



THE WRONG DIRECTION—POLICIES OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

YEAR ONE SUMMARY: VOLUME 1 - ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Compiled and written by Megan Toney, Environmental Policy Analyst

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Introduction

To mark the one-year anniversary of the Trump Administration USRESIST NEWS is publishing compilations of administration policies in several domains--- civil rights, education, the environment, foreign policy, health, and immigration. This series sadly chronicles the backward steps this administration has taken in clamping down on civil rights, undermining public schools, loosening environmental protections, revising cold war style foreign policy, reducing access to health care, and blunting immigration. The disastrous results of these policies are becoming more apparent with each passing day. Income inequality between rich and poor is on the rise; our cities and rural communities are becoming more vulnerable to the impact of climate change; the civil rights gains made by women and minorities are being threatened; and America is losing its stature as a world leader. And this is just after one year.

USRESIST NEWS monitors and reports on Trump administration and congressional policies. We publish one-page Briefs every time a new policy comes out. The Brief summarizes what's in the policy, analyzes and critiques it, and provides a list of organizational resources for people who want to push back. To learn more please visit our website (www.usresistnews) download our news Briefs and sign up for our subscription service.

Ron Israel

Managing Editor

USRESIST NEWS

Trump Administration Environmental Policies: Year One Summary

In his first year as President, Trump has walked back many of the previous policies designed to protect the environment and the American people. He has rallied industry leaders around him and appointed those that share his agenda to political positions within environmental agencies. Trump's mantra is America-first, and he claims to be a champion of the people, returning lands that have previously been under various conservation and historic protections to their rightful owners in pursuit of America's full economic potential. He and his secretaries have opened up land and sea to industry giants in illegal moves, claiming to work in the best interest of America, even as America vocally disagrees. Lawsuits have been filed, protests have been staged and reports have been published, all saying that we are simply revving engines toward demise.

This administration is unashamed and unapologetic as it opens up historic sites for mining and puts oil industry leaders in positions of power while they deny scientists seats on advisory boards. Among their achievements are the title of the only nation to sit outside the Paris Climate Agreement, a repeal of the Clean Power Plan, a destruction of history and land in rescinding National Monument designations and keeping phrases like "evidence-based" out of grants and proposals, all the while taking note of who opposes these moves. Some proposals are preposterous, while others are explicitly illegal. Nominees serving in agencies before confirmations, refusal to meet with advisory boards, misuse of funds and federal power leveraged in excess.

The only thing that is more unbelievable is the consistency of resistance. Universities, organizations, cities and states have come together time and time again to let this Administration know that they will not back down. Legal motions have been filed and bills have failed because of the voice of the people. Governors and board members have gone their own way, disregarding the directives from the Federal government in pursuit of a higher ideal. With the future in mind, many seek to protect our lands and better conserve this nation. We at US Resist News are proud to be a part of that movement.

The following briefs are grouped into three overarching themes: Repeal of Obama Era Environmental Protections, Trump Administration Changes and Community Response. The Repeal of Obama Era Environmental Protections contains briefs summarizing Trump's reversal of Obama policies. These largely fall under what Trump calls his "America-First Energy Strategy" with a few briefs about the redesignation of National Monuments. The second grouping is Trump Administration Changes, which contains briefs on Administrative decisions, including political appointees, and plans for new construction and infrastructure. The third theme is Community Response. While resistance is a theme throughout these briefs, the Community Response group contains write-ups that are specifically about reactions to a variety of Trump Administration actions and decisions.

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Repeal of Obama Era Protections

Stream Protection Rule

Approved Legislation

Approved on February 16, 2017

Summary

President Trump signed a bill nullifying the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement [Stream Protection Rule](#) (SPR). The rule, issued in the closing days of the Obama-era, revised existing regulations that were enacted more than 30 years ago and was created in order to reflect advancements in science, technology, and coal mining operations. Changes were intended to minimize adverse impacts of coal mining on surface water, wildlife, and ecological health in order to protect biological resources and reduce human health and climate change-related risks. Trump and Republican lawmakers claim the legislation will save jobs and revive the American coal industry. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

Chris Wood, president of Trout Unlimited, argues in a [New York Times op-ed](#) that the SPR is necessary to help reduce the devastating effects of acid mine drainage on water health and on the commercial fishing industry which supports over 800,000 jobs (more than five times that of the coal industry). A [January 11th report](#) from the Congressional Research Service clarified the health and environmental benefits of the SPR: stream restoration requirements would protect wildlife and reduce human exposure to contaminants in drinking water, while forest restoration will increase carbon storage and reduce emissions, reducing risks for human health and climate change. The report also noted that while the SPA would reduce coal-related employment by 260 jobs per year an average of 250 jobs would be created from compliance activities yearly. It is also [widely accepted](#) that the decline of the coal jobs has less to do with regulations, stemming primarily from mechanization, cheaper alternative energy sources, and weakened demand. [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Trout Unlimited](#) – A national nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of clean water and associated upland habitats for fish, wildlife, and people.
- [Southern Environmental Law Center](#) – A non-profit legal group specializing in environmental protection in the Southeast US.
- [Clean Water Action](#) – An environmental advocacy group focused on canvassing and gaining support for political issues and candidates.
- [League of Conservation Voters](#) – An American political advocacy organization that supports a pro-environment agenda through voter education, voter mobilization, and direct contributions.

This brief was compiled by Conor Downey. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact conor@usresistnews.org.

America-First Energy Strategy

“Waters of the United States” Rule Under Review

Executive Order

Issued February 28, 2017

Summary

The Trump administration released an Executive Order (EO) directing EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to review the Obama Administration’s “Clean Water Rule” and “publish for notice and comment a proposed rule rescinding or revising the rule.” The [Clean Water Rule: Definition of ‘Waters of the United States’](#) helped define the extent of governmental protection of national waters under the Clean Water Act establishing the government’s authority to regulate pollution of a large swath of smaller streams, wetlands, and other water sources. Opponents of the rule argue that it harms economic growth and places undue burdens on farmers and other business interests. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

While the EO has [no legal significance](#) of its own, it signals the president’s desire to dismantle the Clean Water Rule, and Scott Pruitt is expected to vigorously begin the process of rolling back regulations put in place by the Obama administration. Environmental groups and fishing organizations support the rule, [which offers](#) “clearer protection to upstream bodies of water that contribute to drinking supplies for one-third of the population.” They argue that you can’t protect major rivers and lakes from pollution unless you cover their sources upstream; the gray area that exists in absence of the rule would make it difficult to bring a case against companies dumping in smaller streams and waterways. Additionally, while the farming industry has argued that new regulations harm business interests, the EPA explicitly avoided overburdening farmers, and a [systematic legal analysis](#) revealed that the agencies jurisdiction with regards to agriculture is, if anything, more limited than under the previous framework.

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – a non-profit international environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump’s “environmental assault” and providing individuals with avenues for taking action.
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation’s largest environmental preservation organization; recent focuses include green energy, mitigating global warming, and opposing coal.
- [Clean Water Action](#) – an environmental advocacy group focused on canvassing and gaining support for political issues and candidates.
- [Environment America](#) – a federation of liberal state-based environmental advocacy organizations throughout the US that researches and advocates for environmental policies.

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Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth

Executive Order

Issued on March 28, 2017

Summary

President Trump's March 28 Executive Order, entitled "[Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth](#)," takes extensive action to eliminate federal climate policies and regulations, explicitly targeting at least 23 executive actions, federal rules, memoranda, and reports. Most notably, the directive moves to rescind the Clean Power Plan while undercutting key elements of climate policy analysis. Additionally, the EO orders agency heads to review and eliminate all regulations and policies that "burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources, with particular attention to oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy resources." [While some aspects of the directive will take effect immediately](#), others are likely to be held up by rulemaking procedures and legal battles.

Analysis

In an effort to "[grow American jobs](#)" Trump is taking broad steps to reverse the climate legacy of the Obama administration by deregulating "impediments to American energy independence." His executive order starts by revoking four Obama-era executive actions which individually [strengthen the resilience of American communities from the severe impacts of climate change](#), [mitigate negative impacts to natural resources](#), [establish a framework for considering climate-related impacts in the development of national security doctrine](#), and [direct the EPA to set carbon pollution standards and regulations](#) and rescinded two reports detailing Obama's Clean Action Plan [strategies for cutting carbon pollution](#), preparing for the impacts of climate change, and [reducing methane emissions](#). Those who oppose the directive have emphasized the devastating implications for the environment and public health and have fought against the job contention, arguing that coal jobs are declining because of [weakened demand, mechanization, and competition from oil and natural gas](#); that wind, solar, and [energy efficiency jobs outnumber coal jobs 16 to 1](#); that the order would create investment uncertainty; and that [accelerating efficiency would be better for energy independence](#).

Clean Power Plan

The executive order begins the arduous process of rescinding Obama's signature [Clean Power Plan](#), which aims to significantly cut emissions of greenhouse gases and harmful pollutants from power plants while advancing the development and deployment of clean energy. The Rhodium Group estimates that [Obama's policies would help reduce US emissions 21% below 2005 levels by 2025, but Trump's executive order will reverse the trend](#) and stabilize greenhouse gas emissions. This shift will make it extremely difficult for the country to meet international climate commitments and will be [interpreted globally as the US tacitly pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement](#) (the agreement, reached between 195 countries in 2016, aims "to stave off the most devastating effects of climate change by limiting the increase in global temperatures"). In order to reverse Obama's plan, the [EPA will have to justify the scientific and economic basis for their new, weaker plan and will likely face years of litigation and legal battles](#) attempting to implement it.

Climate Policy Analysis

The executive order also radically changes how agencies will evaluate policy action by rescinding guidance which [provides agencies with a framework for agency consideration of the effects of \[greenhouse gases\] and climate change to ensure efficient and transparent agency decision-making](#) and getting rid of the [social cost of carbon](#) which allows agencies to incorporate the social benefits of greenhouse gas reductions by monetizing damages. The order

directs agencies to revert to a 2003 Office of Management and Budget guidance which will likely [reduce the estimated cost of climate damages by 90% or more](#). [The social cost of carbon is the “most important climate measurement,”](#) underlying nearly every environmental analysis and climate-related policy. By revoking these measures Trump removes the requirement to consider the climate impacts of potential policies and incapacitates federal agencies from effectively evaluating public health and climate change consequences.

Coal, Oil, Natural Gas

The executive order lifts a freeze on federal coal leasing which halts coal mine expansions on public land. The moratorium was meant to stay in place until the government could review the [climate impacts and royalty fairness of the coal-leasing program](#). Trump touted the rescission as bringing jobs to coal miners, but it only affects [“mines in Wyoming and Montana, where coal companies had for years shed jobs because of increased automation and declining coal demand.”](#) The order also [rescinds stricter design standards and regulations](#) for hydraulic fracturing on federal and tribal lands and oil/gas operations within national parks and refuges; this rollback will hamper the government’s ability to safeguard against [negative impacts such as man-made earthquakes and threats to groundwater](#). The president’s directive also targets restrictions on dangerous mountaintop removal mining and a rule reducing methane waste and flaring. [Mountaintop removal is notorious for its appalling effects on the environment and on human health](#), including links to cancer and birth defects for nearby populations. The methane waste prevention rule (thoroughly analyzed [here](#)) is estimated to increase economic revenue, to make deep cuts to methane emissions, and to reduce a multiplicity of health-related risks.

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – an international environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump’s “environmental assault” and providing individuals with avenues for action.
- [Greenpeace USA](#) – an environmental NGO that uses direct action, lobbying, research, and ecotage to raise public awareness and to influence the public and private sectors.
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation’s largest environmental preservation organization; focuses include mitigating global warming and opposing coal; suing the Trump administration over this EO.
- [World Resources Institute](#) – a global NGO committed to protecting the Earth, improving people’s lives, and creating prosperity through sustainable natural resource management.

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Trump and EPA Move to Repeal Clean Power Plan

Draft Proposal of Repeal Plan
Released on October 4, 2017

Summary

Earlier this week, the Trump administration released [a draft of the proposal](#) to repeal the Clean Power Plan (CPP). [The CPP is an Obama initiative](#) to regulate the power sector and curb the emission of climate-warming gases, as well as [specific carbon-cutting targets](#) for corporations.

While this draft represents the first substantial move toward repeal since the [Executive Order in March](#), the draft itself contains little to no details about the process or the plans for the CPP replacement. However, the assumption is that the replacement would contain fewer and weaker regulatory standards. The draft does not contain any legal justification for the repeal, and environmental groups are ready to file suit if weaker regulations are indeed put in place. Secretary Pruitt has said the EPA will accept ideas from the public on how to replace the CPP, although no venue has been created yet for public comment.

Analysis

At this point, a repeal of the CPP with little to no justification would incite a legal battle with environmental groups. In smaller moves to dismantle environmental standards, courts have already answered accordingly. Just this week, a Northern California court judge blocked an attempt by Trump and the Interior Department to delay a rule of methane emission regulations from taking effect. The EPA also came under criticism by environmental agencies for missing the deadline for implementing rules for meeting ozone regulation standards. However, if Pruitt and the Trump administration were able to push a repeal through, they would most likely have to replace the current plan with looser regulations. This poses a problem for Pruitt and his consistent denial of climate change science. This is because the implementation of looser restrictions would require Pruitt to admit that CO2 emissions can damage the environment through atmospheric warming. Many think that Pruitt is unsure of how to proceed in developing a replacement plan, which is why he plans on taking public comments and ideas.

Engagement Resources

- **National Resource Defense Council** – An organization dedicated to preserving the Earth's resources has created a simple way to contact your representatives and oppose the repeal of the CPP.
- **Environmental Defense Council** – An organization dedicated to solving big environmental problems. Their website has a graphic breakdown of the CPP and further details about its impact.

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief, please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy

Executive Order
Issued April 28, 2017

Summary

This Executive Order issued by President Trump instructs his cabinet officials to open millions of acres of federally administered waters for energy development. The move will begin to reverse President Obama's attempts to keep the U.S. waters from lease sales to fossil fuel companies and overturns overturned Obama-era regulations barring companies from drilling in the Arctic. "Past administrations have been overly restrictive of offshore energy exploration and have taken off the table hundreds of millions of offshore acres for development. As a result, 94 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf is off-limits to responsible energy development," the administration said in a statement. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

While Trump's EO will open major swaths of land for oil and gas drilling, [lengthy legal processes and low global energy prices make investment unlikely](#) in the short term. The inevitable threat of drilling, however, worries environmental groups; Earth Justice President Trip Van Noppen argues that ["Trump's short-sighted order reverses climate progress and imperils coastal communities, irreplaceable wildlife and our shared future."](#) Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society, explains that ["the chance of a tragic spill in those remote, icy waters is simply too high](#), and the impacts to marine life and the pristine coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge could be devastating." [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – a nonprofit international environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump's "environmental assault" and using "every tool in the kit to stop this dangerous tar sands oil pipeline project."
- [Greenpeace](#) – an international environmental NGO that uses direct action, lobbying, research, and ecotage to raise public awareness and to influence the public and private sectors.
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation's largest environmental preservation organization; recent focuses include green energy, mitigating global warming, and opposing coal.

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DOI Secretary Zinke Announces Offshore Oil Drilling Program

[Draft Proposed National Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program](#)

Announced by the Department of the Interior on January 4, 2018

Summary

In an announcement last week, DOI Secretary Zinke [announced the Draft Proposal Program \(DPP\)](#) of the National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil & Gas Leasing for 2019-2024. This five-year lease schedule opens the largest number of lease sales in U.S. history. [Where previously 94% of the OCS has been protected, this plan makes 90% of total acreage available for leasing and 98% of the undiscovered area available as well.](#) (Undiscovered are areas where oil is assumed but has not been proven.) [There are 47 sites proposed for auction in that 5-year time frame](#), with 19 off the Alaskan coast, 7 Pacific, 12 Gulf Coast and 9 Atlantic. [Many of these areas have either never been available or have been banned for upwards of 30 years.](#) Some areas are a direct repeal of an Obama Era ban enacted after the 2011 Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster, which killed 11 people and caused the worst spill in American history. But Zinke has already repealed the rig and drilling regulations that contributed to this disaster. Secretary Zinke sites this DPP as a move toward "energy dominance," rather than the existing "energy weakness." In his announcement, he stated that the funds that would come from this drilling would help with conservation efforts and coast revitalization. [According to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management \(BOEM\), offshore oil drilling is responsible for 18% of domestic oil production, as well as thousands of jobs, and the expansion of this program would increase domestic energy efforts.](#)

The road to DPP approval is a long one, with time for public comment, a Note of Intent and an Environmental Impact study and statement, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. And while many members of Congress showed support for the measure earlier in 2017, many others are openly opposing the DPP, opening it up for possible Congressional Review. There are also many at least 12 governors, attorney generals, and 64 environmental agencies in opposition and seeking legal action.

Analysis

A few months after opening national landmarks for commerce and drilling, Zinke has moved to make the OCS available as well. One leader in the industry made a familiar argument when he said that the land is “taxpayer owned and should be made available [to the people].” However, Zinke is already wavering. In a meeting with Florida Governor Scott that, to many, stinks of political favoritism, the Secretary announced that waters off the coast of Florida would be exempt from the DPP and the sites would not be made available for auction. Citing Governor Scott’s points for exemption, the California Attorney General said, “California is also ‘unique’ and our ‘coasts are heavily reliant on tourism as an economic driver.’ Our ‘local and state voice’ is firmly opposed to any offshore drilling. If that is your standard, then we too should be removed from your list. Immediately.”

Engagement Resources

- [Maps of areas proposed for lease auction in 2019-2024 schedule as opposed to 2017-2022 maps](#)
- [Learn more about and participate the public comment period](#)

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Disapproval of Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation

Failed Legislation

Passed in the House on February 3, 2017

Defeated in the Senate on May 10, 2017

Update: July 3, 2017

After the GOP failed attempt to reverse the Obama-era methane flaring restriction, Donald Trump attacked the rule using his energy plan, and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt placed a two-year moratorium on the rule’s enforcement. [On July 3rd a federal appeals court ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency cannot suspend rule and must begin enforcing it.](#)

Update: May 10, 2017

May 10th produced a surprising win for environmental groups when [the Republican bid to reverse the Obama-era environmental regulation died in the Senate](#). Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) unexpectedly joined fellow Republicans Susan Collins (Maine) and Lindsey Graham (S.C.) to kill the legislation in a 49-51 vote. [GOP/Trump administration officials have said they will now shift their focus to rewriting the rule in the Interior Department and using Trump’s energy plan to target the regulation \(Trump’s energy plan/EO and its impending effect on the methane flaring regulation are detailed here\).](#)

Summary

A bill disapproving of (and effectively nullifying) the Bureau of Land Management's [Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation](#) rule recently passed in the House and was introduced in the Senate. The rule went into effect in the closing days of the Obama administration. It enacted regulations to reduce methane emissions and wasted gas, and it replaced provisions that are over thirty years old. Republican lawmakers in favor of the disapproval argue that new regulations put expensive burdens on the energy industry harming business. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

The waste prevention regulations nullified by the GOP bill are projected to reduce wasteful venting, flaring, and leaking of natural gas into the atmosphere from oil and gas operations on public and indigenous lands. The Department of the Interior [points out](#) that new technology enables businesses to reduce waste and capture oil and gas for economic revenue. The department's [fact sheet](#) estimates that federal taxpayers miss out on \$23 million annually in royalty payments from waste, and that wasted gas is enough to supply over 6 million households per year. The Obama Era rule also protects the environment, cutting emissions of methane (a harmful greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide) by 35%. Additionally, environmental and public health organizations [have noted](#) that the rule will “reduce risk of asthma attacks, cancers, heart and other lung problems, neurological disorders, and birth defects related to emissions from oil and gas operations.”

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – An international nonprofit environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump's “environmental assault” and providing individuals with avenues for taking action.
- [Clean Air Task Force](#) – A nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing atmospheric pollution through research, advocacy, and private sector collaboration.
- [The Wilderness Society](#) – A nonprofit land conservation organization that is dedicated to protecting natural areas and federal public lands in the United States.

This brief was compiled by Conor Downey. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact conor@usresistnews.org.

Department of the Interior Starts to Rescind Fracking Rules

Proposed Rule

Proposed on July 25, 2017

Summary

On July 25, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management [published a rescission](#) of an Obama-era hydraulic fracturing rule. The “fracking” rule was specifically targeted by Trump's [Energy Executive Order](#), which directed agency heads to eliminate all policies which burden the development of energy resources. The regulation, released in March of 2015, was stayed in court last summer after being challenged by the oil and gas industry. The rescission was released just three days before the rule was set to have oral arguments read in the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. While the original rule was intended to protect water and to ensure safety measures were enforced, the BLM has argued that “it is unnecessarily duplicative

of state and some tribal regulations and imposes burdensome reporting requirements and other unjustified costs on the oil and gas industry.” The rescission would [revert regulations for fracking to rules written over 30 years ago](#).

Analysis

The original rule passed during the Obama administration only covers drilling on federal and tribal lands, a small percentage of total drilling operations, but it was intended to give state legislatures a foundation with which to create their own regulations. If enforced, the rule would [“allow government workers to inspect and validate the safety and integrity of the concrete barriers that line fracking wells”](#) and would [“require companies to publicly disclose the chemicals used in the fracturing process within 30 days of completing fracking operations.”](#) The rule was created to protect clean water sources in response to the fracking technique, [“which involves injecting a cocktail of chemicals deep underground to break up the rocks around oil and gas deposits.”](#) While the Bureau argues that the rules are duplicative, staff members have reported that [“they do not perform onsite inspections of hydraulic fracturing operations because ‘the work is too dangerous’ under existing rules.”](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Comment on the proposed rescission](#) by mail or online by September 25th
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation’s largest environmental preservation organization; focuses include mitigating global warming and opposing coal; suing the Trump administration over this EO.
- [Earth Justice](#) – a non-profit public interest law organization dedicated to environmental issues. Currently appealing the 2016 ruling in which the fracking rule was struck down.

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Scott Pruitt Reverses Decision to Delay Ozone Regulation

EPA Rule Implementatio; Decision reversed on August 2, 2017

Summary

On August 2, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt reversed the agency’s June announcement to delay implementation of a 2015 Obama-era ozone regulation for another year. The reversal came one day after [15 states and DC filed a lawsuit](#) against the EPA Administrator over the delay. While the reversal was a win for health and environmental advocates, the [EPA noted that](#) it “may take future action to use its delay authority and all other authority legally available to the Agency to ensure that its designations are founded on sound policy and the best available information.” [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

The 2015 regulation set a new national standard for ozone, a smog-causing pollutant formed by chemicals from smokestacks and tailpipes that mixes with the air we breathe, [reducing the acceptable amount from 75 parts per billion to 70 parts per billion](#). Ozone has been [linked to childhood asthma, lower infant birth weights, and lung disease](#) and [exacerbates asthma attacks](#). While the rule is one of the most expensive regulations in history, with an estimated annual cost of \$1.4 billion, the EPA estimated that those [“costs would be vastly outweighed by annual](#)

economic benefits of \$2.9 billion to \$5.9 billion because of fewer premature deaths, missed days of school and work, asthma attacks and emergency room visits.” Though the agency examined nearly 2,300 scientific studies, considered more than 430,000 public comments and held three public hearings while preparing the standard, Pruitt’s delay relied on a provision of the Clean Air Act allowing the agency to delay standards for up to a year if they have “insufficient information.” Earth Justice attorney Seth Johnson argues that “the EPA’s hasty retreat shows that public health and environmental organizations and 16 states across the country were right: the agency had no legal basis for delaying implementation of the 2015 smog standard.” [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation’s largest environmental preservation organization; focuses include mitigating global warming and opposing coal; plaintiff in lawsuit over EPA’s delay
- [American Lung Association](#) – a voluntary health organization working to improve lung health and prevent lung disease through education, advocacy, and research; plaintiff in delay lawsuit
- [Earth Justice](#) – a non-profit public interest law organization dedicated to environmental issues; represented environmental and public health organizations in lawsuit over EPA’s delay

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

National Monuments

Presidential Executive Order on the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act

Executive Order

Issued on April 26, 2017

Summary

On April 26th, President Trump issued an Executive Order targeting the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gives the president the power to designate national monuments on federal lands. The EO directs the Secretary of the Interior to review all presidential designations since 1996 which cover more than 100,000 acres or are determined to have been made without adequate public outreach. On May 5th, the Department of the Interior [released a list of 27 monuments under initial review](#) and will begin formally accepting public comments on May 12 (submit comments [here](#)). Trump cites “[egregious abuse of federal power](#)” and impediments to economic prosperity and energy independence as the major drivers of the order (which congressional republicans lobbied him to release). [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

Trump’s revocation of monuments would be the first of its kind, and sparks controversy over whether or not the president is legally entitled to reverse designations of previous presidents. While proponents of the changes argue that the power is consistent with the purpose of, and is implicit within, the Antiquities Act, many scholars argue that contemporaneous history, precedential court cases, related federal laws, and the purpose of the legislation [give the president the power to quickly designate monuments, but reserve the power to revoke them for Congress](#) (this precautionary measure allows the government to protect objects of historic/scientific significance while Congress reviews the monument).

In addition to facing legal controversy, Trump’s EO has received rebuke from organizations which value the important archaeological and cultural resources that [national monuments protect](#). The controversial Bears Ears National Monument, which spurred Republicans to push for this EO, contains “[tens of thousands of archaeological sites, including ancient cliff dwellings](#)” and [garnered significant support](#) through collaboration between area residents and native tribes. Opponents also note the critical ecological protections woven into national monuments that are [essential to maintain wilderness areas](#) and to meet the objectives of the Endangered Species Act. Other organizations, such as the Outdoor Industry Association, offered economic rebuttals, pointing out the significant outdoor recreational economy, which generates [over \\$887 billion in consumer spending](#) and creates 7.6 million jobs annually. [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Formally Submit Public Comments to the Department of the Interior](#)
- [National Parks Conservation Association](#) – the only independent, nonpartisan membership organization devoted exclusively to advocacy on behalf of the National Parks System
- [World Wildlife Fund](#) – the world’s largest conservation organization, aims to protect and preserve the environment

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Interior's Review of National Monuments

Final Report on National Monuments Review
Issued August 25, 2017

Summary

About four months after Trump's [Executive Order](#) calling for the review of 27 National Monuments, Ryan Zinke, the Secretary of the Interior, has submitted his final report. While [Zinke has not recommended](#) the elimination of any monuments, a few have been [suggested for resizing](#), including Bears Ears National Monument, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Cascade-Siskiyou. The next step is for Congress to review and vote on the recommendations outlined in the report. Since the release of Zinke's recommendations, [no further action](#) has taken place, and there is not a date set for voting at this time.

Analysis

[Obama's establishment of Bears Ears National Monument](#) in Southern Utah was the initial flashpoint for this review. Bears Ears was established in the last days of Obama's presidency to protect the cultural sites of Native peoples in the region, and [Utah legislators](#) approached President Trump the day after his inauguration about eliminating the monument. It comes as no surprise that Bears Ears is on the list for resizing. While Trump says that he is returning the lands to the people, he has encountered a [resistant public](#). Over [2.8 million comments](#) were formally filed with the Department of the Interior, and over [99 percent](#) were in favor of preserving the National Monuments. It seems that Zinke is aware of the [public backlash](#) to the President's order and his recommendations. [He did not originally release his final report to the public](#), and what was available initially contained no specifics. Legal organizations, tribal leaders, attorney generals of various states and conservation organizations have vowed to oppose these measures.

Engagement Resources

Although the window for comments has closed, there are still options for action before the proposed downsizing reaches Congress for decision.

- [Write your senators or Secretary Zinke](#) in defense of national monuments.
- [Inter-Tribal Coalition](#) – A group of five Native tribes dedicated to the conservation of Bears Ears cultural and environmental landscape.
- [The Wilderness Society](#) – One of the leading conservation organizations working to protect our wild lands and inspire other Americans to care for these places.
- [Earth Justice](#) – A legal organization with the goals of protecting the wild, healthy communities, clean energy, and a healthy climate.
- [National Park Conservation Association](#) – A non-profit protecting the national park system.

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Trump Announces Downsizing of Two National Monuments

Presidential Proclamation Modifying [Bears Ears](#) and [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) National Monuments

Announced December 4, 2017

Summary

Trump announced on Monday that [he would reduce the size of two Utah national monuments, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, by about two million acres as recommended by Interior Secretary Zinke. The Bears Ears national monument was downsized by 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante by 50 percent \[see map\], which is the largest reversal of federal land protection in U.S. history. In his address in Utah, Trump cited federal overreach by previous administrations and a desire to give land back to the people as the motivating factors for the rollback. The lack of designation opens up this land to oil and gas production, mineral extraction, logging and other commercial endeavors. Supporters of the reversal say that it will give people access to land they need for their livelihoods and production of key resources, which was previously denied to them in a federal land grab. Opposition to the rollback is concerned about current and future land conservation in the U.S., as well as the sacred Native cultural sites located within the monuments. Eight lawsuits have already been filed against the reversal, citing the President's lack of authority to recall the designations. A group of native tribes, outdoor retailers, and conservation groups are among the entities filing suit. In the meantime, Secretary Zinke has already suggested downsizing for two additional national monuments, California and Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou and Nevada's Gold Butte, as well as a change in management for ten others.](#)

Analysis

This decision fits seamlessly into [Trump's continued call for decreased regulation and increased development of public land. The search for "energy dominance" and the desire to tap into the fossil fuels that are assumed to lie beneath many public lands are assumed to be the driving force behind the push to open up these public lands to private companies. In his address in Utah, Trump claimed that "very distant bureaucrats" in Washington did not know this land's best purpose, and he gave it back to those that do. However, the availability of previously protected land for development and commercial production has set off alarm bells for those in conservation. Especially in light of Zinke's recommendation for downsizing additional monuments, many are concerned that this is only the beginning of undoing regulations for much of America's protected land. Both sides say that the actions of the other are unconstitutional and an overextension of power. Those in favor of reducing national monuments say that the land was designated by federal overreach, while those opposed to the reversal say that the President only has power to set aside land, not reverse such orders. In what has been called a "flurry of lawsuits," many entities, including conservation groups, outdoor retailers, and Native tribes, have come together to oppose this order and the implications it could have on all protected land.](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Sign the NRDC petition](#) to protect national monuments
- [Join the Nature Conservancy's Defense](#) of National Monuments

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Trump Administration Changes: Administrative Decisions

Trump's 2018 US Budget Proposal: Effects on Environment

White House Budget Proposal
Released March 16, 2017

Update: May 23, 2017

The White House released a [new version of Trump's budget](#) which summarized spending priorities while maintaining the extreme EPA and DOE funding cuts detailed in this brief. [LEARN MORE](#)

Policy Summary

President Trump released his first preliminary budget, approximating budget changes for the 2018 fiscal year and showcasing the administration's priorities. The proposed budget has severe implications for environmental and public health, calling for a 31 percent cut in the EPA budget, reducing funding for the Department of Energy, and targeting environmental protection funding in at least nine other federal departments. When asked about cuts to science and climate change research, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick [Mulvane said](#): "the President was fairly straightforward — we're not spending money on that anymore." The president's budget increases military spending by \$54 billion and balances the federal deficit by decreasing spending for various programs across the board.

Analysis

Budget cuts to the EPA would hamper the agency's ability to protect clean air and water, to conduct research, and to mitigate the detrimental effects of climate change and pollution on the country. The proposed budget plan discontinues all EPA funding for climate change-related efforts and the Obama administration's signature [Clean Power Plan \(analyzed in depth here\)](#) which mitigates climate impacts and health risks from air pollutants by reducing carbon pollution from power plants. The plan also eliminates over 50 EPA programs, cuts research and development funding, and decreases funding for [Superfund](#), the EPA program responsible for cleaning up sites contaminated with hazardous wastes. [Department of Energy cuts](#) eliminate research projects and loan programs that fund innovative renewables technology and restrict funding to laboratories which conduct research on renewables and energy efficient vehicles. Stanford environmental engineering professor Mark Jacobson [worries that](#) cuts to research funding will reduce American innovation and competitiveness, decreasing GDP. [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [World Resources Institute](#) – a global NGO committed to protecting the Earth, improving people's lives, and creating prosperity through sustainable natural resource management.
- [Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities](#) – a research, policy, and advocacy organization of public research universities, land-grant institutions, and higher education organizations.
- [Task Force on American Innovation](#) – an alliance of business, universities and scientific societies supporting federally funded basic research in the physical sciences and engineering.

This brief was compiled by Conor Downey. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact conor@usresistnews.org.

US Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord

Presidential Announcement
Announced on June 1, 2017

Summary

On June 1st, President Trump turned his back on climate change and the rest of the world by announcing US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord (PCA). The historic climate agreement boasts 195 countries; only the US, Syria, and Nicaragua are not a part of the deal ([Nicaragua does not believe the accord is tough enough on climate, and Syria has been entrenched in civil conflict during negotiations](#)). Trump argued that the PCA will have devastating economic implications, disadvantaging “the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries.” Trump also repeatedly expressed interest in renegotiating the agreement, but the [UN and world leaders said the deal could not \(and would not\) be renegotiated](#) at the request of a single nation.

[READ TRUMP’S STATEMENT](#)

Analysis

The Paris Climate Accord aims “[to limit the \[global\] temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius](#)” by 2100, signaling international agreement in the importance of climate change and indicating a global shift away from fossil fuels toward clean and renewable energy. The PCA was created to be non-binding, [giving ratifying countries the independence](#) to set their own emissions reduction plans, ensuring flexibility for domestic situations and changing circumstances, and dispelling [fear of penalties](#). The deal [encourages ratifying countries](#) to peak their greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, creates a timetable for countries to make more ambitious pledges and ratchet up efforts, and negotiates climate aid commitments for developing nations. While the agreement is non-binding, [a recent study from the Grantham Research Institute](#) indicates that the soft diplomacy of the accord has already pushed dozens of countries to pass clean energy laws, and [environmental groups have lauded the agreement](#) for symbolizing the world’s commitment to fight climate change.

Trump’s Speech

As President Trump explained the US withdrawal from the agreement, he deployed [an array of inaccuracies and misconceptions](#) about the PCA. He harped on onerous restrictions and regulations that would burden the US and then expresses interest in renegotiating the agreement. But the goals set by the US in the Paris Accord are nonbinding; [Trump can unilaterally change the commitments](#) to protect the economy in any way he wants. He highlighted “unfairness” within the PCA by arguing that the US would be prevented from building coal plants while China and India both massively expand coal production, but the US can alter its commitments, China has [canceled plans to build over a hundred coal plants](#) for the next few years, and, on a per capita basis, the US emits twice [the amount of carbon as China](#) (eight times that of India). His attempt to trivialize the 2100 effects of the PCA as the “tiny, tiny amount” of 0.2 degrees was swiftly rebuked by the MIT researchers he was quoting who pointed out that the [actual reduction would be 0.9](#), a reduction that large has significant impacts on the planet, and this is purely based off of country’s initial commitments (the PCA sets countries up

to make more ambitious pledges every five years until 2100). Trump's economic arguments rely on a highly disputed study from the National Economic Research Associates; [the study "assumed a scenario no policy expert expects," didn't consider potential benefits from avoided emissions, didn't account for greater investment in clean energy and innovation, and was funded by opponents of the PCA.](#)

Consequences

Trump's decision may have debilitating effects on the economy and influence of the United States. Many economic analysts worry that leaving the PCA will decrease [American competitiveness](#) by rejecting the world's transition to a low carbon economy. The [clean energy industry is projected to be a 3 trillion-dollar industry by 2030](#), and the Trump administration is expressing intent to pass on federal investment that is key to clean energy growth and innovation. Clean energy is poised to usurp the global energy economy and the US is squandering the chance to advance its energy market and ["to create vast numbers of advanced energy jobs."](#) As the US leaves the helm, China may step up and fill the leadership void; both politically and economically. [China has pushed climate initiatives in recent years](#) and could use the US void to fill clean energy voids in developing countries and to [corner the wind and solar manufacturing market](#). Withdrawal could also hurt influence by shattering diplomatic relationships, [leaving the US out of continued global engagement](#) and [undercutting "diplomatic priorities across the globe"](#). The issue of climate change affects the entire planet and requires collaboration from every country to effectively combat it; Trump's [isolationist policies and rejection of science](#) have removed the [second-largest producer of carbon dioxide](#) from the first international agreement to lower emissions. While the withdrawal propels a terrifying trend from the highest branches of government, optimistic citizens hope that cities, states, and businesses [can drive energy transformation in spite of the Trump administration.](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – an international environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump's "environmental assault" and providing individuals with avenues for action.
- [Town Hall Project](#) – empowers and encourages citizens to have conversations with their representatives. Call 1-844-6-RESIST to be redirected to the office of your local Congressperson.
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation's largest environmental preservation organization; focuses include mitigating global warming and opposing coal; suing the Trump administration over this EO.

This brief was compiled by Conor Downey. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact conor@usresistnews.org.

Nominations for the EPA, NOAA and Environmental Policy Advisor Positions

October 16, 2017

Summary

Over the last few weeks, Trump has submitted nominations for various environmental positions within the government. [With these nominations](#), many are worried that the administration has

the manpower it needs to [roll back green energy initiatives](#) and replace them with coal and fossil fuel programs. There have been [four nominations](#) for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) positions: [Andrew Wheeler](#), coal lobbyist, for Deputy Administrator; [Michael Dourson](#), toxicology and chemical researcher, for Assistant Administrator of the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention; [Bill Wehrum](#), coal and oil lobbyist, for Office of Air and Radiation; and [David Ross](#), a lawyer typically defending those who have violated EPA regulations, for Office of Water. Trump has also nominated [Barry Meyers](#), CEO of AccuWeather, for Under Secretary of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce and [Kathleen Hartnett](#), Texas Environmental Regulator and author of “Fossil Fuels: The Moral Case,” for the White House Senior Advisor on Environmental Policy. [Each of these nominees](#) has [rejected the idea](#) of climate change science and [many have a substantial stake](#) in the arenas they have been sought out to regulate.

Even before these nominations, [Secretary Pruitt met](#) frequently with lobbyists and industry leaders in sectors like oil, coal, and toxicology, [soliciting their input](#) on potential regulations, [while avoiding](#) meetings with environmental groups. [Funding for environmental justice investigations](#) has decreased, and [Pruitt has threatened](#) to stop funding this sector of the Justice Department altogether. Environmental crime investigators [have been reassigned](#) to Pruitt’s 24-hour security detail, and [climate change researchers have claimed](#) they received desk assignments rather than instructions to continue their research. To top it all off, [an investigation](#) recently began on Pruitt’s spending [on private and chartered flights](#) and the \$25K [sound-proof phone booth](#) in his office.

Analysis

Earlier this month, the [Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works](#) began the process of confirming these nominations with a series of [hearings](#). While the current employers of these nominees are alarming unto themselves, their histories have only caused greater distress among environmental groups and the Democratic Party. Dourson, the nominee for Chemical Safety, [founded an organization](#) that produces research in support of decreased chemical regulation. The results of these studies not only tend to [minimize the harmful effects](#) of certain chemicals, but their funding sources are not fully disclosed. When asked about potential conflicts of interest, Dourson replied [he did not see any present issue](#). [Wheeler](#), the nominee for Deputy Administrator, is a registered lobbyist for Murray Energy, the largest coal mining organization in the US that filed multiple suits against the Obama Administration for regulations on their industry. Wheeler has worked for Senators in the past, in particular on pieces of Bush Era environmental legislation. [Hartnett](#), the nominee for Senior Advisor, has claimed that [carbon is harmless](#) and her current position at a think tank in Texas is funded by major fossil fuel companies. [Wehrum and Ross](#), nominees to Offices of Air and Water, also have long associations with anti-regulation groups and have previously worked as lawyers against the EPA and other environmental organizations. [Meyers](#), Nominee to NOAA, is a businessman with little scientific experience with a history of support of privatization of weather information and restriction on the NOAA’s dissemination of data. With these nominations it is clear that the Trump Administration is looking to deregulate coal and fossil fuel industries, rolling back the Obama Era climate preservation standards and allowing for private sector domination. In the midst of these efforts, money is being spent on chartered flights, private phone booths, and protection details [before it is used](#) for environmental justice investigations and climate change research.

Engagement Resources

- Follow the Senate Committee’s [confirmation process](#).
- The Natural Resource Defense Council’s [guide to calling Congress](#).
- [Sign the petition](#) to reject the nomination of Michael Dourson.

- [Find out more](#) about Pruitt's spending of your tax dollars.
- Check out the [New York Times FAQ](#) on climate change.

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Increased Oversight on HHS Word Choice and EPA employees

Health & Human Services Guidance
2018-2019 Budget Proposal Meeting

Summary

In a recent budget preparation meeting, members of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), a subset of the Division of Health & Human Services (HHS), [were informed that a list of seven words were not to be used in budgets and budget proposals. These seven words were "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus," "evidence-based" and "science-based."](#) In some cases, alternate phrases were suggested, [such as "the CDC bases its recommendations on science in consideration with community standards and wishes,"](#) while no alternatives were given for many others. Policy analysts in the original meeting reported these new restrictions, but the administration has pushed back saying that nothing has been officially "banned" and the complaints are unfounded. The Secretary of HHS and the Under Secretary of the CDC have made statements saying that their interest is the health of the American people cannot live up to this mandate without the proper vocabulary, let alone proper evidence. In another measure of increased restrictions, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of negotiating [a new contract with a media monitoring organization, Definers Public Affairs.](#) Pruitt and the EPA claim that Definers has been hired to do press clips and keep track of media affairs worldwide. However, recent events suggest that EPA employees are being monitored, [especially those critical of Secretary Pruitt. In a report recently published by the New York Times, emails containing the names of Mr. Pruitt or Mr. Trump were read and analyzed by a lawyer for America Rising, a Republican Research group affiliated with Definers Public Affairs. These emails were requested and obtained after employees spoke out in meetings, disagreed with decision making or attended public demonstrations.](#) There is a cruel irony in these increased restrictions as the President opens public and protected lands for oil drilling, mining, and even fracking.

Analysis

[If the HHS and CDC have restricted words for their budget proposals, then so do the thousands of researchers, universities, and organizations that apply for and receive funding from HHS and its affiliates.](#) This includes the National Institute of Health (NIH), which supplies funding for a variety of medical research. Banning words like science-based and evidence-based is alarming in a field where evidence and science drive daily decisions. [However, words like "Trans" and "Fetus" target areas of research, such as the health and outcomes of trans youth. While there has been little official documentation of these banned words and phrases, already HHS affiliates are preparing to do what it takes to continue their work. Whether their emails come under scrutiny next is still unknown.](#)

Outrage ensued after the report was released by the New York Times, and more evidence was discovered regarding video monitoring and Definers Public Affairs' early support of Pruitt. [The EPA announced that it was canceling its contract with Definers Public Affairs. Both parties said that this company's efficiency would have saved the EPA money, but it isn't worth the](#)

[accusations that have arisen](#). At this point, a new firm has not been announced and officials say the search continues.

Engagement Resources

- [Read the Full New York Times Report](#) on EPA Employee Email Monitoring
- [Learn more about the HHS budget](#)

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Trump Administration Changes: New Infrastructure

Presidential Memorandum Regarding Construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline

Presidential Memorandum
Issued January 24, 2017

Summary

President Trump released a presidential memorandum directing the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) to expedite approval for the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and to consider rescinding the Notice of Intent to Prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement released in the final days of the Obama Administration. On February 8, the Army Corps granted an easement to construct the pipeline across federal land. The easement represented the final federal authorization necessary for Dakota Access (a subsidiary of Energy Transfer Partners) to complete construction of the pipeline. Trump argues that the pipeline's construction and operation would serve the national interest by bringing oil into U.S. markets. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

The Standing Rock protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline received international attention last summer [drawing thousands of protesters](#) to Cannon Ball, North Dakota. The protestors were supporting the indigenous Standing Rock Sioux Tribe [which says](#) completion of DAPL would disrupt their sacred burial sites and may lead to a contamination of the tribe's water. The tribe has been [supported by a coalition](#) of indigenous and environmental groups which criticized the USACE's use of an Environmental Assessment instead of a full Environmental Impact Statement as cursory, incomplete, and inconsistent with federal guidelines. The coalition also disputed the USACE's assessment of cultural sites, consultation with Tribal nations, and impact on marginalized groups citing inadequate consultations and use of informational resources and inaccurate analysis. Over [220 scientists have signed a statement](#) calling for a more rigorous evaluation of the pipeline's environmental and cultural impacts. The scientists expressed concern over the potential impacts on climate change, biodiversity, and indigenous people's drinking water. Sunoco Logistics, the pipeline's future operator, "[spills crude \[oil\] more often than any of its competitors with more than 200 leaks since 2010.](#)"

Engagement Resources

- [Respect our Water](#) – A group created by youth from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation to oppose DAPL through petitions, letters, and national events.
- [Greenpeace](#) – An international environmental NGO that uses direct action, lobbying, research, and ecotage to raise public awareness and to influence the public and private sectors.
- [Sierra Club](#) – The nation's largest environmental preservation organization; recent focuses include green energy, mitigating global warming, and opposing coal.

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Issuance of Presidential Permit for Construction of Keystone XL Pipeline

Presidential Memorandum and Presidential Permit
January 24, 2017 and March 24, 2017, respectively

Summary

Two months after President Trump released a [presidential memoranda](#) directing the Secretaries of State, the Army, and the Interior to expedite approval for the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline the Department of State has issued a [Presidential permit](#) to TransCanada authorizing the company to “construct, connect, operate, and maintain pipeline facilities” for the importation of crude oil. The Trump administration, along with industry and Republican proponents, argues that the pipeline will help create jobs and secure national energy security. [LEARN MORE](#)

Analysis

The Keystone XL Pipeline would enable oil companies to transport oil sludge from Canada and North Dakota to Gulf Coast refineries from which they could be easily exported. While Trump boasts the creation of 28,000 jobs from the pipeline, energy historian and consultant [Ellen Wald explains](#) that estimates for construction jobs are misleading because they are often inaccurate, they include vague “spin-off” jobs, and the jobs are short-term (a [2014 State Department review](#) estimates only 35 permanent jobs would be created). Framing the project’s job creation as a way of addressing unemployment distorts the actual impacts. Opponents of the pipeline argue that “[future demand has been put in question](#)” by high American oil production, green energy, and energy efficient cars and that excess oil from the pipeline will be exported, untouched by U.S. citizens. [Clifford Krauss for the New York Times adds](#) that declining oil prices have made expensive oil sand extraction unattractive for oil producers many of whom have sold their assets and abandoned development projects. [Environmental groups argue](#) that the pipeline will increase the profitability and production of tar sands oil which produce 81 percent greater greenhouse gas emissions than other forms of oil accelerating the devastating effects of climate change. [LEARN MORE](#)

Engagement Resources

- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) – a non-profit international environmental advocacy group committed to fighting Trump’s “environmental assault” and using “every tool in the kit to stop this dangerous tar sands oil pipeline project.”
- [Greenpeace](#) – an international environmental NGO that uses direct action, lobbying, research, and ecotage to raise public awareness and to influence the public and private sectors.
- [Sierra Club](#) – the nation’s largest environmental preservation organization; recent focuses include green energy, mitigating global warming, and opposing coal.

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Nebraska Approves Keystone XL Pipeline

Approved by the Nebraska Public Service Commission on November 20, 2017

Summary

Last Monday, five members of an obscure Nebraska committee [voted three-to-two](#) in favor of TransCanada's [Keystone XL Pipeline \(KXL\)](#) route through their state. [The Keystone XL is the name for the fourth and final phase of the Keystone Pipeline System.](#) [Overcoming this regulatory obstacle was cited as a victory](#) for the 1,179-mile-long pipeline nine years after the initial proposal. In 2011, President Obama delayed construction of the KXL in the U.S. [before rejecting the project completely in 2015 for climate change reasons.](#) [Trump reversed this order within his first month as president,](#) calling the pipeline a source of jobs and revenue with "no down side." [However, the approved route differs from that of the initial proposal.](#) This approved Mainline Alternative route is further east, nearer to the phase three portion of the pipeline and further away from the Sandhill's region and Ogallala Aquifer. [This caveat creates further complications](#) for the pipeline hopefuls who must now assess feasibility and cost differential between the two pathways. In addition, TransCanada would have to get temporary permission ([easement agreements](#)) from new landowners. [Environmental groups and local native tribes](#) have also promised to protest the decision [through both demonstrations and legal action based on the lack of analysis on this alternate route.](#) Not to be confused with the American Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), the KXL opposition mainly consists of environmentalists [as opposed to the recently stayed DAPL,](#) which was protested based on its pathway through Standing Rock Sioux sacred sites.

Analysis

[This vote does not necessarily mean the pipeline will be built.](#) While it was a substantial regulatory hurdle, the approval of a different route [may require new permits and renewed State Department approval.](#) This alternate site is near a current oil Mainline, [but there has been little investigation of the proposed site and the implications a pipeline route would have on that location.](#) The decision came four days after [210,000 gallons spilled from the phase one portion of the pipeline in South Dakota.](#) [Keystone XL advocates claim that all infrastructure breaks down at some point, but many see this as a concern.](#) Especially when considering that [the Canadian tar sands oil creates up to 50 percent more carbon dioxide than conventional oil when burned.](#) When the proposal was initially submitted in 2008, [oil was \\$80-90 a barrel compared to the current price of \\$60 a barrel.](#) Even if delays do not continue, [the lauded economic impact may not meet expectations](#) and the overall outcome may be far less lucrative than originally expected.

Engagement Resources

- [Find out more about the Keystone XL from NRDC](#) (National Resource Defense Council)
- [Read the recent Call to Action](#) from a collective group of those in opposition to the pipeline.

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Community Response

Cities, Companies, Universities Bypass Trump on Climate

Private and Public Actions

Summary

After President Trump [withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Accord](#) on June 1st, private and public actors have both vowed to lead the country's fight against climate change. The coalition "[We Are Still In](#)" [released a statement](#) on June 5th declaring their intent to "ensure the U.S. remains a global leader in reducing carbon emissions." The signatories are an amalgamation of cities, states, businesses, and universities representing [over a third of the US population, accounting for \\$7.6 trillion of the US economy, and including over 20 Fortune 500 companies](#), such as Apple, Google, and Nike. [13 states have formed the US Climate Alliance](#) in an effort to reduce national emissions, while [340 mayors have adopted Paris Accord goals for their cities](#). Additionally, Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor and billionaire, [has pledged to meet the \\$15 million funding gap](#) left by the US for UN operations under the Paris Accord.

Analysis

While the public and private backlash to Trump's decision induces environmental optimism, coalitions, cities, and businesses face major hurdles without federal support. Due to their limited size, [city climate initiatives neglect some of the most emissions-intensive activities, such as agriculture, cement production, natural resource extraction, air travel, and power production, which often occur outside city limits](#). Moreover, ["city policies would be rendered ineffective if sources of emissions relocate to evade them."](#) Burdensome restrictions in certain cities and states may cause companies to move their production to less stringent locations. The national coalitions and agreements may also face [compliance issues; some signatories may not have the resources to be effective or may have signed on purely for publicity purposes](#). And while some actors, such as Nike and New York City, have released specific goals to reduce emissions and commit to renewable energy, others have no detailed plans to work with. Obviously, the commitment from companies, cities, and states to fight for the health of our planet is a positive sign with the potential to reduce emissions and to encourage environmentally conscious technologies and behaviors; but without a federal commitment to fight climate change, it will be difficult for these coalitions to save the world.

Engagement Resources

- Encourage your representatives to commit to the goals of the Paris Climate Accord
- [Contact Your State Governor](#)
- [Contact Your Mayor](#) – locate mayors by name, city, or population size.
- [We Are Still In](#) – explore the coalition of US government and business leaders who have declared support for climate action to meet the Paris Accord; encourage your affiliates to join.

This brief was compiled by Conor Downey. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact conor@usresistnews.org.

White House Releases Report on Human Responsibility for Climate Change

Report published on November 3, 2017

Summary

Earlier this month, [thirteen federal agencies](#) published a report through the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) that claims humans are primarily responsible for global warming through the increased production of greenhouse gases in the last century. [The White House has released this report](#), despite [its direct opposition to the touted Trump administration position](#). The report goes so far as to say that there is “[no convincing alternative \[to human responsibility for climate change\] supported by observable science](#).” The report describes increasing global temperatures and rising seas levels with the expectation that [these changes will continue](#) at an alarming rate. These changes are linked to extreme weather events, [which could increase in intensity and frequency](#). [Unless something is done](#) about the emission of greenhouse gases, [there will be dire social and economic consequences](#) the world over, which [disproportionately affect the world’s poorest](#) individuals and communities.

Analysis

Since taking office, Trump and his administration have [consistently denied](#) the reality of climate change in both word and deed. [However](#), scientists within the government [have not allowed such talk to stay their research](#), even though [Pruitt has banned](#) many scientific grant recipients from his advisory councils. The U.S. is currently [the only country](#) that is not a part of the Paris Climate Agreement since Trump withdrew earlier this year. However, [the U.S. is responsible for 27 percent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions](#). Despite the pointed nature of the report, the White House has been silent on the point of climate change since its release of the document.

Engagement Resources

- Read the [Full USGCRP Report \(Executive Summary\)](#) and access their [Resource Guide](#)
- [Get Involved at a local level](#)
- [How-to guide](#) for calling Congress
- [Further reading on Climate Change](#)
- [Resources for talking to kids](#) about climate change

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief please contact megan@usresistnews.org.

Scientists sue EPA and DOI Advisory Board Members Quit

EPA Lawsuit filed on January 24, 2018; DOI Advisory Board Members resigned on January 16, 2018

Summary

Earlier this month, [The Union of Concerned Scientists \(UCS\)](#) and [Protect Democracy](#) sued EPA Secretary Pruitt for blocking scientists who receive EPA funding from being on advisory boards within the agency. [Pruitt announced](#) this unprecedented shift back in October 2017 without any window for public comment, citing a potential conflict of interest as the reason for the change.

[No further explanation](#) has been given for why leaders in the scientific community cannot contribute their expertise to the EPA and its policies. The UCS says that [this violates the Federal Advisory Committee Act](#), which sets guidelines for balanced government advisories that are untainted by the viewpoint of the appointing authority. [Pruitt has filled these advisory board openings](#) with industry funded scientists instead, causing further alarm within the academic community.

Meanwhile in the Department of the Interior, [nine of the twelve National Parks System Advisory Board members resigned their posts](#) as a means of protesting Secretary Zinke and the acts of the DOI. A tenth member submitted her resignation the following day. In the resignation letter, former board chair and former Governor of Alaska Tony Knowles said that Zinke had disregarded the legal partnership between the board and the department. In a later interview he said that Zinke had [“stonewalled”](#) their efforts to address pressing issues of climate change and environmental protections by refusing to meet with them. [A recent report by the UCS](#) reviewed the 73 advisory boards within six federal agencies and found that these boards met less in 2017 than any other year since 1997, when the government started keeping records. Almost two-thirds of those boards have met less than their charter recommends.

Analysis

In their press release regarding the legal action, Protect Democracy called Pruitt’s move [“an attack on science itself,”](#) as well as an abuse of power. Since the EPA is one of the largest funders of environmental and public health research, [scientists face a choice](#) between public service and continuing important scientific research with this board overhaul, which could lead to some of the brightest scientific minds stepping down from EPA advising. One member called the advisory boards [“one of the most effective ways for me to use my scientific expertise to promote public health,”](#) but goes on to say that this directive necessitates a decision between his own work and serving the public. One plaintiff says the order goes further by [“caus\[ing\] significant harm to the public interest”](#) by replacing these scientist with those who work for the industries and companies that the EPA is designed to regulate. As a self-designated champion of national parks, Zinke has also shown a lack of desire for scientific input, largely relying on industry leaders for advice on national monument size and offshore oil regulation. Neither the EPA or the DOI responded immediately to the respective lawsuit and resignations. DOI Spokeswoman Heather Swift has since stated that the [“boards have restarted”](#) without any further explanation and [Pruitt has maintained](#) that he is committed the EPA’s scientific integrity.

Engagement Resources

- [Read the full UCS Report, “Abandoning Science Advice”](#)
- Read the full press releases from both plaintiffs ([Protect Democracy](#) and [UCS](#)) suing Pruitt

This brief was compiled by Megan Toney. If you have comments or want to add the name of your organization to this brief, please contact megan@usresistnews.org.