Message

From: Morning Consult [reply@e.morningconsult.com]
Sent: 5/17/2017 12:16:18 PM
To: Smidinger, Betsy [Smidinger.Betsy@epa.gov]
Subject: Morning Consult Energy: EPA Call for Comments on Deregulation Met With Pleas for Protections

By Iulia Gheorghiu and Jack Fitzpatrick

Washington Brief

- After requesting input on deregulating laws, the Environmental Protection Agency received more than 55,000 public comments with pleas to protect environmental safeguards. (The Washington Post)
- Democrats introduced a bill that would sunset the law that Republicans have used to reverse 13 regulations, including the Interior Department's stream protection rule, passed during President Barack Obama's administration. (The Hill)
- Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) questioned an Environmental Protection Agency nominee about her lobbying past at an electric utility company. (Law360)

Business Brief

- The progress in decreasing oil prices made by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' plan to extend production cuts could be undone by U.S. shale oil production. (The Wall Street Journal)

- North Dakota's largest electricity provider has embraced wind farms to meet energy demands as cheapest and most readily available source of energy in the fossil energy state. (E&E News)

- Nuclear power plants looking for bailouts faced slim options due to strong opposition from natural gas lobbyists, who have argued that nuclear subsidies will raise energy prices. (NPR News)

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Chart Review

Oil-fired power plants provide small amounts of U.S. electricity capacity and generation

U.S. Energy Information Administration

Events Calendar (All Times Local)

Wednesday

Murkowski, Faison discuss energy at ACCF	8:30 a.m.
Greentech Solar Summit	8:45 a.m.
House Appropriations subcommittee American Indian and Alaska Native public witness hearing	9 a.m.
Senate Homeland Security Committee meeting on regulatory reform bills	10 a.m.
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on infrastructure	10 a.m.
Perdue testifies to House Agriculture Committee	10 a.m.
House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing on rigs to reefs program	10 a.m.
The Climate Reality Project's carbon pricing panel	11 a.m.
House Appropriations subcommittee American Indian and Alaska Native public witness hearing	1 p.m.
House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing on wildfire management	2 p.m.

Thursday

Greentech Solar Summit	9:30 a.m.
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on nomination of deputy Interior secretary	10 a.m.
House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing on water rights bills	10 a.m.
House Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee hearing on water quality	10 a.m.

Environmental Law Institute discussion on compensatory mitigation	12 p.m.
Book talk on "Hot, Hungry Planet" by Lisa Palmer	4 p.m.
Pruitt discusses "Returning to EPA Originalism"	5 p.m.

Friday

NCAC-USAEE event on horizontal wells	12 p.m.

General

Senate Dems Say EPA Pick's Lobbying Past Makes Her Unfit
Christine Powell, Law360

Two Democratic senators are questioning the EPA about its recent decision to appoint an ex-lobbyist for an association of electric cooperatives to a leadership position, saying in a news release announcing a letter sent to the agency on Tuesday that she "appears to be unable to perform virtually any of the duties of the job due to her ethics conflicts."

EPA asked the public which regulations to gut - and got an earful about leaving them alone
Brady Dennis, The Washington Post

Last month, the Environmental Protection Agency put out a call for comments about what regulations are in need of repeal, replacement or modification. The effort stemmed from an executive order issued by President Trump earlier this year instructing agencies to reexamine regulations that "eliminate jobs, or inhibit job creation" and/or "impose costs that exceed benefits."

Dems propose scrapping law GOP used to overturn regulations
Tim Devaney, The Hill

Democrats are taking aim at President Trump's power to roll back regulations. The Sunset the CRA and Restore American Protections (SCRAP) Act introduced Tuesday by Sens. Cory Booker (N.J.) and Tom Udall (N.M.) would eliminate the law that Trump and Republican lawmakers have used to repeal more than a dozen Obama-era regulations. Rep. David Cicilline (D-R.I.) is backing identical legislation in the House.

Trump triggers battle over energy nominees
Devin Henry, The Hill

President Trump is facing a new fight with Democrats and greens over his energy agenda. Trump last week nominated two officials to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which is responsible for permitting decisions on hot-button energy projects such as natural gas pipelines and export terminals.

Anti-Trump activists calling for more peer review in government are giving conservatives exactly what they want.
Daniel Engber, Slate

A protest on behalf of something as nebulous as "science" could mean anything, really. But when thousands of men, women, and children arrived in Washington, D.C., last month for a "March for Science," their prime concern appeared to be that objective, scientific facts were losing ground in government. "What do we want? Evidence-based science!" protestors shouted in D.C. and around the world. "When do we want it? After peer review!"

Virginia Looks to Cut Emissions Regardless of Clean Power Plan Review
Jack Fitzpatrick, Morning Consult

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) on Tuesday called for limits on carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in the Old Dominion, as Democratic state and city officials push back against the Trump administration's stance on energy issues.

Democrats accuse Rick Perry of freezing clean energy funding
John Siciliano, Washington Examiner

Nearly 30 Democrats complained to Energy Secretary Rick Perry on Tuesday that the Department of Energy is withholding clean energy funding that Congress already designated under previously passed spending bills.

Is science too 'politicized?' Trump administration tackles issue
Christopher Wallace, Fox News

Drought is threatening to turn Eastern Africa into yet another scene of devastating famine. Already, livestock are dying because they lack water to drink, and the farms can't grow enough feed for them. Yet, in Tanzania, government workers recently poured bags of special drought-resistant corn into a pit and set them ablaze.

Caution Reigns as U.S. Politics Takes Center Stage: Markets Wrap
Robert Brand, Bloomberg News

OPEC's internal Economic Commission Board meets in Vienna to discuss the market in preparation for the group's formal meeting on May 25. The U.S. Energy Information Administration is projected to report that crude stockpiles declined by 2.67 million barrels in the week ended May 12, according to a Bloomberg survey of analysts.

Oil and Natural Gas

Oil Prices Hold Gains on Prospects for OPEC Deal
Neanda Salvaterra and Timothy Puko, The Wall Street Journal

Oil prices are holding near unchanged Tuesday with concerns about strong imports to the U.S. erasing earlier gains tied to optimism about extended production cuts from the world's biggest exporters.

Iran likely to back longer OPEC-led oil cut if all on board: sources
Alex Lawler and Rania El Gamal, Reuters

A proposal to extend an OPEC and non-OPEC supply cut for nine months is a positive idea, sources familiar with Iranian thinking said, suggesting OPEC's third-largest producer is likely to go along with such a plan if there is a consensus.

Portland General Electric nixes plan for new gas capacity
Robert Walton, Utility Dive

Responding to criticism over its plan for new gas-fired capacity, Portland General will head back to the drawing board and negotiate to acquire green resources as well as proposing to add significant renewable capacity to its system.

Utilities and Infrastructure

China building biggest infrastructure project in history
Steve LeVine, Axios

Americans and Europeans are again riveted on intelligence leaks, cyber hacking and the latest surge of inward-looking fervor. In Beijing, though, the talk the last couple of days has been of globalization on a historic scale - the construction of a more than trillion-dollar global web of roads, ports, railroads and energy projects, all of them leading back to China.

Renewables

Miners increase green energy use to power their pits
Barbara Lewis, Reuters

Major mining companies, including some of the world's biggest suppliers of fossil fuel, are seeking to use more renewable energy themselves as they strive to drive down costs and curb emissions. Glencore, the world's biggest shipper of seaborne coal, said in Tuesday's 2017 sustainability report that it gets 19 percent of its energy from renewable sources, up a percentage point from last year's report.

San Jose approves clean energy program
Nicholas Cheng, The San Francisco Gate

San Jose approved a program Tuesday to pool funds from residents to purchase energy from green sources, becoming the largest city in the country to do so. Several other Bay Area communities have established such programs, known as Community Choice Energy programs.

Coal

Dakota coal industry digs in as wind power sweeps the state
Daniel Cusick, E&E News

From the cab of the 7,000-ton dragline Chief Ironsides, the gray-brown subsurface of central North Dakota is peeled back in 160-ton bucket loads, revealing a 10-foot-thick seam of lignite that runs like a ribbon through the rolling plains north of Bismarck. This is the fuel that made North Dakota a fossil energy state long before the Bakken Shale produced its first barrel of oil.

Ex-coal CEO fresh from prison urges Trump to probe 2010 blast
Timothy Gardner, Reuters

A former coal executive who last week finished a yearlong prison sentence for conspiring to violate safety standards at a mine where a deadly blast occurred, has urged U.S. President Donald Trump to "get to the truth" about the incident.

Colombia's mining sector could receive $1.5 billion annually over five years
Luis Jaime Acosta and Helen Murphy, Reuters

Mining could become Colombia's economic growth engine with investments of at least $1.5 billion a year over the next five years if the government guarantees legal certainty to businesses, the industry's top representative said on Tuesday. Major mining companies are urging the government to better regulate public consultations and votes on mining projects, arguing that legal uncertainty is the industry's biggest challenge.

Nuclear

Struggling Nuclear Industry Lobbies State Governments For Help
Marie Cusick, NPR News

Just like coal companies, America's nuclear power industry is having a tough time. It faces slowing demand for electricity, and competition from cheaper natural gas and renewables. And now, touting itself as a form of clean energy, the nuclear industry is lobbying state legislatures with a controversial pitch for help.

Plan to entomb Manitoba's nuclear waste worries environmentalists
CBC News

Manitobans should be worried about a plan to permanently cover over nuclear waste in Pinawa with grout, say some local environmentalists. And what happens here could set a precedent for the rest of Canada, said environmentalist Anne Lindsey.

Climate

All but two countries are in the Paris climate agreement. The U.S. could be the third.
Denise Lu and Kim Soffen, The Washington Post

One of Donald Trump's prominent campaign promises - to pull out of the Paris climate agreement, a 2015 U.N. accord that aims to combat climate change - may soon become reality.

Opinions, Editorials and Perspectives

Clean Coal: An American Alternative Energy Source
Denny Weddle, Morning Consult

Energy Secretary Rick Perry recently dedicated the world's largest clean-coal power plant, the WA Parish Generating Station - known as Petra Nova. Located not far from Houston, Petra Nova is the first of several American clean-coal operations scheduled to open during fiscal year 2017.

Rick Perry Is Implementing Pragmatic Environmentalism For Trump Administration
James Taylor, Forbes

Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry, like his predecessor in the Obama administration Ernest Moniz, is using the power of his position to advocate pragmatic environmentalism. Like Moniz, Perry recognizes that nuclear power is essential to affordable, reliable, emissions-free power.

U.S. chemical safety rules need to be updated
Mike Wilson, The Houston Chronicle

During 13 years of work as a professional firefighter, paramedic and EMT, I sometimes responded to an emergency at an industrial facility. If this required us to extricate a worker from a piece of machinery, we would start IV lines, administer morphine and oxygen, and pull the machine apart with hydraulic tools or carefully disassemble it.

Research Reports

High Arctic Holocene temperature record from the Agassiz ice cap and Greenland ice sheet evolution
Benoit Lecavalier et al., PNAS

Reconstructions of past environmental changes are important for placing recent climate change in context and testing climate models. Periods of past climates warmer than today provide insight on how components of the climate system might respond in the future. Here, we report on an Arctic climate record from the Agassiz ice cap. Our results show that early Holocene air temperatures exceed present values by a few degrees Celsius, and that industrial era rates of temperature change are unprecedented over the Holocene period (???12,000 y).

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