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From: Webster, Sarah
Sent: 2017-05-03T17:54:07-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: BLM-CA in the News, May 3
Received: 2017-05-03T17:54:42-04:00
[New Clips 5 03 LONG.pdf](#)

CALIFORNIA

Wildflower 'superbloom' springs in California

Al Jazeera, May 2

BLM California Bob Wick talks about this year's super bloom after drought.

1-minute hike: The Alabama Hills in California

Bangor Daily News, May 2

Easy to moderate. Several footpaths, lined with rocks, travel through the rock formations of the Alabama Hills over uneven desert floor. Expect small hills, slippery sand and fairly short trails. For example, the Arch Loop Trail, a popular hiking trail in that visits a natural stone arch called the Mobius Arch, is about 0.5 mile long.

BLM to Start Pile Burning Near Pine Hill Preserve to Improve Public Safety

Yuba Net, press release, May 1

In the coming weeks, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will start burning small brush piles to get rid of fire fuel to improve public safety, and as a result, residents of the Cameron Park area near the BLM Pine Hill Preserve may start seeing and smelling smoke.

Feinstein fumes as Trump team waives environmental review for Mojave water project

McClatchy DC, April 4

The Trump administration has handed a big boost to a private water venture in Southern California, angering California's senior senator, Democrat Dianne Feinstein, who said the decision could "destroy pristine public land" in the Mojave Desert.

Trump administration boosts Mojave Desert water project

The SB Sun, April 5

The Trump administration has removed a major roadblock to plans by a Santa Monica company to pump ancient groundwater from below the Mojave Desert and sell it to

urban areas of Southern California.

Cadiz Announces \$255 Million in Construction Financing for Desert Water Project

LA Business Journal, May 2

With the Trump administration soon likely to approve its long-sought desert water storage and transmission project, Cadiz Inc. announced Tuesday it has arranged up to \$255 million in construction financing from giant private equity firm Apollo Global Management... But within days of taking office, President Donald Trump's administration placed the Cadiz project on its priority list of infrastructure projects and then, last month, the Bureau of Land Management rescinded its decision to block the pipeline approval, clearing the way for the final government approval needed for the project.

Cadiz Inc. Issues Statement in Response to Remarks by California Senator Dianne Feinstein on the Cadiz Water Project

Econo Times, April 5

Today, Cadiz Inc. (NASDAQ:CDZI) ("Cadiz", the "Company") CEO Scott Slater released the following statement in response to a press release from California Senator Dianne Feinstein about the Cadiz Water Project and recent action by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management: "Senator Feinstein regrettably relies on outdated, 17-year old data inconsistent with presently known facts as foundation to oppose a project which will safely and sustainably create new water for 400,000 people, has broad bipartisan community support, will generate 5,900 new jobs, and will drive nearly \$1 billion in economic growth. Two public agencies and twelve separate court opinions have expressly repudiated her arguments and sustained our project in accordance with CEQA, the highest environmental legal standard anywhere in America.

Desert groundwater at stake as Joshua Tree pumping plan moves forward

The Press-Enterprise, April 27

Federal land managers have advanced plans for a \$1.4 billion energy-storage project in which desert groundwater would be pumped to high-elevation reservoirs near Joshua Tree National Park and then released downhill to generate electricity. Late last week, the Bureau of Land Management found that using 1,150 acres of public land mainly for the project's power and water lines would not cause significant harm to the environment. The acreage stretches between Interstate 10 and the national park. The finding moves the project, which was licensed by federal energy officials in 2014, into a 30 day period to allow for official protests.

New bill calls for reopening of Clear Creek

Benito Link, April 7

In the latest effort to re-open the Clear Creek Management Area of southern San Benito

County to off-road use, this week California Congressmen Jimmy Panetta (CA-20), David G. Valadao (CA-21), Jeff Denham (CA-10), and Paul Cook (CA-08) introduced H.R. 1913, the Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act. The bill directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to reopen the 63,000-acre Clear Creek Management Area in San Benito and Fresno counties for use by off-road vehicles. The legislation would also protect 21,000 acres of BLM land adjacent to Clear Creek by designating the area the Joaquin Rocks Wilderness.

War in the Woods: Game Wardens Battle Marijuana Cartels

The Crime Report, May 1

Other states with significant cartel gardens on national forests, national and state parks, Bureau of Land Management lands and federal Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife refuges include: Colorado, Oregon, Michigan, Wisconsin and Kentucky especially in the Daniel Boone National Forest.

President Trump Signs Orders That Could Open the California Coast to Offshore Drilling

Lost Coast Outpost, May 2

Besides being beautiful, California's coast shines with historical, cultural, scientific, ecological and recreational significance. Too bad not everyone thinks so. Last week, President Trump signed two executive orders potentially jeopardizing the future of California's coastline; a review of National Monuments designated by presidents since 1996, and a push to expand offshore oil drilling. The above shots happen to be places in Humboldt that are part of the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) -Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch and the Lost Coast Headlands.

Federal policies on rural issues gain attention

AG Alert, May 3

...The order could also affect the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. Van Lennep said that designation moved forward without an adequate process to hear concerns brought by local residents, in part about increased visitor traffic.

Cache Creek Conservancy offers nature journaling workshop

The Davis Enterprise, May 3

Janice Kelley, an award-winning naturalist, author and storyteller, will lead a nature journaling workshop from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 6, at the Cache Creek Nature Preserve, 34199 County Road 20, west of Woodland. Participants may stay for an optional brown-bag lunch and sharing session until 1 p.m.

Fun trails with great views and variety of terrains

Record Searchlight, April 25

It's nice to have connections. The Mule Ridge trails west of Redding are fun to explore and they link to other great trail networks. The Mule Ridge options, accessed from Muletown Road off Placer Road, join with trails in Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's Swasey Recreation Area. They stretch 19.5 miles over BLM lands and four miles into Whiskeytown, offering ups and downs, twists and turns and terrific views.

NATIONAL

Zinke to tour Bears Ears amid Trump monuments review

The Hill, May 3

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is scheduled to tour the controversial Bears Ears National Monument on Monday, local officials in Utah told the Deseret News. Zinke will tour part of the 1.35-million acre Bears Ears monument on horseback, a county commissioner told the paper after meeting with Zinke on Tuesday.

Wild horses on federal land put at risk by omnibus provision, American Wild Horse Campaign warns

The Washington Times, May 2

An interest group devoted to protecting the nation's wild horses is warning that a change in federal law tucked into the omnibus spending package could lead to exploitation of the creatures and a diminishing of their number on federal lands. In a Tuesday news release, the American Wild Horse Campaign says that language in Section 116 of the spending bill up for vote in Congress this week would allow the federal Bureau of Land Management to "strip wild horses of federal protection and transfer them to states and local governments for use as 'work animals.'"

US budget deal avert most agency cuts

Argus Media, May 1

Republican and Democratic leaders in the US Congress have reached a tentative agreement that would reject President Donald Trump's calls to slash spending at environment and energy agencies over the next five months. The spending agreement, released today, would slightly increase funding at the US Interior Department and other energy-related agencies while cutting the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget by just 1pc to \$8bn. The bill overall would authorize about \$1.2 trillion in government spending for all of fiscal 2017, which ends on 30 September.

House Republicans begin probe of monuments law

The Hill, May 2

Top Republicans on the House Natural Resources Committee on Tuesday outlined

potential reforms for the Antiquities Act as the Interior Department kicks off its review of the law. Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.), the chair of the committee's federal lands panel, said "ongoing abuses of the Antiquities Act are antithetical" to the committee's goals of expanding public access to federal lands and managing them along with local governments.

23 Environmental Rules Rolled Back in Trump's First 100 Days

The New York Times, May 2

President Trump, with help from his administration and Republicans in Congress, has reversed course on nearly two dozen environmental rules, regulations and other Obama-era policies during his first 100 days in office. Citing federal overreach and burdensome regulations, Mr. Trump has prioritized domestic fossil fuel interests and undone measures aimed at protecting the environment and limiting global warming.

'We have to restore trust,' Zinke tells industry

ENERGYWIRE, May 2

A decision on reorganizing or possibly merging the government's two principal offshore energy regulatory agencies could arrive by the end of the summer, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told reporters here yesterday. And a designated leader for one of them, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), may be named before the month is out. The delay in naming a new director is due to background checks and ethics reviews underway on the possible nominees to head BSEE and its sister agency, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). *See PDF for full story.*

Measure to roll back methane rule could be in peril

E&E Daily, May 3

A push by pro-ethanol senators to loosen certain restrictions on the fuel is complicating a Senate vote to repeal an Obama-era rule regulating methane waste on public lands. Some Republican senators from "corn states" are eyeing S.J. Res. 11, which would roll back an Interior Department rule that curbs greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas flaring, venting and leakage on public lands, as possible leverage to encourage their colleagues to support a waiver of seasonal restrictions on the sale of E15, or 15 percent ethanol in gasoline. *See PDF for full story.*

Key Dems press Zinke for info on reg review task force

E&E Daily, May 3

Key House Democrats are pushing back at recent Department of the Interior efforts to roll back regulations and are questioning the role of acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior James Cason. House Natural Resource Committee ranking member Raúl

Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations ranking member Donald McEachin (D-Va.) yesterday sent a letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke demanding additional information on a newly established regulatory task force. President Trump's February executive order on regulations requires agencies to establish a panel to identify rules for modification or repeal. *See PDF for full story.*

American Patriot: militias and the Fight Against the Federal Government

PBS Frontline, airing May 16

FRONTLINE investigates how the Bundy family's fight against the government invigorated armed militias and "patriot" groups. The film goes inside the family's standoffs over land in the West, and examines how groups aligned with them have grown to levels not seen in decades.

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NATIONAL

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"The White House has approved a list. It's just going through the Office of Ethics, which has been really, really slow," Zinke said. "But we'll have our name out for BSEE, I'm pretty confident, within 30 days."

On potentially recombining BSEE and BOEM, Zinke said he'll take the summer to consider it, mindful of all the potential pros and cons. The two agencies were created from splitting apart the former Minerals Management Service during the aftermath of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Zinke spoke to reporters at the Offshore Technology Conference, which is an annual gathering of oil and gas executives and employees to assess the latest in marine ocean exploration and production technologies.

Zinke and his staff traveled to Houston to tout President Trump's recent executive order launching a review of BOEM's five-year offshore leasing plan and review of a slew of regulations put on offshore drilling during the Obama administration. The previous administration had rescinded plans to auction off drilling rights to portions of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans. The new review ordered by Trump is likely to relist those areas for offshore drilling consideration.

But Zinke insisted that the review he'll undertake, which he said could take up to two years, will be done in a measured and considerate way that takes into account the interests and desires of local coastal communities. Some may want to see offshore drilling and some may not, he noted, and Zinke pledged to take their thoughts into consideration. He said that approach aligns with Trump's desire to see more power and authority taken out of Washington, incorporating more local interests into decisionmaking.

"There are areas that are appropriate for offshore exploration, and there are areas that aren't," Zinke noted. "We're going to look at it in a very pragmatic, scientific practices effort, and take also the local voice into consideration, as we should."

"The president has made a good point that Americans haven't had a voice, so what we're trying to do is a pivot and give Americans and the community a voice," he added.

On the conference sidelines, Zinke participated in a signing ceremony directing Interior to begin its review of the five-year offshore leasing plan. He signed the order surrounded by employees of Talos Energy LLC and Fieldwood Energy LLC, and leadership of the Consumer Energy Alliance. The photo opportunity was meant to underscore that Trump's Interior would be more cooperative with an industry that had fought the Obama administration on access to onshore and offshore federally controlled energy resources.

He lamented that many people, particularly in the Mountain West, distrusted the agencies under Interior. Hailing from Montana, Zinke said he planned to tour the nation to try to regain the trust of local communities. He insisted that the interests of the economy and the environment can be balanced and pledged to take a "Teddy Roosevelt" approach to lands management that seeks to balance development and conservation.

"We have to look at ourselves, too, and make sure we're streamlined and our regulations aren't arbitrary," Zinke said during his speech. "We have to restore trust."

Measure to roll back methane rule could be in peril

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A push by pro-ethanol senators to loosen certain restrictions on the fuel is complicating a Senate vote to repeal an Obama-era rule regulating methane waste on public lands.

Some Republican senators from "corn states" are eyeing S.J. Res. 11, which would roll back an Interior Department rule that curbs greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas flaring, venting and leakage on public lands, as possible leverage to encourage their colleagues to support a waiver of seasonal restrictions on the sale of E15, or 15 percent ethanol in gasoline.

E15 is mainly derived from corn, and producers say the seasonal sale restrictions on E15 are the biggest obstacle to introducing the blend in more markets (see related story).

Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), among others, unsuccessfully tried to get the E15 waiver into the omnibus package and now are looking for other opportunities to advance it.

"We're trying to figure out a path forward to get it addressed, so we'll see how all that bears on the discussion about the methane CRA," Thune told E&E News yesterday, referring to the Congressional Review Act, the law Republicans are using to try to overturn the BLM methane rule.

If the ethanol backers got a guarantee on the waiver, it would "help enormously" with moving forward on the methane rule, Thune said. "There are a number of us who feel pretty strongly about it. Most of us, of course, are from corn states."

Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), the resolution's sponsor, said yesterday that a vote on the methane rule would happen next week, though he previously assured reporters it would happen this week (E&E Daily, April 27).

Meanwhile, Don Stewart, a top aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), said Monday night that a vote on the BLM methane rule had not yet been scheduled.

The deadline for rolling back the previous administration's "midnight" rules expires next week, on May 9 or 10, which puts pressure on lawmakers to hold a vote soon on S.J. Res. 11.

But Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.), who has been involved in amassing support for the measure, said yesterday he believed the ethanol issue could be straightened out and that it shouldn't be a problem "as far as the vote we're going to have on the CRA."

Still, some senators expressed uncertainty. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), who is still publicly undecided on repealing the methane rule, said yesterday she didn't know if it was going to come to the floor. Another holdout, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), was not aware of the ethanol issue possibly imperiling an impending vote on methane.

Republicans have struggled for months to garner enough votes to pass the resolution rolling back the rule. But senators' positions on S.J. Res. 11 have not necessarily split cleanly along party lines, stalling the measure's momentum in the upper chamber.

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.

Key Dems press Zinke for info on reg review task force

E&E Daily, May 3

Key House Democrats are pushing back at recent Department of the Interior efforts to roll back regulations and are questioning the role of acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior James Cason.

House Natural Resource Committee ranking member Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations ranking member Donald McEachin (D-Va.) yesterday sent a letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke demanding additional information on a newly established regulatory task force.

President Trump's February executive order on regulations requires agencies to establish a panel to identify rules for modification or repeal.

The lawmakers noted that the members of the task force, first reported by E&E News, include five political "beachhead" employees and one career staffer but no Senate-confirmed personnel or staff with clear technical expertise in land management, wildlife management, environmental protection or safety regulation.

They added that there is no information "about how this task force will operate, where it fits in the regulatory review process created by SO 3349, whether any of its activities or decisions will be transparent and be made known to the public, whether it will accept public comments, or any other logistical detail."

They demanded Zinke release more information about how the task force plans to operate, while emphasizing that the task force should not operate in the dark.

"The American people deserve to know why certain regulations are or are not being considered for repeal or modification, how decisions to repeal or modify regulations are being made, and the true health, safety, environmental, and economic impacts of making changes to those regulations," they wrote.

Cason's review authority

In a separate letter, the lawmakers raised questions about an April 12 memo Zinke sent to department secretaries directing them to ensure all bureau heads and office directors report to the acting deputy secretary on all "proposed decisions" that have "nationwide, regional, or statewide impacts."

The memo also said that decisions should not be made until the acting deputy secretary has "reviewed the report and provided clearance."

"While the memo purports to be in part for the purpose of allowing the Acting Deputy Secretary to learn more about how Departmental decisions are made, the person currently filling the role of Acting Deputy Secretary, Mr. James Cason, served as Associate Deputy Secretary for the

Department of the Interior from 2001 through 2009, and would be expected to already have a good understanding about Departmental processes," yesterday's letter pointed out.

Grijalva and McEachin asked Zinke to disclose any guidance issued to Interior agencies explaining the extent of Cason's review authority. They also asked what authority Cason has over grants and regulatory decisions, and for further clarification over the terms "nationwide, regional, or statewide impacts."