EPA Morning News Highlights 02.28.18

Reuters: U.S. Judge halts California plan to require glyphosate warnings

A federal judge has temporarily blocked California's plans to require cancer warnings on products containing the popular weed killer glyphosate, in a win for manufacturer Monsanto Co. U.S. District Judge William Shubb said the warnings would be misleading because glyphosate is not known to cause cancer, according to court documents filed on Monday in California. He still allowed the state to keep glyphosate on a list of cancer-causing products. "Given the heavy weight of evidence in the record that glyphosate is not in fact known to cause cancer, the required warning is factually inaccurate and controversial," Shubb wrote.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner: Woodsmoke is the greatest contributor to PM 2.5, borough regulations will help reduce health risks

When I was asked to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Pacific Northwest and Alaska Region, I was excited to bring an Alaskan perspective to the agency and help focus our work with communities and local agencies to protect people's health and the environment in this great state. I've watched the Fairbanks North Star Borough struggle to meet the particle pollution health standards for more than a decade. The health risks are real. The standards are supported by years of scientific studies that are available on EPA's website.

The Hill: 'No deal made' as GOP senators meet with Trump on ethanol mandate

Four Republican senators representing oil and farm states failed to come to an agreement on changes to the nation's biofuel mandate during a White House meeting with President Trump on Tuesday. The senators met with Trump, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt to discuss changes that oil-state senators want made to the country's Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).

National Morning News Highlights 02.28.18

Wall Street Journal: Oil drops with stocks as dollar gains

Oil prices declined Tuesday, under pressure from a rising dollar, falling stocks and an expected increase in crude stockpiles. Light, sweet crude for April delivery fell 90 cents, or 1.4%, to $63.01 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent, the global benchmark, lost 87 cents, or 1.3%, to $66.63 a barrel. Analysts said oil prices moved in tandem with broader markets, as statements from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell made traders more wary of higher interest rates this year.

TRUMP TWEETS

Reuters

https://www.reuters.com/article [illegible] -pesticides-monsanto/u-s-judge-halts-california-plan-to-require-glyphosate-warnings-idUSKCN1GB2H0

U.S. Judge halts California plan to [illegible] e glyphosate warnings

By: Tom Polansek, 2/27/18

A federal judge has temporarily blocked California's plans to require cancer warnings on products containing the popular weed killer glyphosate, in a win for manufacturer Monsanto Co.

U.S. District Judge William Shubb said the warnings would be misleading because glyphosate is not known to cause cancer, according to court documents filed on Monday in California. He still allowed the state to keep glyphosate on a list of cancer-causing products.

"Given the heavy weight of evidence in the record that glyphosate is not in fact known to cause cancer, the required warning is factually inaccurate and controversial," Shubb wrote.

The judge's decision is important for Monsanto because warnings could discourage use of glyphosate, which is widely used by farmers on genetically engineered crops and by consumers on lawns. The company's agricultural productivity segment, which includes glyphosate, had net sales of $3.7 billion in fiscal-year 2017.

Monsanto, which is being acquired by Bayer AG, and U.S. farm groups sued California in November to stop the warnings.

The state added glyphosate, the main ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, to its list of cancer-causing chemicals in July 2017 and had planned to require that products containing the chemical carry warnings by July 2018.

California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) said on Tuesday its actions were lawful and that it was pleased the judge denied Monsanto's request for an injunction against including glyphosate on the list.

The state acted after the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) concluded in 2015 that glyphosate was "probably carcinogenic."

Other studies have found the opposite, including one released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in December.

A large, long-term study on glyphosate use by U.S. agricultural workers, published in November as part of a project known as the Agricultural Health Study, or AHS, also found no firm link between exposure to glyphosate and cancer.

Reuters reported in June that an influential scientist was aware of new AHS research data while he was chairing a panel of experts reviewing evidence on glyphosate for IARC in 2015. He did not tell the panel about it.

"Glyphosate is a vital tool that growers have trusted to provide safe, affordable food," said Chandler Goule, chief executive officer for the National Association of Wheat Growers.

The case is National Association of Wheat Growers et al v. Lauren Zeise, director of OEHHA, et al, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of California, No. 17-cv-02401.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

http://www.newsminer.com/opinion/community_perspectives/woodsmoke-is-the-greatest-contributor-to-pm-borough-regulations-will/article_953841ea-1ab1-11e8-a46a-a701f2901b1d.html

Woodsmoke is the greatest contributor to PM 2.5, borough regulations will help reduce health risks

By: Chris Hladick, 2/27/18

When I was asked to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Pacific Northwest and Alaska Region, I was excited to bring an Alaskan perspective to the agency and help focus our work with communities and local agencies to protect people's health and the environment in this great state.

I've watched the Fairbanks North Star Borough struggle to meet the particle pollution health standards for more than a decade. The health risks are real. The standards are supported by years of scientific studies that are available on EPA's website. Particle pollution comes from a variety of sources. However, analysis of air samples collected in the borough show that wood smoke contributes as much as 60-80 percent of the particle pollution, depending on location. Wood smoke is the primary source of particle pollution in the borough.

Although the wood smoke problem is more severe in the borough, we see the same problem in other areas of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. That is, wintertime temperature inversions, and stagnant air, trapping wood smoke and making the air unhealthy to breathe.

Because you can't change the weather, you need to change your wood burning habits. Implementing the borough's wood smoke curtailment program is critical to achieving the particle standards in the borough. This means there will be days when cleaner, less polluting, heating options must be used. This is not an easy choice, but when borough residents understand how their choices affect the air they and their neighbors breathe, it's the right choice.

We are confident the Borough Air Quality Division is the best agency to implement a local curtailment program. They are your neighbors and are working to manage the program to provide flexibility to those who need it most. Communities in Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington also have had success finding local solutions to improve their air quality.

The borough and your local leaders are making progress, and air quality looks to be improving. However, there's a long way to go to get to clean air, and we all need to work together to get there.

Chris Hladick is regional administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Pacific Northwest and Alaska Region. Before his appointment to EPA, Chris served as commissioner of Alaska's Department of Commerce and as city manager in Unalaska and Dillingham.

The Hill

http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/375879-no-deal-made-as-gop-senators-meet-at-white-house-on-ethanol-mandate

'No deal made' as GOP senators meet with Trump on ethanol mandate

By: Timothy Cama and Miranda Green, 2/27/18

Four Republican senators representing oil and farm states failed to come to an agreement on changes to the nation's biofuel mandate during a White House meeting with President Trump on Tuesday.

The senators met with Trump, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt to discuss changes that oil-state senators want made to the country's Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).

"There was no deal made," said Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), who has been defending corn and ethanol interests in recent months amid pressure to change the ethanol mandate or how it is enforced.

"We reminded President Trump of his commitment to maintaining the 15 billion gallons per year of ethanol under the RFS, his commitment to biofuels, ethanol and rural America."

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who for months had held up the nomination of Bill Northey to a top Agriculture Department post in order to force the meeting, called the discussion "vigorous and positive."

"I believe we are likely to reach a win-win outcome. One that is a win for Iowa corn farmers, that results in Iowa corn farmers being able to sell more corn than they can right now, and at the same time that saves the jobs of tens of thousands of union [refinery] members," Cruz told reporters.

Although no agreement was reached, the Senate did approve Northey's nomination by voice vote.

Sens. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) also attended the meeting.

The RFS requires refineries to mix transportation fuel with a certain level of ethanol or buy credits called Renewable Identification Numbers (RIN).

Cruz has been pushing in recent months for the EPA to put a cap on the price of RINs, which are sold on a market and subject to price increases and decreases, to count exported ethanol toward the mandate total, or to forgive RIN obligations for certain refineries.

He kept pushing that policy at the Tuesday meeting, which he said was to stand up for oil and refinery workers.

"The objective has been and remains to find a solution that stops skyrocketing RINs, which are made up regulatory licenses, from bankrupting refineries across the country and costing the jobs of tens of thousands of refinery workers, while at the same time benefiting corn farmers and expanding the market for corn so that corn farmers can sell more corn," Cruz said.

The Iowa senators and ethanol interests say those changes would be devastating.

"The bottom line is that these changes will come at the expense of farmers in Iowa and across the heartland," said Ernst. "Iowans won't have the wool pulled over our eyes, and we made it very clear in today's meeting."

While the meeting didn't result in any agreements, the senators in attendance said that Trump and his administration also did not make any promises regarding what they would not do using executive power.

"No guarantees on anything. It's status quo," Ernst said.

Central to the meeting was the recent bankruptcy of Philadelphia Energy Solutions, the largest refinery on the East Coast, in Toomey's state. The company and its supporters, like Cruz, blame RFS costs for the bankruptcy, while ethanol supporters say the company had bigger financial problems.

"This cannot be Iowa versus Pennsylvania, particularly when the thing that is in bankruptcy was badly managed in the first place," Grassley said.

Wall Street Journal

https://www.wsj.com/articles/oil-falls-on-fear-of-growing-u-s-inventory-1519730790

Oil drops with stocks as dollar gains

By: Stephanie Yang, 2/28/18

Oil prices declined Tuesday, under pressure from a rising dollar, falling stocks and an expected increase in crude stockpiles.

Light, sweet crude for April delivery fell 90 cents, or 1.4%, to $63.01 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent, the global benchmark, lost 87 cents, or 1.3%, to $66.63 a barrel.

Analysts said oil prices moved in tandem with broader markets, as statements from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell made traders more wary of higher interest rates this year.

U.S. stocks dropped after Mr. Powell indicated that the central bank is on track to raise interest rates three times this year amid a strong economic picture. The Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 both closed down more than 1%.

Meanwhile, the WSJ Dollar Index rose 0.6% to 84.05.

"Right now, everything's going to be much more tied to the macro, capital market issues," said John Saucer, vice president of research and analysis at Mobius Risk Group. "Any time you see that big risk-off in equities, you're going to see that in crude."

Traders were also awaiting data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration on the amount of crude oil sitting in storage. Analysts surveyed by The Wall Street Journal expect on average that stockpiles rose by 2 million barrels in the week ended Feb. 23.

"I don't think inventory expectations are that great this week," Mr. Saucer said. "The market was probably due for some cooling off, and this was the perfect combination of levers."

The American Petroleum Institute, an industry group, said late Tuesday that its data for the week showed a 933,000-barrel increase in crude supplies, a 1.9 million-barrel rise in gasoline stocks and a 1.4 million-barrel decrease in distillate inventories, according to a market participant.

Oil prices rose to a three-week high Monday, partly helped by an unexpected decline in U.S. crude stockpiles for previous week. Oil market observers will be looking closely at this week's official data to see whether the drop in stocks last week was just "a one-off," said Thomas Pugh, commodities economist at Capital Economics.

Gasoline futures fell 1.3% to $1.8034 a gallon and diesel futures rose 1.2% to $1.9630 a gallon.

Trump Tweets

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 5m

45 year low on illegal border crossings this year. Ice and Border Patrol Agents are doing a great job for our Country. MS-13 thugs being hit hard.

1.6K 1.4K 5.7K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 2h

I have decided that sections of the Wall that California wants built NOW will not be built until the whole Wall is approved. Big victory yesterday with ruling from the courts that allows us to proceed. OUR COUNTRY MUST HAVE BORDER SECURITY!

10K 8.7K 38K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 2h

The Heritage Foundation has just stated that 64% of the Trump Agenda is already done, faster than even Ronald Reagan. "We're blown away," said Thomas Binion of Heritage, President Trump "is very active, very conservative and very effective. Huge volume & spectrum of issues."

8.1K 8.5K 34K