris climate accord, where would that leave it?

Could it still hope to be a leader in terms of deployment, jobs or intellectual property? Or would it watch those go to China and Europe, as Trump's critics suggest?

Energy storage

Energy storage is a hot new industry, and America has become its innovation engine — creating some of the best new products, software and business models that are starting to make energy storage a moneymaker.

Less stellar has been our record at holding on to that innovation edge. In the last few years, U.S. startups have been snapped up by foreign buyers, especially from Europe, where the big energy companies seem to grasp the market potential of energy storage better than America's do (*Energywire*, March 20).

Some speculate that Trump's yanking the United States out of the Paris Agreement will cause other countries to view U.S. energy companies with the same skeptical filter they apply to Trump.

"Pulling out of the Paris Agreement will bias foreign governments against U.S. firms, making it harder for American companies to sell their expertise around the world," said Jigar Shah, a storied U.S. solar entrepreneur.

But those countries are also probably savvy enough to know that American business and the American government are not necessarily the same thing, especially when it comes to climate policy in the Trump era (*Energywire*, June 2). — **David Ferris**

Nuclear

Pulling out of the Paris Agreement will have little impact on the U.S. nuclear industry, which is struggling to restart after remaining dormant for roughly 30 years.

Nuclear is a carbon-free form of energy that, in theory, would have been incentivized under a global agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. But the United States has struggled to keep down the cost of building modern reactors, and that is dampening the prospect of future U.S. nuclear expansions.

The nuclear industry is a global one, and projects in other countries are still waiting to get built. More than 60 nuclear reactors are being built in 13 countries including China, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Russia, according to the World Nuclear Association. But they'll likely use technology and parts from countries such as South Korea, Italy, China and Japan.

Quitting the Paris Agreement isn't expected to mean permanent job losses in the United States, where Westinghouse Electric Co. just declared bankruptcy. For U.S. workers and craft laborers on-site at nuclear projects in Georgia and South Carolina, prospects are good they'll find other high-tech construction jobs in other sectors of the economy.

With Paris off the table, U.S. companies that want a piece of the nuclear industry will have to develop new technology and streamline a heavily regulated U.S. industry with the strictest safety standards.

What's more, the transformation of electricity could give rise to small nuclear reactors and other technologies. Large, baseload reactors could be a thing of the past. — **Kristi E. Swartz**

Offshore wind

The United States just placed five turbines off the coast of Rhode Island. Europe has built just under 3,600 and counting. Last August, U.K. policymakers approved a 300-turbine project, enough to power 1.8 million British homes.

It's never been a secret who's in charge of the global offshore wind industry, and Paris can't change that. European-domiciled companies — chiefly in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom — have been at it for decades. Even General Electric Co. makes parts in France.

Now that Maryland, Massachusetts and New York want to build thousands of megawatts of offshore wind, the question is whether the parts need to be made here. New factories cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, and so far the industry has said it needs to see bigger commitments (*Energywire*, April 24).

There is one area where the United States could still seize the lead: floating turbines, which would bob on the ocean surface instead of being driven into the ocean floor. Engineers are still trying to figure out the most cost-effective technology. California is interested, as it has a 50 percent renewable power target for 2030 and has a seabed too deep for standard technology. — **Saqib Rahim**

Hydraulic fracturing

In or out of the Paris Agreement, Trump's move is unlikely to have any impact on U.S. dominance in natural gas extraction.

While shale gas has upended U.S. energy markets, relatively little shale gas exploration and production is occurring beyond North America. China has struggled to develop its own domestic shale gas reserves with gas prices low. Algeria once boldly declared its intent to become a shale gas powerhouse, but to date little has come of that announced initiative. Argentina is looking to develop mainly shale oil but also some shale gas from its Vaca Muerta formation.

Fracking out of gas basins in Texas, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania has had a global impact. Around 2005, the U.S. government and industry expected a rush of liquefied natural gas imports to meet rising U.S. gas demand. But in recent years, investments in ports to import LNG went bust as domestic shale gas supplies soared. Those import centers are being retooled as LNG export hubs, adding the United States to a growing list of global gas suppliers, upending the Middle East's dominance.

A transition away from oil- and coal-fired power generation has been a major contributor to a decline in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Natural gas has in most cases been the fuel to replace coal. For its part, Europe is trying to diversify its supply of gas. Though energy demand in Europe isn't expected to expand by much, more U.S. LNG is expected to head to Europe, with or without U.S. participation in an international climate treaty. — **Nathanial Gronewold**

Solar

Trump's nixing of the Paris Agreement won't do much by itself to tip the scales of U.S. solar power. It's Trump's other decisions, involving trade and research funding, that are likely to have a much larger impact.

Solar has become the fastest-growing source of new electricity and created hundreds of thousands of jobs not because of international accords but because its prices have finally dropped to the point where it's competitive with even the bargain-basement prices of natural gas.

But those prices face new uncertainty because of a tariff proposal now wending its way through the U.S. International Trade Commission. Domestic manufacturing of basic solar materials has withered in recent

years because of cheap imports. In response, manufacturers have appealed directly to Trump to raise trade barriers. If Trump does so, the result could be pricier imports that slam the brakes on solar growth.

What is more likely to restore America's role in manufacturing is the creation of products and methods that essentially restart the industry and erase Asia's entrenched lead. That's why many in the solar industry are dismayed by Trump's steep cuts for research funding, which could lead to just that kind of breakthrough. — **David Ferris**

Natural gas turbines

U.S. companies dominate natural-gas-fired turbine manufacturing and exports, though they share a slice of the pie with European and Japanese rivals. International energy experts anticipate that a global shift away from coal toward greater gas-fired generation would drive global greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

In international trade, the United States exports more gas turbine technology than it imports by almost tenfold. According to the Census Bureau, exports of gas turbines last year were valued at some \$5.1 billion. Imports were estimated at a little under \$590 million in 2016. But recent data suggest the United States' global lead in gas turbine technology may be slipping. The U.S. has seen rising imports of smaller gas turbines in recent years as foreign companies pick up market share.

Analysts at ICF warned that foreign governments and companies are increasingly focusing on investments in advanced gas turbine technologies and that the United States is poised to fall behind unless companies invest in research and development.

"Foreign manufacturers will gain a large share of the U.S. market for new electric generating capacity over the next 25 years unless U.S.-based manufacturers develop new advanced natural gas-fired combined cycles," analysts there concluded in the report. "Without advanced U.S.-based gas turbines, foreign manufacturers are poised to increase their share of the [natural-gas-fired combined cycle] market from 6 percent to 53 percent by 2037." — **Nathanial Gronewold**

CCS

Paris or no Paris, carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology faces the same problem it always has: The technology hasn't advanced far enough to become a real option for fighting climate change.

Why? Because no one yet knows how to burn coal, capture all of the CO₂, then store or reuse the gas, all in a way that makes commercial sense. It's still extremely expensive.

Engineers are still pecking at different parts of the problem. There are 40 large-scale demonstration projects globally, 13 of which are in the United States, according to the [Global CCS Institute](#).

The U.S. efforts, once expected to make the nation a technology exporter, have been wayward. The Energy Department canceled the high-profile FutureGen project in 2015. A power plant for Mississippi Power Co. has gone billions of dollars over budget. A Duke Energy Corp. project in Indiana soured former CEO Jim Rogers.

"My judgment is, I believe that it's just too expensive today, there's been no breakthroughs, there's been a lot of money invested to figure it out," Rogers said at a recent event at the Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy. "It's just not economic to build ... the future for coal in the United States, there is no future."

Secretary of Energy Perry said he plans to discuss CCS on his trip to East Asia. But the Trump administration's strategy is unclear since it proposed cutting the research and development budget at DOE's Office of Fossil Energy from \$668 million to \$280 million. — **Saqib Rahim**

<http://bit.ly/2qZkQkq>

11. Lawmakers to wade into contentious abandoned mine program

Dylan Brown, E&E News reporter

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House lawmakers will get a head start this week on debating whether to reauthorize a program that charges coal mining companies a fee to help clean up abandoned sites.

The Interior Department's Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) program does not expire until Sept. 30, 2021, but after a previous bitter, yearslong fight in Congress, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources is holding a hearing Wednesday on renewal.

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act established a per-ton fee to cover the costs of reclamation at coal sites abandoned before it passed in 1977.

Forty years later, the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement reports about \$4 billion in work complete but roughly \$10 billion left to do.

Most eligible mines remain in traditional coal states like Pennsylvania and West Virginia, but more than half of all fee revenue last year came from Wyoming, a "certified" state because it has finished its priority cleanup work.

That dichotomy has pitted Wyoming and other certified states, which want to keep coal revenue at home, against eastern uncertified states, who say the goal of the AML program is cleaning up coal sites, not padding state coffers.

In 2006, the two sides brokered a tenuous compromise that saw AML fees funneled to traditional coal states, while payments from the federal Treasury were used to make up for every dollar that would have gone to certified states.

Certified states still clean up post-SMCRA coal areas and issues that re-emerge on reclaimed sites, but under SMCRA, money can be used for non-coal projects.

Funding is often directed at hardrock mine reclamation, which lacks a similar AML fund, but it is infrastructure spending that infuriates advocates and environmentalists in uncertified states. Wyoming, for example, briefly considered using the money for a \$10 million university basketball arena in 2011.

A recent Interior Department inspector general report stoked that discord by noting that from 2013 to 2016, Wyoming spent \$214 million on non-coal projects, compared with \$166 million at coal sites (*Greenwire*, April 4).

Wyoming lawmakers have staunchly defended that spending, and Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) opposed legislation that would accelerate payments out of the Abandoned Mine Land Fund in the name of spurring economic development in traditional mining states (*E&E Daily*, April 6).

Schedule: The hearing is Wednesday, June 7, at 10 a.m. in 1324 Longworth.

Witnesses: Those invited include John Dawes, executive director, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds; Glenda Owens, acting director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement;

Todd Parfitt, director, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality; Hal Quinn, CEO, National Mining Association; and Rob Rice, chief, West Virginia Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation.

<http://bit.ly/2qRmPYM>

12. Alaska delivers pricey wish list to Trump

Margaret Kriz Hobson, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, June 5, 2017

Alaska Gov. Bill Walker (I) sent a wish list to President Trump last month laying out the state's seven top infrastructure priorities, including building a road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, helping relocate a coastal village being hit by climate change and building a naval base in Alaska.

The infrastructure request, which was also sent to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, was drawn up after the Trump team directed the state to prioritize its infrastructure needs.

Walker's letter came in advance of this week's White House's campaign to boost infrastructure spending by private companies, states and cities (*Greenwire*, June 5). Alaska's infrastructure request to Trump was first reported by the *Alaska Dispatch News*.

The governor's top request focused on helping Alaska pave the way for the Native village of King Cove to build a road through the Izembek refuge to the city of Cold Bay. Alaska officials are seeking to fast-track the state-federal land exchange needed to build the 12-mile gravel road, which would provide the village access to airport facilities on the Alaska Peninsula.

That project was rejected by the Obama administration in 2013 on the grounds that it would fragment a crucial wetland and tarnish a congressionally designated wilderness area.

The governor's second priority was \$124 million in federal assistance to help relocate the coastal village of Newtok to a new site, known as Mertarvik.

The Native community is in "imminent danger due to advanced erosion caused by permafrost degradation and flooding during seasonal storms," Walker said in his request. Those impacts have been linked to climate change, although Alaska officials do not include those words in the letter.

Walker said the King Cove road and funding for Newtok would help the state address "serious life, health and safety risks" to its residents.

Alaska wants the Trump administration to build an Arctic naval base and expand Coast Guard presence in the state to boost U.S. national security. Walker argued that those projects are essential "given Alaska's proximity to Russia (2.3 miles), China (1,300 miles) and North Korea (1,600 miles), geopolitical tension in the Pacific region, and Russian Arctic military build-up."

He also asked the Department of Defense to quickly complete a report on the need for one or more strategic ports in the Arctic.

Alaska is also seeking:

- Federal loan guarantees and expedited regulatory review for construction of the proposed Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas Project, a \$43 billion venture that would allow the state to commercialize 34 trillion cubic feet of natural gas available at the northern oil fields. The state is seeking to build a North Slope gas treatment plant, an 800-mile natural gas pipeline, a liquefaction plant and an LNG export terminal along the state's southern coast.

- Funding for a road through the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska between the Native communities of Utqiagvik, formerly known as Barrow, and Nuiqsut. Walker said the corridor would be the first phase of a transportation network connecting rural communities and providing access to "stranded resources in the resource-rich North Slope."
- A grant for \$125 million to complete a stalled rail extension.
- Financial assistance to help rebuild Anchorage's aging port.

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