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From: Ides, Nan
Sent: Fri 12/1/2017 4:03:14 PM
Subject: related to your FOIA?

Poisoned wells found around Mountaire Farms

WULMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL A number of private wells near a Millsboro-area poultry processing plant that was recently cited for polluting the groundwater have been found to be dangerously contaminated, state regulators said late Thursday. Recent testing found that water in "several" wells surrounding the plant contains more nitrates than the 10 milligrams per liter allowed by national drinking water standards, according to the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. Exposure to high levels of nitrate can lead to decreased blood pressure, cramps, vomiting and even death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention At DNREC's urging, Mountaire Farms has agreed to provide bottled water to the affected homes, a press release issued by the state agency at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday stated. DNREC did not disclose how many wells were found to be undrinkable, how many residents are affected, where the wells are located or the full extent of contamination discovered in those wells. An agency spokesman said more information might be available Friday. A spokesman for Mountaire Farms was not immediately available for comment. Mountaire has been providing bottled water and drinking water treatment to a half-dozen homes since at least Nov. 2 when the state issued the company a violation notice for heavily contaminating the groundwater around the poultry plant. State officials say the contamination entered the groundwater through a state-permitted spray irrigation system that allowed Mountaire Farms to apply wastewater from its processing plant to nearly 930 acres of farmland in the surrounding area. That wastewater, which contains both poultry and human waste, is supposed to be thoroughly treated using a process that involves screens, separation tanks, lagoons and nutrient-eating bacteria. But state regulators say at least some of the wastewater was bypassing a critical step in the treatment process before being applied to farm fields, according to state records. As a result, that wastewater showed a presence of fecal coliform – bacteria found in human and animal waste – at a level 5,500 times the legal limit, along with high levels of other contaminants. Records turned over to state regulators show the pollution may have gone undetected for months. Mountaire fired its entire wastewater treatment staff at the plant after discovering the violations, a company spokesman said in early November.

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Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines -- Friday, December 1, 2017

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Friday, December 1, 2017

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

Fracking ban proposed for Delaware River basin; 'significant risks cited

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA The Delaware River Basin Commission on Thursday proposed a ban on fracking for natural gas in the basin. The interstate regulator said it had determined that high-volume hydraulic fracturing "poses significant, immediate and long-term risks" to the waters of the basin, including so-called Special Protection waters that have a high ecological, recreational or scenic value. "High volume hydraulic fracturing in hydrocarbon bearing rock formations is prohibited within the Delaware River Basin," it said. The ban would cover both the Marcellus and Utica Shales. But in a section that dismayed environmentalists, the draft regulations also say DRBC would allow the export of water for fracking from the basin if certain permit conditions are met – even though the practice is "discouraged." And it says that "produced water" such as that from fracking operations would be permitted in the basin if it goes through a water treatment plant. The regulation marks a milestone in a battle over whether to allow the natural gas industry to exploit the basin's shale gas reserves, as it has in all but two

Pennsylvania counties – Pike and Wayne – that adjoin the Delaware River. "This is a huge and groundbreaking protection for the Delaware River watershed," said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, which has campaigned for years for a permanent ban on fracking. But she attacked the DRBC's proposal to potentially allow exportation of water for external fracking operations, and the importation of waste water from those operations, as "illogical" given the ban on fracking itself. "Those are absolutely flaws to this rule," Carluccio said. "There really is no way that importing waste water from fracking and exporting water for fracking could adhere to the requirements of the Delaware River Basin Commission's requirement to protect the water resources."...

House Votes to Renew Brownfields Program for First Time in 15 Years

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT The House overwhelmingly passed legislation Nov. 30 to reauthorize the brownfields program, which helps communities clean up and reuse contaminated sites, although Senate action will likely have to wait until 2018. The bill, which passed 409-8, has won widespread support from environmental engineers, developers, and municipalities. Those who have followed the bill (H.R. 3017) said a few recent changes to limit brownfields grants may have mixed results for communities seeking financial assistance. The overall legislation signals congressional support for developers, communities, and an Environmental Protection Agency program that hasn't been reauthorized since its inception in 2002, those followers said. Organizations including the National Ground Water Association, the National Association of Realtors, and Smart Growth America lobbied in support of brownfields legislation. The EPA's Brownfields Program provides communities with technical assistance and grants to assess, clean up, and promote redevelopment of sites that are or might be contaminated. The House bill authorizes up to $200 million for the federal program, and $50 million for state response programs, for each fiscal year from 2018 through 2022. The bill relieves local governments of liability when handling brownfields, makes nonprofits eligible for grant funding, and expands applicable uses for individual grants. A similar bill in the Senate (S. 822), introduced by Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), has not yet reached the floor and, with just two weeks of scheduled floor time left for the year, will almost surely be put off until next year. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the bill in July.Inhofe told Bloomberg Environment hours earlier that there may be broad enough support to expedite the Senate bill under unanimous consent (UC), a procedure which avoids debate and deems a bill passed as long as no senator objects. "I don't know of any opposition to it, in fact I thought we could UC it," the Oklahoma Republican said. "And that will be my intent now that it's passing the House."...

Commentary: The EPA comes to West Virginia - to listen

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL It's taken a while — several years in fact — but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has finally come to West Virginia to hear testimony about the Clean Power Plan. There was plenty of pent-up demand to be heard. As many as 200 people testified Tuesday and Wednesday at the state Capitol. The EPA under the Obama administration created the Clean Power Plan as a broad stroke against global warming. The rules set impossibly low carbon emission standards for power plants to force the coal industry out of business, while driving up electricity costs. The EPA's hostility toward coal through the Clean Power Plan and

other enforcement measures severely damaged the coal industry. Miners lost their jobs and coal companies went bankrupt. Hundreds of mine supply companies lost business. Good jobs and tax revenue disappeared. Coal was also hit hard by market forces, such as plentiful and low-cost natural gas and an increasing desire by the public to use more renewables. However, it's undeniable that having a government agency target an industry for elimination is pretty bad for business. The EPA under the Trump administration is reversing course, and the hearings in Charleston this week are evidence of that. The EPA is now rolling back the Clean Power Plan, but there is a process for that which includes field hearings. EPA Region III Administrator Cosmo Servidio told reporters Tuesday President Barack Obama's EPA went beyond its authority when it tried to impose the draconian carbon standards. "Clearly the Clean Power Plan was an overreach by the previous administration, and this is an opportunity for us to get some feedback as we move forward," he told reporters. "It's important that we're here in West Virginia, coal country. Obviously the coal industry was going to feel the biggest effects of the Clean Power Plan." And that's why the previous administration's EPA never bothered to come here. The agency knew its argument in support of a rule that would have no discernible impact on global temperatures would not wash with coal miners worried about losing their livelihood. Obama's EPA also knew it was on shaky legal footing. Its exploitation of a few words of the Clean Air Act to remake the nation's energy economy was a clear abuse of its power. Notably, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a stay on the Clean Power Plan, a legal decision normally made when the challenging side has a reasonable chance of success when the merits of the case are argued. The previous administration's EPA shut out West Virginia. Even veteran lawmakers like former Congressman Nick Rahall, who always had a working relationship with the agency, was stiff-armed. The anguished voices from suffering coal communities fell on deaf ears. But this week those voices were finally heard.

Commentary: Balance critical to Clean Power Plan

CLARKSBURG EXPONENT-TELEGRAM If the two days of hearings the Environmental Protection Agency held in Charleston this week on the Clean Power Plan show anything, it's that no matter what the EPA does, there will be critics. As an array of media outlets have reported, the hearings, held in three different meeting rooms simultaneously, drew hundreds of people, many of whom took advantage of the 3 minutes allotted to those who signed up to speak. Most reports seem to indicate those in opposition of repealing the leftover work of President Obama's administration outnumbered those who favored repeal. That's not surprising, since EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has indicated his plans to scrap the plan in lieu of one that is more balanced in nature. Such an approach was sure to rile environmentalists and health advocates, who see great benefit from the Obama plan. And make no mistake, there are benefits to transforming the country's energy plan into one that is more environmentally friendly. But, as we've said numerous times before, that transformation can't be done at a pace that hinders the country's — and West Virginia's — economic recovery efforts. The Obama plan, in terms of expedited implementation and government overreach, was bad from day one. And, as advocates knew, it artificially forced power generation companies to look elsewhere — and quickly. That led to the closing of dozens of coal-fired power plants, leading to an earlier-than-necessary or desired demise of coal. So, while the goal of the Obama Clean Power Plan is admirable, its implementation was disastrous and could only be seen as a forced effort to create a presidential legacy. Thus the theme "War on Coal" gained traction and began to pit environmentalists and

others seeking "green" solutions into conflict with those looking for more pragmatic solutions. Some of that was on stage this week in Charleston, as officials, industry experts, environmentalists and common folks had their 3 minutes of fame, sharing their opinion. It was a worthy exercise; one that very much needed to take place, if for no other reason than to engage the public in hopes of more reasoned debate. But, at the end of the day, Pruitt and President Trump have it right: The Clean Power Plan, as currently written, needs to go. In its place, the country needs a clear national energy policy that allows for the continued use of natural resources — including coal, natural gas, oil (preferably domestic in nature), wind, solar and hydro. And, as coal naturally diminishes and the free markets dictate its demise, the nation will be better situation to survive economically — and environmentally.

Pa. wants to cut methane emissions, but plans moving slowly

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA Nearly two years ago, the Wolf administration made national headlines by saying it would limit climate-damaging methane emissions produced by Pennsylvania's drilling industry. But plans the state unveiled Thursday don't mean much for curbing pollution in the near future. Methane is the main component of natural gas. Compared to carbon dioxide, it's much more potent as a climate-warming greenhouse gas, although it stays in the planet's atmosphere for a shorter time period. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection says that starting in early 2018, drilling companies will have to use the best available technologies to prevent leaks at new well sites and midstream facilities. A separate package of new regulations for existing emission sources was supposed to be proposed over a year ago, but the DEP missed that self-imposed deadline and won't give a new one. Because those regulations on existing infrastructure would take years to go into effect, Joe Minott, executive director of the Philadelphia-based Clean Air Council, calls the overall plan to cut methane pollution "painfully slow." "The politics in Pennsylvania are not very supportive of regulating the gas industry," says Minott. "It's really up to the [Wolf] administration to explain it, but I think they wanted to move extremely cautiously. They couldn't move any more cautiously than this. But it is moving, and that is good."State Rep. Greg Vitali (D- Delaware), a vocal environmental advocate, says he's concerned the efforts have been slow-walked. "I heard a lot of talk about the DEP not wanting to do anything on methane until after the budget," says Vitali. "I think there's a lot of politics behind these being delayed.The Marcellus industry gives so much money to the legislature." For its part, the industry has argued DEP overstepped its bounds– essentially by trying to create new regulatory requirements via permit changes. "Our industry has a long and clear record of utilizing best practices and cutting-edge technologies to capture methane," Marcellus Shale Coalition president David Spigelmyer said in a statement. "These continuous improvements make good economic, environmental and business sense, and independent data reflects our collective successes."...

Editorial: Environmental Consequences Of Natural Gas Development

WILKES-BARRE CITIZENS VOICE Debates about the impact of industrial-scale gas drilling in Pennsylvania tend to be about relatively near-term issues — job creation, economic cycles, the immediate environmental impact and so on. Tuesday, the entire state Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that speaks to the as-yet-unknown long-term environmental

consequences of the natural gas boom. Driller EQT Production has challenged the state Department of Environmental Protection's imposition of a record $4.5 million in fines for an October 2014 leak from a wastewater-holding structure in Tioga County. The DEP contends that it has the authority and regulatory duty under the Clean Streams Act to fine a driller for each day that spilled pollution remains in a waterway or moves to a second or subsequent waterway. That interpretation differs from the company's by 180 degrees. Under the Land Recycling and Environmental Remediation Standards Act, EQT argued, it can be fined only for the number of days that the leak continued. The company won its case at the Commonwealth Court level, prompting the DEP appeal to the Supreme Court. "When do civil penalties start and end?" company attorney Robert Byer asked the justices. "There has to be somewhere where it ends." That's true as a practical regulatory matter, and the justices will provide a legal answer. The problem is that the same assumption cannot be made about the environmental problem. It often is possible to determine when and where pollution begins, but it is much more difficult to determine when and where it ends, if at all. Stream or groundwater pollution could prove to be a multi-generational issue, as evidenced a century later by the lingering environmental consequences of coal-mining pollution. That's why, as DEP attorney Jonathan Massey put it: "This is one of the most important environmental cases the court has heard in recent years." Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, the state Legislature should ensure that state law holds producers accountable for the long-term environmental consequences of drilling-related pollution.

Rep. Bullock Tackles Pollution Affecting African-American Families

PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE State Rep. Donna Bullock, D-Phila., vice chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, spoke at a news conference hosted by Moms Clean Air Force and Defend Our Future to discuss how toxins from the oil and gas industry disproportionately impact African-American families throughout Pennsylvania. According to a November 2017 report co-authored by the Clean Air Task Force and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, African-Americans are exposed to 38 percent more polluted air than their white counterparts and are 75 percent more likely than the average American to live in a fence-line community. Fence-line communities are communities that neighbor a company, industrial or service facility, and are directly impacted by the facility's operation, which includes noise, door traffic, odor and chemical emissions. "The recent report authored by the Clean Air Task Force and the NAACP only confirms what we already know: the oil and gas industry is making profits at the expense of the health and well-being of historically marginalized communities," Bullock said. "Many fence-line communities consist of low-income residents who have faced a history of discrimination on the bases of race, gender, class and disability. These companies are able burden vulnerable communities, many which have low rates of health insurance, with the deadly consequences from air pollution." The report shows that nearly 80,000 African-Americans in Pennsylvania live within a half-mile radius of oil and gas facilities. As a result, countless African-American families face a higher risk of being exposed to hazardous pollutants that can cause asthma, cancer and other devastating health impacts...

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Trump tells confidants that a government shutdown might be good for him

WASHINGTON POST President Trump has told confidants that a government shutdown could be good for him politically and is focusing on his hard-line immigration stance as a way to win back supporters unhappy with his outreach to Democrats this fall, according to people who have spoken with him recently. Over the past 10 days, the president has also told advisers that it is important that he is seen as tough on immigration and getting money for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to two people who have spoken with him. He has asked friends about how a shutdown would affect him politically and has told several people he would put the blame on Democrats. Trump's mixed messages on a partial government shutdown could hamper the ability of congressional Republicans to negotiate with Democrats, whose support they need to pass spending legislation in coming weeks. Many Republicans said this week that a shutdown is a possibility they hope to avoid. Even inside the White House, aides fret about the possibility, saying it would not poll well. White House Legislative Affairs Director Marc Short and other aides said the president did not want a shutdown. "He's not advocating for a shutdown in any

way. We want to make sure our military is funded. We want to make sure our priorities are funded. That's why we invited [Democrats] over to have a conversation about a deal," Short told reporters at the U.S. Capitol late Thursday. Sen. John Cornyn (Tex.), the second-ranking Republican senator, said that "when you run for office and you get elected and you are given the opportunity to govern, it strikes me as a bad idea to shut the government down. That seems like an abdication of responsibility."...

Editorial: Why Trump wants a government shutdown, and why he shouldn't

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER The public can be forgiven if the manufactured distractions of President Trump have kept it from focusing on the possibility of another government shutdown, but people need to pay attention. Trump tweeted Tuesday that he didn't think a budget deal could be made, which prompted Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to back out of a meeting with Trump and Republican leaders. Trump said it would be the Democrats' fault if the government shuts down without a budget, but he has been sounding like he wants a shutdown for months. In May Trump tweeted, "Our country needs a good 'shutdown' in September to fix mess!" In August he told a rally crowd in Phoenix, "If we have to close down your government, we're building that wall." The president continues to show himself to be a poor student of history. Someone should tell him there have been 18 government shutdowns since the current budget process began in 1976. In each case, the consequences did not justify the cost. The last exercise in futility, from Oct. 1 to 16, 2013, occurred after Republicans tried to defund Obamacare. The shutdown put more than 800,000 federal employees out of work and cost the country an estimated $24 billion in economic output. Here's a breakdown of the other 17 shutdowns:... The country blamed Gingrich for the shutdown and put his political career in a downward spiral. That's a lesson Trump needs to consider. He insists he can pin blame for a shutdown on the Democrats. So did Gingrich.

PENNSYLVANIA

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shutdown put more than 800,000 federal employees out of work and cost the country an estimated $24 billion in economic output. Here's a breakdown of the other 17 shutdowns:... The country blamed Gingrich for the shutdown and put his political career in a downward spiral. That's a lesson Trump needs to consider. He insists he can pin blame for a shutdown on the Democrats. So did Gingrich.

4.1 magnitude Delaware earthquake shakes Philly, South Jersey region Yes, that was an earthquake that rattled your office window, jolted your desk and caused your Twitter feed to explode late Thursday afternoon. The U.S. Geological Survey reported that a rare earthquake rumbled under the East Coast about 4:45 p.m. Thursday. The epicenter was six miles from Dover, Del., near Bombay Hook National Wildlife Reserve, and about five miles underground. It was initially reported as a 5.1 magnitude earthquake. However, it was downgraded to a 4.4, then a 4.1 shortly after 5:30 p.m.At first, people throughout the area were puzzled by buildings that felt as if they were swaying, or windows seemingly ready to pop. Social media lit up with people reporting feeling the shaking for miles around Philadelphia and South Jersey. Reports say the quake was felt from Washington to New York. The tremors were felt in Atlantic City, where Gino Martinelli, 67, said his house seemed to turn to rubber for about four seconds."I felt the whole house almost like waving," he said. "It lasted for approximately four seconds. I knew it was pretty strong, because we live where northeast winds hit, and this was way worse than that. I actually felt the whole house moving."...

Comcast's Center City office footprint grows with lease renewal ahead of new tower Comcast Corp. plans to remain a big renter of Philadelphia commercial space even after moving into the new Center City skyscraper being built for the technology-and-entertainment giant, cementing its status as the city's leading office user. The company plans to increase its footprint at the Three Logan Square office building at 1717 Arch St. by 70,000 square feet to occupy 300,000 square feet. The deal extends its lease at the 57-story, red-granite tower through 2023, spokesman John Demming said in an interview this week. The roughly one million-square-foot high-rise stands across Arch Street from the Comcast Center headquarters building and diagonally across an intersection from the new Comcast Technology Center tower under construction nearby. ...

Questions on outlook for nuclear plants In what is likely to be the opening salvo of a nasty legislative battle, lawmakers are to convene early next week to discuss how to prevent New Jersey's nuclear plants from shutting down prematurely. The bigger question is whether they also are planning to act on a yet-to-be-introduced bill that some say could provide billions of dollars in ratepayer subsidies to Public Service Enterprise Group over the next decade. The Senate Environment and Energy Committee and Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee plan to hold a rare joint session Monday on economic challenges facing nuclear power plants, an issue that is splintering the energy sector not only in New Jersey but in Washington and elsewhere. News of the joint hearing this week jolted a coalition opposed to efforts to prop up nuclear units. They fear the proceedings foreshadows a legislative initiative to award lucrative financial incentives to PSEG and Exelon (a co-owner of two of the plants) during the lame-duck session, which ends early in January. "We've seen this special-interest strategy before on bad bills," said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, an opponent of subsidies to nuclear plants. "It's how a bad bill gets passed in a lame-duck session." Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo (D., Mercer), chairman of the Assembly committee, discounted

that scenario at least for now: "At this point in time, I don't have a bill." Sen. Bob Smith (D., Middlesex), chairman of the Senate panel, did not return a call seeking comment. He has been guarded about the subject, saying only that the issue is being studied...

PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE

Rep. Bullock Tackles Pollution Affecting African-American Families State Rep. Donna Bullock, D-Phila., vice chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, spoke at a news conference hosted by Moms Clean Air Force and Defend Our Future to discuss how toxins from the oil and gas industry disproportionately impact African-American families throughout Pennsylvania. According to a November 2017 report co-authored by the Clean Air Task Force and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, African-Americans are exposed to 38 percent more polluted air than their white counterparts and are 75 percent more likely than the average American to live in a fence-line community. Fence-line communities are communities that neighbor a company, industrial or service facility, and are directly impacted by the facility's operation, which includes noise, door traffic, odor and chemical emissions. "The recent report authored by the Clean Air Task Force and the NAACP only confirms what we already know: the oil and gas industry is making profits at the expense of the health and well-being of historically marginalized communities," Bullock said. "Many fence-line communities consist of low-income residents who have faced a history of discrimination on the bases of race, gender, class and disability. These companies are able burden vulnerable communities, many which have low rates of health insurance, with the deadly consequences from air pollution." The report shows that nearly 80,000 African-Americans in Pennsylvania live within a half-mile radius of oil and gas facilities. As a result, countless African-American families face a higher risk of being exposed to hazardous pollutants that can cause asthma, cancer and other devastating health impacts...

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

DEP releases final methane permits for shale gas sites The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has shifted drilling, fracking and other temporary shale gas well site activities out of its controversial plans for methane-reduction permits, in a bid to cut down on leaks of the greenhouse gas without creating obstacles to new natural gas development. Agency officials said Thursday that the final version of the permits will instead consider emissions from temporary activities through its current permit exemption process — a roundabout way of requiring drilling companies to meet certain environmental standards without needing to obtain air pollution permits before construction starts. After the first drafts of the permits were released in February, the shale gas industry and its supporters were emphatic in their complaints that notification requirements and cumbersome equipment inventories would have made it impossible to run nimble drilling operations, where equipment is frequently moved on and off sites and can't always be predicted in advance. "We've done a lot of work to make sure we're balancing the environmental impacts that we're attempting to manage through the regulatory and permitting process with the operational realities," DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said during an online presentation to outline the changes. The general permits, known as GP-5 and GP-5A, will update existing air pollution control requirements for natural gas compressor stations along pipelines and supplement the permit exemption method that has been used for managing air emissions at new well sites since 2013. The department plans to publish the permits in the first

quarter of 2018, but it released details of the changes Thursday to give its advisers time to ensure the language is "clear and implementable," George Hartenstein, DEP's deputy secretary in charge of air programs, said. The permits will allow 30-day and 60-day transition periods before the standards take effect. Natural gas is mostly made up of methane, a potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change that has a relatively short life in the atmosphere. Methane is also emitted in significant amounts from farm animals, landfills and coal mines. Legislators in the General Assembly's Republican majority criticized the first drafts of the permits as an attempt by the Democratic governor's administration to write regulations without going through the more rigorous review process that regulations require...

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Somerset County PA Gas Well Fire Triggers Precautionary Evacuations A gas well fire in rural Somerset County Thursday morning prompted the evacuation of several residences as a precaution, according to emergency dispatchers. The leak was reported just before 9 a.m. near the 2500 block of East Mud Pike, northwest of Berlin in the central portion of the county. No injuries were immediately reported. The well belongs to Xtreme Energy, according to the Daily American of Somerset. Berlin Volunteer Fire Department assisted ambulance crews in the evacuations within 1,000 feet of the well, according to dispatchers.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

Fracking ban proposed for Delaware River basin; 'significant risks cited The Delaware River Basin Commission on Thursday proposed a ban on fracking for natural gas in the basin. The interstate regulator said it had determined that high-volume hydraulic fracturing "poses significant, immediate and long-term risks" to the waters of the basin, including so-called Special Protection waters that have a high ecological, recreational or scenic value. "High volume hydraulic fracturing in hydrocarbon bearing rock formations is prohibited within the Delaware River Basin," it said. The ban would cover both the Marcellus and Utica Shales. But in a section that dismayed environmentalists, the draft regulations also say DRBC would allow the export of water for fracking from the basin if certain permit conditions are met – even though the practice is "discouraged." And it says that "produced water" such as that from fracking operations would be permitted in the basin if it goes through a water treatment plant. The regulation marks a milestone in a battle over whether to allow the natural gas industry to exploit the basin's shale gas reserves, as it has in all but two Pennsylvania counties – Pike and Wayne – that adjoin the Delaware River. "This is a huge and groundbreaking protection for the Delaware River watershed," said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, which has campaigned for years for a permanent ban on fracking. But she attacked the DRBC's proposal to potentially allow exportation of water for external fracking operations, and the importation of waste water from those operations, as "illogical" given the ban on fracking itself. "Those are absolutely flaws to this rule," Carluccio said. "There really is no way that importing waste water from fracking and exporting water for fracking could adhere to the requirements of the Delaware River Basin Commission's requirement to protect the water resources."...

Pa. wants to cut methane emissions, but plans moving slowly Nearly two years ago, the Wolf administration made national headlines by saying it would limit climate-damaging methane emissions produced by Pennsylvania's drilling industry. But plans the state unveiled Thursday don't mean much for curbing pollution in the near future. Methane is the main component of

natural gas. Compared to carbon dioxide, it's much more potent as a climate-warming greenhouse gas, although it stays in the planet's atmosphere for a shorter time period. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection says that starting in early 2018, drilling companies will have to use the best available technologies to prevent leaks at new well sites and midstream facilities. A separate package of new regulations for existing emission sources was supposed to be proposed over a year ago, but the DEP missed that self-imposed deadline and won't give a new one. Because those regulations on existing infrastructure would take years to go into effect, Joe Minott, executive director of the Philadelphia-based Clean Air Council, calls the overall plan to cut methane pollution "painfully slow." "The politics in Pennsylvania are not very supportive of regulating the gas industry," says Minott. "It's really up to the [Wolf] administration to explain it, but I think they wanted to move extremely cautiously. They couldn't move any more cautiously than this. But it is moving, and that is good."State Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware), a vocal environmental advocate, says he's concerned the efforts have been slow-walked. "I heard a lot of talk about the DEP not wanting to do anything on methane until after the budget," says Vitali. "I think there's a lot of politics behind these being delayed.The Marcellus industry gives so much money to the legislature." For its part, the industry has argued DEP overstepped its bounds– essentially by trying to create new regulatory requirements via permit changes. "Our industry has a long and clear record of utilizing best practices and cutting-edge technologies to capture methane," Marcellus Shale Coalition president David Spigelmyer said in a statement. "These continuous improvements make good economic, environmental and business sense, and independent data reflects our collective successes."...

Fire On Natural Gas Well Pad In WV Quickly Extinguished, None Hurt A piece of equipment on a natural gas well pad in northern West Virginia caught fire Wednesday, officials said. At the time of the fire, no one was on the pad, which has produced gas for several years, and there were no injuries. The blaze was five or six feet high when firefighters arrived, said Tom Hart, director of Emergency Management for Marshall County. The fire was put out when workers for Pittsburgh-based EQT, which operates the well, shut the gas flow. Local emergency crews were called to the Groves well pad, in Cameron, W. Va., 70 miles southwest of Pittsburgh, around 11 a.m., Hart said. Hart said the well is about half a mile from the nearest house in the largely rural county, which borders Pennsylvania. Linda Robertson, a spokesperson for EQT, said in an email that the fire occurred in the well pad's gas production unit — "a contained unit with a separator tank that sits quite a bit away from the well head." The unit separates liquids from gas coming out of the well before the gas is transported for further processing, Robertson said. "The pad was quickly secured and the well was shut in — the gas inlet and outlet were closed — as a precaution," Robertson said. Robertson said the cause is under investigation and the well will remain shut. The well was first put into production by Trans Energy in 2011, and EQT acquired the well when it purchased Trans Energy in 2016. The fire was first reported by workers at the nearby Williams Companies' Fort Beeler Cryogenic Gas Processing Plant, Hart said. The plant was evacuated, according to a West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection incident report...

HARRISBURG PATRIOT NEWS

Developer: 2 Underground Coal Mine Fires Pose No Threat To Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline
SHAMOKIN - A portion of the Atlantic Sunrise natural gas pipeline in Northumberland County will be near two underground fires, but the project developer says an extensive study shows they

do not pose a threat. "Clearly nothing is more important to us than ensuring the safety and continued integrity of the pipeline system." Christopher L. Stockton, spokesman for the Williams Co., said Thursday. "The extensive investigation into the status, extent, path progress and containment of the mine fires confirms the mine fires do not pose a threat to the pipeline's integrity or public safety." The state Department of Environmental Protection does not have any concerns with the location of the pipeline, spokesman Neil Shader said. DEP continues to monitor the fires and will work with the relevant agencies regarding their progress as it relates to the pipeline, he added. Williams Co. retained John T. Boyd Co., mining and geological consultants in Pittsburgh, to study the part of anthracite coal field in Northumberland County that is in proximity to the Central Penn Line South part of Atlantic Sunrise.Boyd issued its report in November 2016, three months before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in February granted a certificate of public convenience for the Atlantic Sunrise project.

ALTOONA MIRROR

Study: EPA cuts could damage bay Environmental Protection Agency cuts in the budget proposed by the Trump administration would devastate the decades-long, ongoing effort to restore Chesapeake Bay to pristine condition, according to a study released Thursday by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. The administration is proposing to eliminate the EPA's entire $73 million annual contribution to the restoration work, which would eliminate the agency's critical role in coordinating and tracking the cleanup, which involves six states, the District of Columbia, numerous jurisdictions and agencies at every government level and nonprofit groups, according to Kate Fritz, executive director of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. "They're staggering numbers," Fritz said Thursday of the potential funding losses — which are far from certain to occur, according to Kristin Reilly, spokeswoman for the Choose Clean Water Coalition. In Pennsylvania alone, the proposed cuts include $1.8 million in water pollution control grants, $1.2 million in drinking water protection and enforcement grants and — if non-point pollution control grants are eliminated — $4.7 million to deal with urban and farm runoff, according to a PennEnvironment news release. Altogether, Pennsylvania received $12 million in fiscal 2016, Reilly said. The threatened grant programs have supplied about $1 million to Blair County since the early 1990s — for remediation of acid mine drainage in Glen White Run above the Horseshoe Curve reservoirs of the Altoona Water Authority, control of nutrient runoff from farms and more recently for stormwater cleanup projects in keeping with increasingly strict federal and state regulations, said Donna Fisher, director of the Blair County Conservation District. The bay cleanup is at a "tipping point," with pollution measurements headed in the right direction and the states and the district midway along their paths to clean-up goals, Fritz said...

LANCASTER NEWSPAPERS

Lancaster Farmland Trust settles lawsuit over gas pipeline on preserved farm Lancaster Farmland Trust has settled its lawsuit against the builder of the Atlantic Sunrise gas pipeline and a landowner who, the trust claimed, violated a conservation easement on a preserved farm in Martic Township. The settlement does not stop the pipeline from being built through the farm, as the nonprofit trust had hoped in filing the lawsuit. But a renegotiated right of way easement adds protections to the land, said Karen Martynick, the trust's executive director. The Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co. also agreed to pay the trust $12,470 for the right of way and

pay almost $25,000 in the trust's legal fees. The dispute involved a 139-acre preserved farm sold in 2015 to Robert and Mindy Hostetter on Red Hill Road. The previous owners, the Steinman Foundation, had donated a conservation easement to the trust that specifically stated various man-made activities, and specifically listing pipelines, could not be built on the property. The Steinman Foundation is a local, independent family foundation funded by the companies that comprise Steinman Communications; those companies include LNP Media Group. The trust's lawsuit alleges the Hostetters had no authority to grant a right of way for the Atlantic Sunrise pipeline to go through the property, made three weeks after they had purchased the land. The Hostetters were paid nearly $50,000 for the easement. When the Hostetters and Transco refused to terminate the easement agreement, the trust sued. A Lancaster County court judge twice refused motions by Transco to dismiss the case...

Snowy Owls May Be Back In Lancaster County Remember all those rare snowy owls — you know, Harry Potter's pet — that swept through Lancaster County in the winter of 2013-14? If you missed them the first time, you may get another chance real soon. Project SNOWstorm — the volunteer snowy owl-tracking group that formed after the spectacle and even put transmitters on some of the predators — says another mass migration into the U.S. seems to be taking shape. The first vanguard of solitary migrants in white winter plumage has already shown up in North Carolina, Oklahoma and Missouri. Moreover, the pattern that led to the largest snowy owl "irruption" since the 1920s seems to be repeating itself, according to Scott Weidensaul, an ornithologist, author and snowy owl bander from Schuylkill County. Like four years ago, lemmings, the main food sources for snowy owls breeding in Northern Quebec in the summer, have had a banner year, resulting in unusual numbers of snowy owlets, Weidensaul notes. Scientists studying caribou in the area report unusually high numbers of young snowy owls flapping around. With so many owls, the parents kick them out, and the young birds head south. In 2013-14, thousands of snowy owls descended on the northern United States, delighting birdwatchers and Harry Potter fans of all ages. Most winters, maybe 10 snowy owls visit Pennsylvania. That winter, some 400 were observed. Lancaster County had its fair share of the largest owls in North America. Up to three at a time were seen during the winter in the Leola-New Holland-Intercourse area...

WELLSBORO GAZETTE

DEP Secretary Tours Upper Tioga River Watershed Pennsylvania's Environmental Protection Secretary Patrick McDonnell visited the upper Tioga River watershed recently, to learn firsthand about the acid mine drainage pollution impacting the area. According to Tioga County Concerned Citizens Committee Secretary Joyce Andrews, the Nov. 16 visit came at the secretary's request. "Secretary McDonnell wanted to gain firsthand knowledge of efforts to treat the AMD pollution impacting the area," Andrews said. TCCCC President Charlie Andrews presented Secretary McDonnell with a binder containing information about each of the four major tributaries contributing AMD pollution to the Tioga River and highlighted the partnership with the Hillside Rod & Gun Club, Southwestern Energy, and the many government agencies and civic organizations participating in the effort to restore the River. Joyce Andrews described the coalition's "Save The Tioga River" initiative as well as the money that has been raised thus far toward future operation and maintenance expenses. Northcentral Region Watershed Pollution Biologist Steve Means discussed water quality results that he has been collecting on the river

corridor to highlight benefits that have already been realized in the Tioga River channel since the Fall Brook AMD Treatment Projects came on line. He also reinforced the need to address the AMD pollution in the remaining tributaries to restore aquatic life to the Tioga River. Those in attendance were given a tour of the Fall Brook AMD treatment projects as well as a description of the proposed Morris Run AMD treatment project...

WILKES-BARRE CITIZENS VOICE

Editorial: Environmental Consequences Of Natural Gas Development Debates about the impact of industrial-scale gas drilling in Pennsylvania tend to be about relatively near-term issues — job creation, economic cycles, the immediate environmental impact and so on. Tuesday, the entire state Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that speaks to the as-yet-unknown long-term environmental consequences of the natural gas boom. Driller EQT Production has challenged the state Department of Environmental Protection's imposition of a record $4.5 million in fines for an October 2014 leak from a wastewater-holding structure in Tioga County. The DEP contends that it has the authority and regulatory duty under the Clean Streams Act to fine a driller for each day that spilled pollution remains in a waterway or moves to a second or subsequent waterway. That interpretation differs from the company's by 180 degrees. Under the Land Recycling and Environmental Remediation Standards Act, EQT argued, it can be fined only for the number of days that the leak continued. The company won its case at the Commonwealth Court level, prompting the DEP appeal to the Supreme Court. "When do civil penalties start and end?" company attorney Robert Byer asked the justices. "There has to be somewhere where it ends." That's true as a practical regulatory matter, and the justices will provide a legal answer. The problem is that the same assumption cannot be made about the environmental problem. It often is possible to determine when and where pollution begins, but it is much more difficult to determine when and where it ends, if at all. Stream or groundwater pollution could prove to be a multi-generational issue, as evidenced a century later by the lingering environmental consequences of coal-mining pollution. That's why, as DEP attorney Jonathan Massey put it: "This is one of the most important environmental cases the court has heard in recent years." Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, the state Legislature should ensure that state law holds producers accountable for the long-term environmental consequences of drilling-related pollution.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Pa.)

Delaware River Basin Commission Seeks Fracking Ban In NYC Watershed HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A commission that oversees water quality for the watershed that supplies Philadelphia and half of New York City with drinking water took another step Thursday toward permanently banning natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing, despite industry opposition. The Delaware River Basin Commission's newly published draft regulations would enact a formal ban on fracking, as well as put additional restrictions to make it harder, if not impossible, for the industry to dispose wastewater within the watershed or use water from the river and its tributaries for fracking outside the basin. It scheduled four hearings in January and a public comment period through Feb. 28, with a final vote possible next year. The area supplies drinking water to 15 million people. The decade-old drilling boom in the Marcellus Shale natural gas

reservoir — which lies beneath much of Pennsylvania and extends into New York — has put pressure on the Delaware River basin to allow exploration and fracking, the technique that's spurred a U.S. production renaissance in shale gas and oil. New York banned horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing statewide in 2015, while more than 10,000 Marcellus Shale wells drilled in Pennsylvania has rocketed the state to within striking distance of Texas to becoming the nation's No. 1 natural gas producer. The commission imposed a moratorium on drilling and fracking in 2010, preventing the industry from developing its acreage in the Delaware watershed. It voted 3-1, with one abstention, in September to begin the lengthy process of enacting a formal ban on drilling and fracking. A commission spokesman said Thursday he was not aware of any case where the industry had even applied to draw water from the watershed for use in fracking or to import its wastewater to a treatment facility inside the basin. David Masur, the director of Philadelphia-based PennEnvironment, an environmental advocacy group, said he supported the new regulations and suggested that the tighter restrictions would ensure the basin's water is off-limits to the exploration industry. "Since they have plenty of other places to get their water and dump their wastewater, why would they go through this process?" Masur said. Jeff Tittel, the director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, said the draft regulations still leave the possibility that the industry could draw water or return it to the basin as wastewater, and he opposes that. "We don't want the threat of wastewater or the removal of precious water, and we'll keep fighting to get the regulations that way," Tittel said. The industry has opposed the fracking ban. In a statement, David Spigelmyer, the president of the Pennsylvania-based Marcellus Shale Coalition, a trade association, said the proposed regulations "amount to a taking and deny Pennsylvania citizens the right to develop their own property rights. It flies in the face of settled science and common sense environmental regulation, and would bring self-inflicted economic harm to the commonwealth."...

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Trump tells confidants that a government shutdown might be good for him President Trump has told confidants that a government shutdown could be good for him politically and is focusing on his hard-line immigration stance as a way to win back supporters unhappy with his outreach to Democrats this fall, according to people who have spoken with him recently. Over the past 10 days, the president has also told advisers that it is important that he is seen as tough on immigration and getting money for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to two people who have spoken with him. He has asked friends about how a shutdown would affect him politically and has told several people he would put the blame on Democrats. Trump's mixed messages on a partial government shutdown could hamper the ability of congressional Republicans to negotiate with Democrats, whose support they need to pass spending legislation in coming weeks. Many Republicans said this week that a shutdown is a possibility they hope to avoid. Even inside the White House, aides fret about the possibility, saying it would not poll well. White House Legislative Affairs Director Marc Short and other aides said the president did not want a shutdown. "He's not advocating for a shutdown in any way. We want to make sure our military is funded. We want to make sure our priorities are funded. That's why we invited

[Democrats] over to have a conversation about a deal," Short told reporters at the U.S. Capitol late Thursday. Sen. John Cornyn (Tex.), the second-ranking Republican senator, said that "when you run for office and you get elected and you are given the opportunity to govern, it strikes me as a bad idea to shut the government down. That seems like an abdication of responsibility."...

GOP crafts spending bill provisions aimed at speeding repeal of water protection rule House and Senate Republicans have inserted language into spending bills aimed at blocking legal challenges to the Trump administration's effort to repeal a 2015 water protection rule that gave two federal agencies broad leeway in regulating activities that could affect streams and tributaries. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, who challenged the rule in federal court when he was Oklahoma's attorney general, has made repeal of Waters of the United States (WOTUS) a top priority. He traveled to Kentucky on Thursday to meet with Gov. Matt Bevin (R) and members of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, in part to discuss how to rewrite the rule. Both the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would carry out the regulation. "Farmers and ranchers are some of the nation's first environmentalists," Pruitt said in a statement.President Trump signed an executive order in February instructing the agencies to abolish the rule, which formally extended federal jurisdiction over roughly 60 percent of the nation's water bodies, and to instead fashion a new rule based on a narrower definition of the government's authority under the 1972 Clean Water Act. The law gave the two agencies control over navigable rivers and interstate waterways, but a series of court rulings left the extent of that power murky. The Obama administration sought to clarify federal jurisdiction by finalizing WOTUS, but agriculture groups, real estate developers and some industry associations said the regulation put costly and unnecessary constraints on their operations. Conservationists and some sporting groups have questioned the Trump administration's approach to unraveling the rule, arguing that officials have deliberately ignored hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits that would accrue to the public each year if it remained in place. If enacted, the language in the bills funding the EPA's operations for fiscal 2018 could make it harder for those groups to challenge the administration's action in federal court. The identical provisions authorize the EPA and the Army Corps to pull back the rule "without regard to any provision of statute or regulation that establishes a requirement for such withdrawal." Legislative experts say this could block challenges filed under the Administrative Procedures Act, which not only requires agencies to solicit comment but to lay out the basis for their regulatory actions in the public record and demonstrate that they have not favored a particular group or individual in making their decision. Officials at D.C. Water say raising the $2.6 billion necessary to complete the project is a zero-sum game: If cemeteries start paying less, other residents, businesses or the city will have to pay more...

'We're at a breaking point': Cleaning up D.C.'s rivers hurts the city's cemeteries Three Supreme Court justices, four Civil War generals and America's first female Marine are among those buried in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington's oldest burial ground. Now, operators say the future of the nearly 300-year-old cemetery is threatened by skyrocketing water bills that surged from about $3,500 in 2008 to nearly $200,000 in 2016. The bulk of Rock Creek Cemetery's bill — $144,184 in 2016 — goes toward a fee to help the District's independent water and sewage authority pay for a federally mandated project to clean up the Potomac and Anacostia rivers by 2030. "It's really dire," said Cecily Thorne, director of operations at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Rock Creek Parish, which runs the cemetery. "We're at a breaking point." Thorne said

she wants the District's long-polluted rivers to be cleaner. But she said the fee's current structure, which is based on a property's "impervious area" — hard surfaces that could cause storm water to run into sewers and storm drains — is particularly hard for cemeteries and other faith institutions, which have little disposable income. Faith institutions and most cemeteries are exempt from federal income tax and also do not pay local property taxes. "We want our city to have clean water, but we want to see it done in a way that's equitable," Thorne said. Roads, pathways, parking lots and mausoleums are counted as impervious surfaces in cemeteries, even though the green space around them absorbs much of storm water runoff, she said...

The Energy 202 Blog: Trump administration's renewable fuel ruling leaves no one happy After months of infighting between Republicans representing different regional economic interests, the Environmental Protection Agency Thursday finally rendered its ruling on how much renewable fuel is required to be mixed into the nation's transportation fuel supply. The outcome: No one says they're happy. And as that old adage goes, that might be a sign of a good compromise — at least politically, that is, for President Trump, whose administration is forced to balance the competing desires of farm- and petroleum-state Republicans in its decision. With Trump's election, the oil and gas sector saw its first opportunity in years to upend the status quo in which the EPA steadily raised targets compelling refiners to add renewable fuels derived from corn, soybeans and other agricultural products to gasoline and diesel sold to consumers...

The Energy 202 Blog: Why the wind and solar lobby is terrified of the Senate tax plan The version of the tax overhaul approved by House Republicans earlier this month contained a lot of red meat for redder members of Congress. In that chamber, many GOP lawmakers are opposed to the federal government lending a helping hand to renewable energy. The House tax proposal, which passed the chamber in the middle of November, would partially or completely roll back tax breaks meant to encourage wind and solar development nationwide. The Senate version, on the other hand, doesn't mention the wind and solar tax credits. In this political environment, with Republicans in control of Congress, the wind and solar lobby was more than happy to see the tax breaks left untouched...

Why these two small, fuzzy chicks in Virginia are a big deal Two Guam rail chicks hatched at the National Zoo's conservation site in Front Royal, Va. This is a big deal for several reasons, according to officials. For starters, it is the first surviving clutch for their parents, *and* the hatchlings are what officials called a "boon for the species." Guam rails are considered extinct in the wild by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with experts saying that only small groups of the birds exist on Rota and Cocos islands. The chicks hatched Nov. 14 at the zoo's conservation site. They're covered in black, downy feathers. Officials said the birds will probably be released into the wild in Guam sometime in 2018.

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Poisoned wells found around Mountaire Farms A number of private wells near a Millsboro-area poultry processing plant that was recently cited for polluting the groundwater have been found to

be dangerously contaminated, state regulators said late Thursday. Recent testing found that water in "several" wells surrounding the plant contains more nitrates than the 10 milligrams per liter allowed by national drinking water standards, according to the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.Exposure to high levels of nitrate can lead to decreased blood pressure, cramps, vomiting and even death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention At DNREC's urging, Mountaire Farms has agreed to provide bottled water to the affected homes, a press release issued by the state agency at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday stated. DNREC did not disclose how many wells were found to be undrinkable, how many residents are affected, where the wells are located or the full extent of contamination discovered in those wells. An agency spokesman said more information might be available Friday. A spokesman for Mountaire Farms was not immediately available for comment. Mountaire has been providing bottled water and drinking water treatment to a half-dozen homes since at least Nov. 2 when the state issued the company a violation notice for heavily contaminating the groundwater around the poultry plant. State officials say the contamination entered the groundwater through a state-permitted spray irrigation system that allowed Mountaire Farms to apply wastewater from its processing plant to nearly 930 acres of farmland in the surrounding area. That wastewater, which contains both poultry and human waste, is supposed to be thoroughly treated using a process that involves screens, separation tanks, lagoons and nutrient-eating bacteria. But state regulators say at least some of the wastewater was bypassing a critical step in the treatment process before being applied to farm fields, according to state records. As a result, that wastewater showed a presence of fecal coliform – bacteria found in human and animal waste – at a level 5,500 times the legal limit, along with high levels of other contaminants. Records turned over to state regulators show the pollution may have gone undetected for months. Mountaire fired its entire wastewater treatment staff at the plant after discovering the violations, a company spokesman said in early November.

Delaware hit by 59 earthquakes since 1871 Delaware has been rattled by 59 earthquakes since 1871, according to the Delaware Geological Survey and U.S. Geological Survey. Thursday's magnitude 4.1 earthquake near Dover was the largest one since 1871, when one of the same magnitude struck the Wilmington area. A magnitude 3.3 temblor also struck near Dover in 1879. All but five Delaware quakes have been in northern New Castle County. See the full list of earthquakes below the map. (Note: Some markers indicate the coordinates of the instruments that recorded the temblors.)

Sussex residents worry poultry wastewater will taint their water Milton-area residents have appealed the state's approval of a regional wastewater disposal facility near Milton.

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Earthquake felt in Delaware The United States Geological Survey confirms that at 4:48 p.m. today, a 4.4 magnitude earthquake...

DELAWARE PUBLIC MEDIA (NPR)

Magnitude 4.1 earthquake hits Delaware, centered near Dover A magnitude 4.1 earthquake hit Delaware around 4:48 p.m. Thursday, with an epicenter about six miles east to northeast of Dover, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. David Wunsch, the director of the Delaware Geological Survey, says the earthquake was unusual for Delaware because the state is not near

any active faults. "We're kind of more in the center of a plate, but that's not to say they're not under stress and we do have these small quakes now and then," Wunsch said. Delaware Emergency Management Agency says there are no reports of any damage at this time. But people definitely felt it. Ted Celeste with National Institute for Civil Discourse is visiting Dover for a workshop and was walking to his hotel room when it hit. "Walking down the eighth floor hall to our room, [we] felt what felt like a loud thump, like something had fallen on the floor up above us. I actually think I said 'it sounded like some plane breaking the sound barrier', you know, that loud," Celeste said. According to a tsunami information statement from the National Tsunami Warning Center, the earthquake did not have a high enough magnitude to generate a tsunami. David Hale is a senior watch stander with the National Tsunami Warning Center. "Anywhere where there is a potential of an uplift of the seafloor or a landslide that moves a lot of materials out into deeper water that could displace water, could potentially generate a tsunami," Hale said. "In this particular case, this earthquake did not have the magnitude to displace enough water to generate a tsunami." Most earthquakes result from a release of stress that builds up in the continental plate. This 4.1 magnitude earthquake matches the largest ever recorded in the First State — a 4.1 earthquake in October 1871. The last earthquake felt in Delaware was a 5.8 magnitude one centered in Virginia in August 2011. "It's just an eye opening experience that we are subject to earthquakes," Wunsch said. "I think people do get a little complacent all along the East Coast because we have them kind of infrequently."

Active & destructive 2017 Atlantic hurricane season comes to a close The National Weather Service says there were 17 named storms during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, tying it with 1936 as the fifth most-active season since records began in 1851. National Weather Service meteorologist Lance Franck says a lot of the storms impacted the southeast U.S., while several others remained further out in the Atlantic. "So this is an example of a season where you can have an active season with landfalling hurricanes and little impact to our region," said Franck. "Whereas the converse can happen as well, where you have a season that's relatively quiet and you have one landfalling hurricane and it just happens to move across your area." Franck says the four major storms this year were Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria. None of them significantly impacted the First State or Delmarva region. Franck says in tracking storms like Irma, Jose and Maria in particular, any one of them COULD have taken a different path and headed farther north and east, impacting Delmarva. "Anytime you have a storm that's especially in the vicinity of the Bahamas, not so much Harvey because that was well into the Gulf of Mexico, but yea a storm like Irma (that hit Florida in Sept.) that went between Cuba and the Bahamas, that has a greater potential for impacting the East Coast," said Franck.

DELAWARE STATE NEWS

Earthquake hits Dover DOVER — A magnitude 4.1 earthquake struck the Little Creek area at 4:47 p.m. Thursday. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, it stretched as far as northeast North Carolina and southern New York. No damages were reported. The last earthquake to strike Delaware was in 2011. That quake originated in central Virginia near the town of Mineral. Thursday's earthquake had an epicenter about 6.5 miles east of downtown Dover, where a holiday celebration was scheduled to begin at 5. The quake started about five miles underground. Little Creek Mayor Glenn Gauvry said the shaking caused him to fall off the couch and also upset his pet. "My parrot fell off his perch," he said. Mr. Gauvry said neighbors walked out into the street, wondering what just happened. The National Weather Service reported the shaking

was felt by people in Delaware, eastern Maryland, southern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania...

MIDDLETOWN TRANSCRIPT

Offshore Wind Working Group to hold Dec. 5 public workshop Delaware's Offshore Wind Working Group will host a public workshop at 6 p.m. Dec. 5 at Lewes Public Library, 111 Adams Ave., for input about the potential for offshore wind energy and the ways that it might benefit the state. As with a workshop held Nov. 29 in Odessa, the Lewes workshop will begin with a briefing on the status of the Offshore Wind Working Group, which was established by Gov. John Carney's Executive Order 13 in August. Representatives from the US Wind and Deepwater Wind companies will then give a presentation on projects approved earlier this year by the Maryland Public Service Commission and the prospects for new offshore wind projects that might provide economic opportunities and energy benefits to Delaware. The public will then be encouraged to comment on these projects in an open forum. The Offshore Wind Working Group began meeting in October, and by Dec. 15 the group must submit a report to the governor with recommendations on short- and long-term strategies for developing wind power to serve Delaware and plans to develop job opportunities in the offshore wind industry. All Offshore Wind Working Group meetings are open to the public. Briefing materials, public comments and additional resources can be found at de.gov/offshorewind.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL

Commentary: The EPA comes to West Virginia - to listen It's taken a while — several years in fact — but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has finally come to West Virginia to hear testimony about the Clean Power Plan. There was plenty of pent-up demand to be heard. As many as 200 people testified Tuesday and Wednesday at the state Capitol. The EPA under the Obama administration created the Clean Power Plan as a broad stroke against global warming. The rules set impossibly low carbon emission standards for power plants to force the coal industry out of business, while driving up electricity costs. The EPA's hostility toward coal through the Clean Power Plan and other enforcement measures severely damaged the coal industry. Miners lost their jobs and coal companies went bankrupt. Hundreds of mine supply companies lost business. Good jobs and tax revenue disappeared. Coal was also hit hard by market forces, such as plentiful and low-cost natural gas and an increasing desire by the public to use more renewables. However, it's undeniable that having a government agency target an industry for elimination is pretty bad for business. The EPA under the Trump administration is reversing course, and the hearings in Charleston this week are evidence of that. The EPA is now rolling back the Clean Power Plan, but there is a process for that which includes field hearings. EPA Region III Administrator Cosmo Servidio told reporters Tuesday President Barack Obama's EPA went beyond its authority when it tried to impose the draconian carbon standards. "Clearly the Clean Power Plan was an overreach by the previous administration, and this is an opportunity for us to get some feedback as we move forward," he told reporters. "It's important that we're here in West Virginia, coal country. Obviously the coal industry was going to feel the biggest effects of the Clean Power Plan." And that's why the previous administration's EPA

never bothered to come here. The agency knew its argument in support of a rule that would have no discernible impact on global temperatures would not wash with coal miners worried about losing their livelihood. Obama's EPA also knew it was on shaky legal footing. Its exploitation of a few words of the Clean Air Act to remake the nation's energy economy was a clear abuse of its power. Notably, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a stay on the Clean Power Plan, a legal decision normally made when the challenging side has a reasonable chance of success when the merits of the case are argued. The previous administration's EPA shut out West Virginia. Even veteran lawmakers like former Congressman Nick Rahall, who always had a working relationship with the agency, was stiff-armed. The anguished voices from suffering coal communities fell on deaf ears. But this week those voices were finally heard.

Commentary: DEP's Caperton squandered his benefit of the doubt When Gov. Justice appointed Austin Caperton as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, there was some grumbling. He was a coal industry guy, the descendant of a coal operator family. Since his new job included regulating the mining industry, there was much talk of foxes guarding henhouses, etc. At the time, I was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, even considering going so far as defending him. Even though those who made their way from the mining industry to regulating mining have included some real doozies, it is never a good thing to rely upon stereotypes. I was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt because of his family history. Mr. Caperton is descended from the Caperton family that ran mines on Slab Fork in Raleigh County. The miners I knew who had worked there always said that Old Man Caperton (I assume he had a first name; I never knew anybody to refer to him as anything other than Old Man Caperton) was a good person to work for. Then there was the way Old Man Caperton managed his slate dumps. These are piles of the rock and low-grade coal that are separated from the marketable coal and discarded. Mr. Caperton would spread out the slate and cover it with a layer of dirt. Layer of slate; layer of dirt. The coal in the slate dumps all over the coal fields may have been too low quality to sell but it would still burn. Eventually many of the dumps caught fire and smoldered for years, to the great annoyance and ill health of everybody within smelling distance. This went on for decades, at least well into the 1970s. When Carl Beard was the head of the West Virginia Air Pollution Control Commission in the '70s and '80s, the thing he seemed most proud of was that they had finally extinguished the burning slate dumps in Southern West Virginia...

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Rural Homes More Likely to Have High Levels of Allergens A new report from the National Institutes of Health has found that across the United States, more than 90 percent of homes have three or more detectable allergens. The study found that in about 73 percent of homes, at least one allergen was found at an elevated level and exposure to several elevated allergens was most prevalent in rural areas. Elevated allergen levels can make existing asthma and allergy symptoms worse and experts say treating these conditions effectively often includes removing the trigger. Despite higher levels of allergens in rural areas, rural Americans were actually less likely to have overreactive immune responses to those allergens. Overreactive responses are associated with developing asthma and allergies. The study found that the presence of pets and pests had a major influence on high levels of indoor allergens. Mobile homes, older and rental homes, and homes in rural areas also increased the likelihood of elevated exposure to multiple allergens. The study is the largest indoor allergen study to-date.

Prevent Asthma, Consider Getting a Dog A new study indicates that children exposed to high indoor levels of pet or pest allergens during infancy may have less risk of developing asthma. Previous studies found that reducing exposure to things that aggravate asthma like pet dander can help control the condition. But the new study, published today in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology found that exposure to certain allergens before asthma is established, may help prevent kids from developing asthma at all...

BECKLEY REGISTER-HERALD

EPA hosts second day of public hearings in Charleston CHARLESTON — The second day of public comment on the proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan concluded Wednesday with many speakers expressing concern over the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hosting its lone public hearing in Charleston. Hearings started Tuesday in three separate meeting rooms in the state Capitol. It continued Wednesday with more than 50 people scheduled to speak, but utilizing only one meeting room. The hearings adjourned Wednesday with the EPA taking comments under advisement. Written comments will be received through Jan. 16. Many people called for the EPA to host more public hearings around the country. The EPA's sole scheduled hearing took place in Charleston. David Lillard was among those who questioned the EPA's decision to have its only hearing in Charleston. Lillard said he got up around 4:30 Wednesday morning and made the five-hour drive from Shepherdstown to voice his opinion. “As a West Virginian, I'm insulted at the choice of this location,” Lillard told the panel. “Because it's great TV to have coal barons talk about saving pennies on coal but it's great theater to have desperate coal miners carrying the message that the coal barons have lied to them repeatedly.” Lillard said he would like for the EPA to host more hearings across the country. He mentioned his own 300-mile commute, saying people from other states faced even longer trips. “Even within the state, I drove 300 miles to get here," he said. "How can people across the country have the opportunity to attend public hearings? It seemed like anti-democracy to pick a place where they knew coal was operating and think they were expecting everyone who spoke from West Virginia would be supportive of repealing the plan. However, that's not what they've heard."

CLARKSBURG EXPONENT-TELEGRAM

Commentary: Balance critical to Clean Power Plan If the two days of hearings the Environmental Protection Agency held in Charleston this week on the Clean Power Plan show anything, it’s that no matter what the EPA does, there will be critics. As an array of media outlets have reported, the hearings, held in three different meeting rooms simultaneously, drew hundreds of people, many of whom took advantage of the 3 minutes allotted to those who signed up to speak. Most reports seem to indicate those in opposition of repealing the leftover work of President Obama’s administration outnumbered those who favored repeal. That’s not surprising, since EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has indicated his plans to scrap the plan in lieu of one that is more balanced in nature. Such an approach was sure to rile environmentalists and health advocates, who see great benefit from the Obama plan. And make no mistake, there are benefits to transforming the country’s energy plan into one that is more environmentally friendly. But, as we’ve said numerous times before, that transformation can’t be done at a pace that hinders the country’s — and West Virginia’s — economic recovery efforts. The Obama plan, in terms of expedited implementation and government overreach, was bad from day one. And, as advocates knew, it artificially forced power generation companies to look elsewhere — and quickly. That led to the closing of dozens of coal-fired power plants, leading to an earlier-than-necessary or

desired demise of coal. So, while the goal of the Obama Clean Power Plan is admirable, its implementation was disastrous and could only be seen as a forced effort to create a presidential legacy. Thus the theme "War on Coal" gained traction and began to pit environmentalists and others seeking "green" solutions into conflict with those looking for more pragmatic solutions. Some of that was on stage this week in Charleston, as officials, industry experts, environmentalists and common folks had their 3 minutes of fame, sharing their opinion. It was a worthy exercise; one that very much needed to take place, if for no other reason than to engage the public in hopes of more reasoned debate. But, at the end of the day, Pruitt and President Trump have it right: The Clean Power Plan, as currently written, needs to go. In its place, the country needs a clear national energy policy that allows for the continued use of natural resources — including coal, natural gas, oil (preferably domestic in nature), wind, solar and hydro. And, as coal naturally diminishes and the free markets dictate its demise, the nation will be better situation to survive economically — and environmentally.

MARYLAND

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

MD pays steep price for Hallowing Point site with access to the Patuxent A one-time mobile home park in such poor condition that many of its dwellings violated livability codes is slated to be transformed into one of Maryland's newest waterfront parks as well as offices for the Department of Natural Resources. But some are questioning whether the state paid too much for a tract with marginal ecological value that had little chance of ever being developed. Over the last three years, the DNR has used Program Open Space funding to buy three Calvert County parcels totaling nine acres at Hallowing Point on the Patuxent River. State and county officials plan to turn it into a waterfront park with a boat ramp, fulfilling a long-neglected need for more public access to the water.Since 1969, Maryland has used Program Open Space money to preserve ecologically sensitive areas and acquire new parkland. State policy calls for being "strategic" in spending limited funds and getting the best price possible...

Commentary: We need to shift gears on the pursuit of economic growth (By Tom Horton) Come ride bikes with me. Don't dismiss as idle our idyll through an ideal autumn "leafscape" today, for our pedaling shows the way to a better Bay. My bike has but one speed, unfashionable in a high-geared, tech-fueled world that now affords cyclists push-button shifting through a range of cogs and cranks sufficient to conquer the Alps and pass Porsches. Single-speeding is limiting — then liberating. It makes you respect the lay of the land, to seek the gentler slopes that meander alongside the hills, to value the wooded corridors that block headwinds. Your pedaling becomes more efficient, your legs stronger. There is more to the bicycling life than more gears, bigger mileage, higher speeds. The virtues of slow are especially relevant now to saving the Chesapeake Bay and the larger environment, as Congress debates major tax reforms based on a single, awful premise: Salvation demands that we gear up to grow the economy faster and bigger than ever...

VIRGINIA

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT

60,000 gallons of sewage spill at Little Creek base, Navy says NORFOLK -- A ruptured pipe at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek spilled 60,000 gallons of liquid sewage into the surrounding harbor Thursday morning, officials said. Security workers found liquid under a door at a Navy pump station around 4 a.m., according to the statement from Naval Facilities Engineering Command Mid-Atlantic. After consulting with the Virginia Department of Health, officials said the accidental discharge does not pose a significant public health risk. Crews stopped the spill by 8:30 a.m., according to the release. Public works officials on base recovered an additional 60,000 gallons from adjacent drainage lines before they spilled. Navy officials said in the statement they do not yet know what caused the pipe break and are working to assess repairs. In May, 94,000 gallons of jet fuel spilled at Naval Air Station Oceana, killing wildlife and sending noxious fumes into nearby neighborhoods. The Navy later disciplined nine sailors and one civilian in the incident, citing human error, dereliction of duty and oversight failures, The Virginian-Pilot reported...

LYNCHGBURG NEWS & ADVANCE

Coal ash berm among options Region 2000 studying to extend life of regional landfill RUSTBURG — With the clock ticking as the regional landfill in Rustburg moves closer to reaching capacity in 2030, the Region 2000 Services Authority director on Wednesday presented a solution involving coal ash as a possibility for the future disposal of Central Virginia's waste. Clarke Gibson told the services authority board this option would entail building a stabilized berm around the existing landfill on Livestock Road out of coal ash, enabling more capacity space for waste within the already established area of the landfill. According to Gibson, this plan could add between eight and 10 more years of capacity to the landfill before another plan for waste disposal would need to be developed. The berm will expand space for disposal by creating a wall around the current landfill, and then trash can be filled in the space between the berm and the current slope of the landfill. This will not increase the height of the landfill...

MISCELLANEOUS

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Fracking Ban Proposed for in Four Delaware River Basin States Fracking would be banned in portions of four states overseen by Delaware River Basin Commission as part of draft regulations unveiled Nov. 30. Gas drillers and environmentalists have sparred over the plan for portions of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, with the industry saying the commission is overreaching and activists saying a ban should be full and permanent. The proposed regulations implementing the ban would prohibit high-volume hydraulic fracturing in shale and other rock formations in the 13,539 square-mile river basin, and would govern the use, management, and disposal of water from fracking operations. If implemented, the rules would make permanent a de facto moratorium on fracking in the basin that has been in place since 2010.

The federal-interstate agency, which oversees water quality in the basin, resolved in September to revive a stalled rulemaking process started in 2010 and put on hold in 2011.

Natural gas drillers have fought the ban, calling it an overreach by the agency. Environmentalists have long pushed for a permanent ban on fracking in the basin, which supplies drinking water to more than 15 million people. The Marcellus and Utica shale formations are major sources of natural gas and underlie about 40 percent of the watershed in portions of Pennsylvania and New York, the rulemaking notice says. Four hearings will be held at the end of January in Waymart, Pa., and in Philadelphia, according to a notice posted on the commission website. Written comments will be accepted through Feb. 28, 2018, the DRBC said.

Pennsylvania Fracking Permits Target Methane Leaks A plan to reduce methane leaks from hydraulic fracturing operations is generating concern in the natural gas industry, which said the rules behind Pennsylvania's new draft permits lack a scientific basis. The permits—issued Nov. 30 by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in a draft final form—are part of the commonwealth's strategy to cut overall methane emissions, the second-most prevalent greenhouse gas released in the U.S. from human activities, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. "These general permits are the first in the nation to establish a threshold to control methane emissions from well sites and from compressor stations," DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said in a webinar explaining the new permits. Compressor stations are pressurized pipeline transit hubs that keep the gas flowing smoothly along the pipeline network from the wellhead to its final destination. The industry has a long and clear record of utilizing best practices and cutting-edge technologies to capture methane, said president of the Marcellus Shale Coalition David Spigelmyer, who questioned the need for the permits...

House Votes to Renew Brownfields Program for First Time in 15 Years The House overwhelmingly passed legislation Nov. 30 to reauthorize the brownfields program, which helps communities clean up and reuse contaminated sites, although Senate action will likely have to wait until 2018. The bill, which passed 409-8, has won widespread support from environmental engineers, developers, and municipalities. Those who have followed the bill (H.R. 3017) said a few recent changes to limit brownfields grants may have mixed results for communities seeking financial assistance. The overall legislation signals congressional support for developers, communities, and an Environmental Protection Agency program that hasn't been reauthorized since its inception in 2002, those followers said. Organizations including the National Ground Water Association, the National Association of Realtors, and Smart Growth America lobbied in support of brownfields legislation. The EPA's Brownfields Program provides communities with technical assistance and grants to assess, clean up, and promote redevelopment of sites that are or might be contaminated. The House bill authorizes up to $200 million for the federal program, and $50 million for state response programs, for each fiscal year from 2018 through 2022. The bill relieves local governments of liability when handling brownfields, makes nonprofits eligible for grant funding, and expands applicable uses for individual grants. A similar bill in the Senate (S. 822), introduced by Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), has not yet reached the floor and, with just two weeks of scheduled floor time left for the year, will almost surely be put off until next year. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the bill in July.Inhofe told Bloomberg Environment hours earlier that there may be broad enough support to expedite the Senate bill under unanimous consent (UC), a procedure which avoids debate and deems a bill

passed as long as no senator objects. “I don't know of any opposition to it, in fact I thought we could UC it,” the Oklahoma Republican said. “And that will be my intent now that it's passing the House.”...

$22.6M DuPont Cleanup Plan May Not Be Enough: Environmentalists Environmentalists say a $22.6 million plan to clean up arsenic, lead, zinc, and cadmium at an E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Co. site near Chicago may not be sufficient to keep the heavy metals from further spreading through groundwater and a local river. DuPont and other companies have used the 440-acre East Chicago, Ind., site for more than 100 years for chemical manufacturing, including making Freon products and other production that left behind hazardous waste, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's statement of basis for proposing the $22.9 million plan. The EPA's proposal, released Nov. 29, would require the site's current owner Chemours, a former subsidiary of DuPont, to provide financial assurance that an extensive cleanup would be conducted over the next 30 years to process soil and water contaminated by arsenic and lead. Environmental groups question what took so long to develop a plan and whether it will be enough.

“The EPA has known since at least the early 1990s that this site is bleeding lead and arsenic into the groundwater of the Calumet neighborhoods, but has not taken any serious steps to address that,” Sam Henderson, an attorney with the Hoosier Environmental Council told Bloomberg Environment in an email. “Overall, the EPA's plan is a good start, but it needs some work.”...

Sherwin-Williams Seeks to Upend Lead Paint Nuisance Ruling Sherwin-Williams Co. asked a California appeals court to reconsider its decision to uphold but trim a lead paint public nuisance ruling.

GREENWIRE

Superfund: EPA mum on sites needing 'immediate and intense attention' Public health advocates are questioning U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's commitment to overhauling the Superfund program after months of silence from the agency. Pruitt began that effort in May by creating a task force that he assigned to hatch ideas to "streamline and improve" the program for cleaning up the nation's most polluted properties. Two months later, the agency chief highlighted 11 of the task force's 42 recommendations on which he wanted immediate action (*E&E News PM*, July 25). At the same time, he gave the task force 60 days to hand him a report of the sites "where the risk of human exposure is not fully controlled," when those risks are expected to be controlled, the total of indirect costs charged to responsible parties for fiscal 2016 and 2017, and a list of sites "expected to be proposed for deletion or deleted" by July 2018. Yet four months later, there's been no additional information on EPA's changes to the Superfund program. The agency also hasn't released the "Top 10 Administrator's Emphasis List" of sites that "need immediate and intense attention," which was another key recommendation of the task force. An EPA source said, "The documents are internal and deliberative, and have been delivered to the administrator." The Superfund task force is "developing processes on implementing the recommendations," an EPA PowerPoint obtained from another source said today. That effort

"will be ongoing over the next year." But the press office declined a request to document any specific steps EPA has taken since the task force's report was completed in July.

Chesapeake Bay: Md. plant dumped far more nitrogen than allowed — report One of the largest wastewater plants in Maryland dumped four times more nitrogen and phosphorus into the Chesapeake Bay watershed last year than permitted, according to an environmental group. The Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant in Baltimore was one of 21 such facilities in the watershed that went over pollution limits last year, the Environmental Integrity Project said in a new report. Looking at state and federal records, the group found that in 2016, the Patapsco facility released 3.7 million pounds of nitrogen. The nutrient has long been a problem for the bay, which is plagued by algae blooms that consume the water's oxygen. Patapsco is set to complete plant upgrades to reduce pollution next year, but the group wants to make sure the city follows through on the improvements. "If that happens, great, but we have to wait and see if that's true," said Tom Pelton, a spokesman for the Environmental Integrity Project. "We have to keep a close eye on the city, and we hope the Maryland Department of the Environment will keep a close eye on the city, too."

EPA: Group sues for records on Pruitt's 'sue-and-settle' directive An environmental group filed a lawsuit yesterday accusing U.S. EPA of withholding records related to Administrator Scott Pruitt's directive on the so-called sue-and-settle phenomenon. In the lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the Center for Biological Diversity said EPA failed to conduct an adequate search for and produce records in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. At issue is Pruitt's October memorandum instructing EPA to take steps to curb "sue and settle," under which critics say special interests sue friendly agencies and settle to impose new regulatory requirements. The directive detailed what EPA must do to make litigation practices more transparent and directed the agency to "seek concurrence" with regulated entities and states with proposed settlement agreements.

Tillerson exit might bring climate disbelief to State If CIA Director Mike Pompeo replaces Secretary of State Rex Tillerson as the top U.S. diplomat, he could bring a careerlong skepticism of climate science with him to Foggy Bottom. *The New York Times* reported today that the former Kansas Republican congressman might be poised for a move to State after months of strained relations between Tillerson and President Trump. Trump told reporters Tillerson is still "here," while White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said during a briefing that there are "no personnel announcements at this time." But while Tillerson, the former Exxon Mobil Corp. CEO, raised environmentalists' hopes last year with his belief in man-made climate change and support for continued U.S. involvement in the Paris climate accord, Pompeo has a history of disputing that humans play a significant role in global warming...

NEW YORK TIMES

Ban on Teflon Chemical Tied to Fewer Low-Weight Babies Banning a chemical used to make Teflon led to a sharp decrease in pregnancy-related problems. Perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, had been used in many consumer products, including nonstick cookware, food packaging, electronics and carpets. The chemical was linked to a range of health problems, including low-weight births. Beginning in 2003, its use was gradually phased out in the United States under an

agreement between government and industry, and eliminated by 2014. Researchers used data from a larger health study to estimate levels of serum PFOA in women of childbearing age. They gathered data on birth weights from a government database. The study is in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health. PFOA blood levels peaked in 2007-8, and then declined consistently each year through 2014. PFOA was implicated in 5 percent of low-weight births in 2007-8 and in 0.5 percent in 2013-14. The researchers estimate that 118,009 low-weight births were prevented from 2003 to 2014, resulting in $13.7 billion in savings. "It's important to highlight the role of the Environmental Protection Agency in this," said the senior author, Dr. Teresa M. Attina, a research scientist at New York University. "They sponsored a program with this goal in mind, acting in a good way by involving industry in the interest of public health."...

ASSOCIATED PRESS

EPA chief denounces water rule in visit to Kentucky LOUISVILLE -- Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt found a friendly audience Thursday in his native Kentucky as he lambasted an Obama-era clean-water rule. Speaking to a Kentucky Farm Bureau audience, Pruitt said the rule aimed at protecting small streams and wetlands from development and pollution was an example of federal overreach. He said it tried to redefine the Clean Water Act to cover puddles, dry creek beds and drainage ditches...