EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Date	HeadLine	Outlet
01/02/2013	Energy Year Ahead: Energy Lobbyists Gird for Tax Overhaul Fight	Bloomberg Businessweek - Online
01/02/2013	Natural gas producers turn to “green completion”	Vindicator - Online
01/02/2013	DTN/The Progressive Farmer:Agriculture Markets, News and Weather	Progressive Farmer - Online
01/01/2013	EPA study seen as soft on fracking	Hartford Business Journal - Online
01/01/2013	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief	Planet Ark
01/01/2013	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief	www.planetark.com
01/01/2013	EDITORIAL: Fracking flick channels science fiction	Washington Times - Online
01/01/2013	DTN/The Progressive Farmer:Agriculture Markets, News and Weather	Progressive Farmer - Online
12/31/2012	EPA successor faces fracking fight	Imperial Valley Press - Online
12/31/2012	EPA successor faces fracking fight	Pasadena Sun - Online
12/31/2012	EPA successor faces fracking fight	Burbank Leader
12/31/2012	Let study conclude	Gloversville Leader-Herald - Online
12/31/2012	Fighting climate change in 2013	Financial Chronicle - Online
12/31/2012	One universal theme will dominate for all of us - the economy [National, The (United Arab Emirates)]	Equities.com
12/31/2012	The new robber barons	Enter Stage Right
12/31/2012	Don't throw out the wells, throw out the conclusions	Casper Star-Tribune - Online
12/31/2012	UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom	CNBC - Online
12/30/2012	2013 Predictions	Swans Commentary
12/30/2012	2013 Predictions	Swans Commentary
12/30/2012	EPA successor faces fracking fight	Morning Call - Online
12/30/2012	Dickinson Press' Top 10: No. 1: Booming ND Oil Patch	Dickinson Press - Online
12/30/2012	Gas will play key role in clean future	Tribune Chronicle - Online
12/29/2012	Farm Bill, Weather, Environment Highlight 2012	Lancaster Farming - Online
12/29/2012	Top 10 stories of 2012 in Wyoming	Casper Star-Tribune - Online
12/29/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Reuters - Online
12/29/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Laredo Sun
12/29/2012	Fracking becoming popular in Hollywood	Grand Forks Herald - Online
12/29/2012	Fracking becoming popular in Hollywood	Grand Forks Herald - Online
12/29/2012	Jackson Quitting EPA Hands Successor Fracking Fight	Bloomberg News - Online
12/29/2012	Obama, EPA should keep fracking study from being swayed	Sentinel - Online, The
12/29/2012	2012 in Review - May and June	KXMD-TV - Online

12/29/2012	Channel 5 News @ 10PM	Channel 5 News at 10 PM - KGWN-TV
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA Faces Decisions on U.S. Fracking Boom	Scientific American - Online
12/28/2012	KX News	KXMC-TV
12/28/2012	UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom	Chicago Tribune - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Thomson Reuters - UK - Online
12/28/2012	UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom	Reuters - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Yahoo! Finance Singapore
12/28/2012	UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom	Orlando Sentinel - Online
12/28/2012	Channel 5 News @ 5:30PM	Channel 5 News at 5:30 PM - KGWN-TV
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	South Bend Tribune - Online
12/28/2012	Roth: 'All of the above' equals tough challenges	Journal Record - Online, The
12/28/2012	UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom	Reuters India
12/28/2012	EPA chief Lisa Jackson to step down from US post	www.hydrocarbonprocessing.com
12/28/2012	EPA details focus of study on water impacts of fracking	Energy Daily - Online, The
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Yahoo! News
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	CNBC - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom | Sustainability | Thomson Reuters	thomsonreuters.com
12/28/2012	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief | Sustainability | Thomson Reuters	thomsonreuters.com
12/28/2012	EPA Fracking Regulation To Fall On Lisa Jackson's Successor	Huffington Post, The
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Business Insurance - Online
12/28/2012	EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announces resignation	Casper Star-Tribune - Online
12/28/2012	EPA Chief Lisa Jackson to Step Down | TheLedger.com	Ledger - Online, The
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Today Show - NBC News Network - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	MSNBC - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	US Daily, The
12/28/2012	Around the Water Cooler: An Update on EPA's Hydraulic Fracturing Study	Greenversations (EPA's Blog)
12/28/2012	EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation	KOTA-TV - Online
12/28/2012	EPA director to step down next month	Columbus Dispatch - Online
12/28/2012	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental	Reuters India

	chief	
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Reuters India
12/28/2012	EPA Reviewing Specific Gas Drilling Sites	Natural Gas Intelligence Newsletter - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Rocket News
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	WTBX-FM - Online
12/28/2012	director of strategy and research of your project since	WESA-FM (Pittsburgh's NPR News Station)
12/28/2012	EPA ADMINISTRATOR JACKSON WILL STEP DOWN	U-T San Diego - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...	WSAU.com
12/28/2012	food assistance the US Environmental Protection Agency is	WESA-FM (Pittsburgh's NPR News Station)
12/28/2012	In fracking culture war, celebs, billionaires and banjos	Itmatters.com.ph
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	KDAL-AM - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Scientific American - Online
12/28/2012	Jackson leaves EPA to mixed reviews	Washington Times - Online
12/28/2012	Fracking USA - big decisions loom	IOL News Search
12/28/2012	EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation	Northern Colorado 5 - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Reuters India
12/28/2012	Local News Briefs	Glenwood Springs Post Independent - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	MSN Money (US)
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	wtaq.com
12/28/2012	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief	wtaq.com
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	10 sources
12/28/2012	Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief	Reuters - Online
12/28/2012	EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation	KGWN-TV - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...	WHTC-AM - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...	WKZO-AM - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	WNMT-AM - Online
12/28/2012	After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom	Thomson Reuters - UK - Online
12/28/2012	EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation	Associated Press (AP) - Cheyenne Bureau
12/28/2012	Latest Wyoming news, sports, business and entertainment	Associated Press (AP) - Cheyenne Bureau

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Energy Year Ahead: Energy Lobbyists Gird for Tax Overhaul Fight

Bloomberg Businessweek - Online
Washington, DC
Jim Snyder
01/02/2013

A battle is brewing over a potential corporate tax overhaul in 2013, and the prospect fills oil and gas lobbyist Lee Fuller with dread.

"As a whole, this industry really doesn't see an advantage to these proposals that would lower the corporate rates and eliminate deductions," said Fuller, the vice president for government relations at the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

Translation: the energy industry is going to cling for life to its tax breaks.

Repealing investment benefits -- including one that allows deducting the expenses of everything from roadwork to well repair -- will curtail investments that are lowering foreign oil imports and creating thousands of jobs, Fuller said. Critics -- including President Barack Obama -- say oil and gas companies can afford to give more.

Tax issues this year will affect businesses here and abroad, from Exxon Mobil Corp. (XOM) to the U.S. unit of Iberdrola SA, a Spanish company that specializes in clean energy, if the White House and Congress get serious about cutting out the dozens of breaks and subsidies in favor of a lower rate.

Obama's call to end the $4 billion in annual tax subsidies to oil companies including Exxon Mobil, the biggest U.S. oil company, has failed to pass in either house of Congress.

Green Tax Breaks

Green energy interests are also ready to fight to continue their incentives.

Wind companies, for example, are trying to protect a credit that shaves as much as a third off the costs of producing power, saying its disappearance will lead to significant job losses.

The American Wind Energy Association, a Washington-based group whose members include General Electric Co., released a plan in December to phase out the credit in six years, a concession to growing concerns about the rising federal deficit.

One way to raise revenue is to tax carbon dioxide emissions, which could also encourage the development of renewables to address the risks associated with climate change.

The idea appears to have greater cachet off Capitol Hill than on it. Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and incoming chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, says a carbon tax would be a "big lift politically."

Reaching any agreement on energy has been hard to do in recent years. Congress hasn't passed a major bill since 2007, when lawmakers agreed to raise the fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks and set biofuel production targets.

Since then, the U.S. energy landscape has undergone a "transformational shift," Wyden said in a recent interview.

Fracking Boom

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Hydraulic fracturing has increased domestic production of oil and natural gas. That's lowered imports, and cut gas costs to their lowest level in a decade. Chemical companies are planning to re-locate stateside because natural gas is an important ingredient for their products.

Natural gas has also become the fuel of choice for utilities instead of coal. The switch is lowering carbon emissions, even though Obama couldn't get through Congress a sweeping climate-change bill.

Wyden said more direction from Washington could provide businesses with greater certainty over where to invest, expanding growth in an industry that's already a bright spot in a sluggish economy.

One issue he plans to examine is whether natural gas should be exported. Fifteen companies have applied to the Energy Department for permission to sell to markets in Asia and elsewhere. An Energy Department-commissioned study has offered an almost unqualified endorsement of exports.

'Low-Carbon Economy'

Wyden said that in 2013 he'll try to promote hydropower, biomass and geothermal power sources to help develop a "low-carbon economy." On these issues, he said he hopes to find agreement with the top Republican on the panel, Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, whose state shares some of the same resources.

Paul Bledsoe, a Washington-based energy consultant, said he's doubtful Democrats who control the Senate and Republicans in charge of the House can agree on a major bill. One possible way forward would be to couple an energy-efficiency bill with measures expanding offshore oil and gas production.

"The real question is whether the parties would rather have a bill or a talking point," Bledsoe, a former energy adviser to President Bill Clinton, said.

ALSO WORTH WATCHING IN 2013:

EPA: Lisa Jackson's planned departure as head of the Environmental Protection Agency leaves President Barack Obama facing a confirmation war as regulators prepare to release final rules imposing the first limits on carbon dioxide emissions. Congressional Republicans have sought unsuccessfully to prevent the EPA from acting under the Clean Air Act to fight global warming. In 2013, a new administrator may come under fresh attacks if the agency acts to limit greenhouse gases from existing facilities. Now proposed rules are limited to new power plants.

KEYSTONE: The State Department says it will make a determination about TransCanada Corp. (TRP)'s pipeline from Alberta's oil sands to refineries in Texas early in 2013. Environmentalists oppose the project because they say it promotes development of tar sands mining, which releases more carbon dioxide than oil drilling.

CONFERENCES: From solar panels to Canadian oil sands, there is no shortage of talking topics at various energy conferences tracked by the U.S. Energy Information Agency.

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To contact the editor responsible for this story: Steve Geimann at sgeimann@bloomberg.net

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Natural gas producers turn to “green completion” Vindicator - Online

01/02/2013

Published: Wed, January 2, 2013 @ 12:00 a.m.

By Andrew Maykuth

Philadelphia Inquirer

SYCAMORE, Pa.

The towering flares that turn night into day in the Marcellus Shale gaslands are becoming an increasingly rare sight.

Natural-gas producers are turning to new techniques to capture the gas emitted during the well-completion process. In the past, a well's initial production typically was vented or burned off to allow impurities to clear before the well was tied into a pipeline.

Now, more operators are employing reduced-emission completions,ö "green completion,ö" a process in which impurities such as sand, drilling debris and fluids from hydraulic fracturing are filtered out and the gas is sold, not wasted.

The five gas wells that EQT Corp. completed in October at this remote site in Washington Township, Pa., are typical. Compared to a gas flare, which roars like a jet engine and licks the sky with flame like a giant welder's torch, green completion is dull and quiet.

EQT is not the only drilling company that has embraced green completions. The equipment for separating the gas from the "flowback" has been perfected in the past decade, and in the next three years, using it will become standard practice across the nation.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved new rules this year requiring green completions nationwide by 2015, except for exploratory wells unconnected to pipelines. As of Oct. 15, drillers can no longer vent the gas into the atmosphere without burning.

The EPA says green completions will save drillers up to $19 million a year by capturing natural gas that would be wasted.

The advent of green completions is an example of the rapid development of shale-gas technology, which has revived a flagging domestic energy sector in just a few years.

"What was true yesterday is no longer true today," said Andrew Place, director of public policy research at EQT, based in Pittsburgh. "Systems are evolving."

Much of the new technology has been driven to address fears about drilling, including hydraulic fracturing, the extraction technique that has turned impermeable shale into a bonanza of oil and gas.

"Public concerns have pushed the engineers to come up with solutions," Place said.

Activists and regulators are paying more attention to air emissions from shale-gas development, including toxins emitted during drilling and production. Much of the focus has been on releases of methane, the main component of natural gas as

well as a potent greenhouse gas, though there is substantial disagreement over studies attempting to measure the methane leaks.

In devising the new rules, the EPA said it was acting under its Clean Air Act mandate to reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds and pollutants such as benzene, which can cause cancer. The agency said the new rules were expected to eliminate 95 percent of the smog-forming volatile organic compounds emitted from more than 13,000 new gas wells each year.

The EPA said a "co-benefit" of green completions was a reduction in methane emissions by 1 million to 1.7 million tons a year.

The government delayed full implementation of the rule until 2015 to allow the industry to build enough equipment to handle the workload.

The American Petroleum Institute and other industry groups are challenging the new rules in the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington. So are environmental groups.

"We'd say the rules have not gone far enough," said Jay Duffy, a staff attorney with Philadelphia's Clean Air Council, which joined with Earthjustice in October to notify the EPA it planned to sue.

Duffy praised the EPA for taking action to curb toxic emissions from drilling, but he contends the federal agency failed to directly confront the climate-change issue. The EPA concluded in 2009 that greenhouse gases endangered public health and welfare, but it has not devised standards on methane emissions.

Anti-drilling activists argue that so much methane escapes from gas development that it undermines the industry's claims about the clean-air benefits of the shale-gas boom.

The industry says environmentalists and the EPA are using inflated, biased estimates of methane emissions. It has denounced as hoaxes some of the infrared videos posted online that purport to show methane plumes.

Some industry leaders say the biggest benefit to green-completion technology is that they hope it puts the emissions controversy to rest.

"I do think it addresses a criticism that the industry has had in terms of methane emissions, and maybe we can take that off the table," Jack P. Williams Jr., president of XTO Energy, said in a recent interview.

EQT differs from many gas- exploration companies because it also serves a retail customer base through its gas utility in southwestern Pennsylvania, Equitable Gas Co. It says green completions achieve a significant emission reduction.

"EQT has an interest in minimizing our impact, our air impact in this case, in the basin where we have a social license to operate," said Place, a deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection before he went to work for EQT.

"We've been here for 120 years," he said. "We live in this community."

At EQT's drilling site on Pettit Run Road in rolling farmland about seven miles northwest of Waynesburg, Pa., workers explained the kind of assembly-line drilling operation they have devised that now incorporates green completions.

Before EQT began drilling on this five-acre site carved out of a hillside, the company first extended its pipeline network to the location so it would be ready to receive any gas produced, said Michael Rehl, manager of completion operations.

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During the spring, the five wells were drilled in a row, 15 feet apart, to a depth of about 7,500 feet, where they turn horizontally into the Marcellus Shale layer and follow parallel paths, separated by about 1,000 feet.

Then the wells were lined with several layers of steel pipe and concrete, and hydraulically fractured.

The completion process commenced in October when a contractor, Pure Energy Services Ltd., began cleaning out wells one at a time.

At the outset, a well disgorges mostly sand, water and chemicals used during the fracking process, along with drilling debris and minerals such as barium and manganese picked up from the shale formation. After about four days, the well produces mostly natural gas.

During a green completion, the mixture is routed through a series of filters. A cylindrical sand trap collects the solid materials, which are sent to a landfill.

The water, containing the chemicals and mineral contaminants, is treated and stored for reuse in the next drilling operation.

And the natural gas is channeled into a pipeline and sent off to market rather than being flared into the sky to achieve no other purpose than to heat the planet.

Use the comment form below to begin a discussion about this content.

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DTN/The Progressive Farmer:Agriculture Markets, News and Weather
Progressive Farmer - Online

01/02/2013

Ag Policy Blog

Chris Clayton DTN Ag Policy Editor

Bio | Email

Tuesday 01/01/13

House Sends Tax Bill and Farm Bill Extension to President

Though lawmakers missed a self-imposed deadline, the legislation approved by the House 257-167 late Tuesday and 89-8 by the Senate earlier in the day would avoid raising income taxes on 98% of the country. The bill, if approved by the House, also prevents the permanent farm law from going into effect, thus avoiding the possibility of soaring dairy prices. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

10:26PM CST 01/01/13

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Congress needs to be prohibited from engaging in the selective agricultural investment and profit guaranteeing business. Their sorry record of targeting select farmers with highly discriminatory multimillion dollar investment/profit guaranteeing policies has destroyed countless rural communities by neutering the ability of smaller farmers to compete. To guarantee that the largest and obviously potentially most profitable business always will have a vastly superior incomes renders the smaller farmers incapable of competing in this highly competitive business. If congress is going to be involved in the safety net business all farmers are equally deserving of comparably valued safety nets.

Posted by Lon Truly at

10:29PM CST 01/01/13

New Year's Tax Measure Includes Farm Bill Extension

Though lawmakers missed a self-imposed deadline, the legislation approved 89-8 by the Senate would avoid raising income taxes on 98% of the country. The bill, if approved by the House, also prevents the permanent farm law from going into effect, thus avoiding the possibility of soaring dairy prices. [Read Full Blog Post]

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted at

8:57AM CST 01/01/13

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Yippie! Another 4 trillion in IOU'S.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

6:57PM CST 01/01/13

Congress needs to be prohibited from engaging in the selective agricultural investment and profit guaranteeing business. Their sorry record of targeting select farmers with highly discriminatory multimillion dollar investment/profit guaranteeing policies has destroyed countless rural communities by neutering the ability of smaller farmers to compete. To guarantee that the largest and obviously potentially most profitable business always will have a vastly superior incomes renders the smaller farmers incapable of competing in this highly competitive business. If congress is going to be involved in the safety net business all farmers are equally deserving of comparably valued safety nets.

Posted by Lon Truly at

10:27PM CST 01/01/13

Monday 12/31/12

Congress Scrambles to Pass Farm Bill Extension

Sometime today House leaders will concede they need to adopt a farm-bill extension. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

9:36AM CST 12/31/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Senator Stabenow discloses in her statement the true intent of the "Food Bill". Stop milk prices from spiking! etal.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

6:49PM CST 12/31/12

Thursday 12/27/12

EPA's Jackson Draws Praise, Criticism

During her four-year tenure EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and various agriculture interest groups and members of Congress have been at odds about whether EPA is expanding its reach onto U.S. farms. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

2:49PM CST 12/27/12

by Todd Neeley

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

DTN Releases Forecast of 2013 News Events

I know you have waited all year for this. My skills to map trends of non-fundamental factors in world markets and politics, along a natural gift to overstate the obvious, have once again allowed me to detail the most important news events that will affect American agriculture and policymakers in 2013. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

9:45AM CST 12/27/12

by Chris Clayton

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

Friday 12/21/12

A 2013 Farm Bill is a Nice Christmas Gift

I just want to share the gratitude of those of us in the agricultural policy community for the wonderful re-gifting House leaders have bestowed on all of us this holiday season. To think that we will get the opportunity to continue discussing the 2013 farm bill is certainly a joy that many of us will cherish, even if it looks like we got this same gift last year. [Read Full Blog Post]

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted at

8:46AM CST 12/21/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Now Chris, make sure you re-center your tongue before you bite down on anything. I've done it, myself, and brother does it hurt. (Of course, you probably already suspected this, as you've read my comments over the last year or so.) Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to you and your whole personal and professional family.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:22AM CST 12/21/12

The potential doubling of milk prices is viewed as a total disaster by many. RFS is a major factor in the doubling or tripling of corn and soybean prices. Where is the outrage over the government mandated use of ethanol?

Posted by Lon Truly at

12:26PM CST 12/21/12

Throwing money at problems is not the solution. Throwing money is the problem. See http://www.aberdeennews.com/news/aan-column-congressional-propos al-just-insane-20121215,0,3938965.story

Posted by Lon Truly at

12:55PM CST 12/21/12

The clueless and or corrupt congress ever fixated on re-election has chosen to be oblivious to the economic carnage it is creating with the unfair and inequitable crop insurance schemes. It should be obvious to everyone that targeting the largest and most profitable farm businesses with the largest investment and income guarantees grants these operations with an overwhelmingly competitive edge in a highly competitive business. It should be noted that many of these operations have little or minimal land costs and that government has no business guaranteeing ever increasing land values with insurance schemes that cover land costs. It should also be obvious that smaller farm operations targeted with no or minimal government benefits have little or no chance of competing in such an economic environment. Considering the stratospheric levels to which land values have escalated it should be obvious to all that extreme government income and investment guarantees are capitalized into land values and that government has no business targeting the wealthiest with multi million dollar business benefits.

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Posted by Lon Truly at

1:13PM CST 12/21/12

A major reason that margins in ag are tight is because of government not only assuming nearly all the production and marketing risks for many of the major ag crops, but also government guaranteeing a profit to many farmers with current prices and current government insurance schemes. Current farm bill proposals double down on these government risk assumption schemes with new and crazier shallow loss income guaranteeing schemes. When farmers have to budget for more of the production and marketing risks they are not as crazy about driving profitability margins below zero.

Posted by Lon Truly at

1:27PM CST 12/25/12

And now that Christmas is over, the President is tired of vacationing, the S'mores and MeToo's can line up on Give Away Avenue in D.C. hoping the gifts will continue flowing.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

6:07AM CST 12/26/12

Bonny...I'll never look at "S'mores" the same way, ever again. You also do "tongue-in-cheek" very well.. Late Merry Christmas & Happy New Year. R

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:34AM CST 12/26/12

Ditto's to All,

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

10:12AM CST 12/26/12

Chris,

The only problem with your letter "commentary" to Speaker Boehner

and House Majority Leader Cantor is that I didn't write the letter.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

11:35AM CST 12/26/12

Wednesday 12/19/12

Stabenow Appalled by House Inaction on Farm Bill

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow took to the Senate floor Wednesday afternoon lamenting the failure to get the farm bill done despite the jobs at stake and the agricultural disasters affecting the country. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

12:41PM CST 12/19/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

The potential doubling of milk prices is viewed as a total disaster by many. RFS is a major factor in the doubling or tripling of corn and soybean prices. Where is the outrage over the government mandated use of ethanol?

Posted by Lon Truly at

8:22AM CST 12/21/12

House Leaders Again Hit Pause Button on Farm Bill

Politico reported Tuesday night that House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, fears losing Republican votes on a final fiscal package if leaders throw a full-fledged farm bill into the mix as well. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

6:52AM CST 12/19/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

As potentially harmful as delay could be to the Ag Sector, the dearth of Rural Development Monies is killing a lot of construction-in turn, killing jobs, both for the construction, as well as those generated by Rural Community infrastructure

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upgrades. In Belmond, we got a new Water Plant and good-sized Medical Facility before those funds started drying up. They DID create a number of jobs, which, in turn moved more revenue to local business. For instance if you're a small town supermarket, your orders go up, which pushes up other town's economies-see how it all works. Except, at this moment it's NOT working, and we have consumer prices rising, like the milk mentioned in the article, with more people with reduced employment or unemployed. As Mr Preston eloquently said, "Nothing from nothing leaves nothing..."

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:56AM CST 12/19/12

Cantor / Boehner need to "lead,follow OR get the hell out of the way"

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

10:42AM CST 12/19/12

The potential doubling of milk prices is viewed as a total disaster by many. RFS is a major factor in the doubling or tripling of corn and soybean prices. Where is the outrage over the government mandated use of ethanol?

Posted by Lon Truly at

8:21AM CST 12/21/12

Tuesday 12/18/12

Senate Goes to Its Own Plan B for Ag Disaster Aid

In the Senate on Tuesday, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., filed an amendment to the Sandy disaster legislation that would extend for one year the livestock disaster assistance, as well as the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, known as NAP. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

8:18PM CST 12/18/12

by Chris Clayton

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

State Officials ask White House to end Fracking Rule

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Twostate officialshave asked the White House and other federal officials to call off a proposal to regulate hydraulic fracturing on federal and Indian lands, saying in a letter Monday that the states are better equipped to ensure groundwater safety from the practice that uses high pressure spraying and chemicals to free up natural gas supplies from underground rock formations. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

7:49AM CST 12/18/12

by Todd Neeley

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

Thursday 12/13/12

Time Slipping Away for Farm Bill Deal

Democratic Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota added to the calls of lawmakers pushing for a new farm bill to be completed before Congress adjourns. Yet, a Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee called the idea of attaching the farm bill to a bill resolving the looming tax and budget issues a "Hail Mary." [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

3:15PM CST 12/13/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Perhaps congress is being highly irresponsible by granting a few high rollers annual million dollar insurance subsidies in addition to multimillion investment/profit guarantees. It is truly pathetic the many beginning and smaller farmers being denied opportunities to farm by congress recklessly targeting the greediest and largest with the most insurance benefits.

Posted by Lon Truly at

5:55PM CST 12/13/12

"If you ARE a 'Big Fish' or WANT to be a 'Big Fish', then you must always keep your self surrounded by a steady supply of 'Little Fish', otherwise, you will STARVE."

The "Trickle Down Economy" was a Myth perpetuated by repeating a soundbite. Revenue, like Cream, always rises, and

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

if not readily produced by the efforts of Small, Strong Farms and Businesses, you end with an Economy reminiscent of the current state of the Mississippi River.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

10:04AM CST 12/14/12

What we're likely to see first is the Omnibus Bill passed to "save us from the Fiscal Cliff". notably this has the infamous "Monsanto Rider" on it, that was pulled from the Senate Version of the Farm Bill earlier this year.

For the largest Industrial Farmers, and of course for Biotech Companies, this rider allows deployment of new products without testing being completed by the FDA-just in time for Spring.

Lot's of opportunity for "the right kind of Farms," and an opportunity for the rest of us to observe, that what is sown, may not be exactly what we'll reap.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:49AM CST 12/17/12

Tuesday 12/11/12

Soybean Growers Criticize Target-Price Option

With the clock ticking on this farm bill, the American Soybean Association sent a letter Monday to House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders seeking to attack the need for a target-price program in the commodity title. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

6:16AM CST 12/11/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

I hardly think more options would simpify or reduce administration overhead expenses. Extending the current Food Bill and then falling over the cliff might just be the best solution to the nations oversized government ails. Some of us might just have to quit throwing food into the dumpster.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

7:05AM CST 12/11/12

Then, just as a sidebar, there's dumping two troubled manned fighters representing a $1.5+ Trillion investment over the next ten years, while we're simultaneously deploying Avenger Drones, which DARPA suggests will be the core of our Air Force Technology by 2017. That's a lot of Small Farms and Businesses that could be saved and started-imagine the revenue THAT would generate. China and Russia are creating State of the Art Stealth Fighters for a fraction of what we're spending, perhaps like the Wal-Mart method, we should just buy theirs and retrofit our tech onto them. Again, just a thought.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:42AM CST 12/13/12

Sunday 12/09/12

White House Science Advisors Stress Ag Research Investments

The country's agricultural research "is not prepared to meet the challenges that U.S. agriculture faces in the 21st century," according to a new report released Friday by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

1:59PM CST 12/09/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Gee...I wonder what Corporate interests are heavily represented here. I checked...St Louis must be proud.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

10:41AM CST 12/10/12

Oboma is not interested in science. He isinterested in what he can do to get control of everything he can. He is now the hero of most dicators in the world, they know they can deal with him. He will not read the report you linked to, he is just not interested in it ,it is to far beneath him. I there is nothingin it to push his socialist agenda he has no time for it. I linked to it and read it. I is a groveling attempt to get more money fo some of the screwy ideas being promoted by a bunch of liberals in univerisities who are way overpaid. Anyone who disagrees with this regime will be deamoized in his next speech and by the liberal press. This getting truly pathetic we are being lead by a potus who thinks he needs to tell us what kind of a light bulb we can use.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by GORDON KEYES at

5:31PM CST 12/10/12

Well Gordon, all your "Rush rants" don't change the fact he won the election while Faux News and hate radio predicted a Romney landslide. Maybe it's time the party of tea start facing reality as well as science, the 1950s are over.

Posted by Jay Mcginnis at

7:06AM CST 12/21/12

Saturday 12/08/12

Huelskamp Has Lost Committee Job Before

One of the biggest stories this week among aggies in Washington was the ouster of Kansas Republican Tim Huelskamp from the House Agriculture Committee. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

11:17AM CST 12/08/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Do not know the details, but do know that when all on a committee or board, all vote one way or another, most of the time,, democracy is not working.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

5:51PM CST 12/08/12

Friday 12/07/12

Federal Agencies Trying to Mitigate Low Mississippi Flows

President Obama raised the issue of the Mississippi River flows with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at a cabinet meeting Wednesday and also asked Vilsack about the drought overall. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

8:06AM CST 12/07/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

It takes considerable effort to understand a misguided liberal. If it is climate change, what would any of these idiots do about it? I guess they could setup a hearing to discuss.

Posted by Frank Thomas at

9:37AM CST 12/07/12

I do have questions. If watersheds were free flowing, without man made obstructions, how much H2O would be now flowing down the mighty Mississippi? Also, if all were released now, would there be a reserve for next year? The river we live close to, ceased to flow in the 30's, but is still flowing, with fish in it today.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

10:54AM CST 12/07/12

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA study seen as soft on fracking
Hartford Business Journal - Online

01/01/2013

The Environmental Protection Agency released a progress report Friday that reiterated its support for increasing natural gas development in the United States.

"As the administration and EPA has made clear, natural gas has a central role to play in our energy future," the agency said in a press release. "The administration continues to work to expand production of this important domestic resource safely and responsibly."

EPA outlined several steps it's taking to assess the impacts fracking -- short for hydraulic fracturing -- has on the nation's water supply, as directed by Congress in 2009.

Steps include:

-- Analyzing existing data from natural gas companies on chemicals and practices used

-- Modeling how discharging waste might impact the water

-- Lab testing on water discharge

-- Testing fracking chemicals for toxicity

-- Testing groundwater in five regions near drilling activity

The final results are not expected until late 2014.

Some see the lack of data or negative comments in Friday's progress report as a positive for the industry.

"It signals that the Obama administration has no real appetite for additional federal regulations until 2014 at the earliest," said Nitzan Goldberger, a natural gas analyst at Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy. "That's good news for the oil and gas guys."

The Obama administration has tightened some rules around fracking, but for the most part has left regulation up to the states.

Fracking involves injecting massive amounts of water, sand and some chemicals deep underground in a bid to crack shale rock and ease the flow of oil and natural gas.

The process has unleashed an energy boom in the United States, creating thousands of jobs, driving down the price of oil and natural gas and cutting energy imports to levels not seen in decades.

But it's also raised serious concerns over its effects on the environment, including air pollution from trucks and wells, its links to earthquakes and, fears that it is contaminating drinking water.

For environmentalists, the negatives seem to outweigh the positives.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Fracking was once seen as a technology that, given the proper regulations, could be done safely and provide a fuel that emits far fewer greenhouse gases than coal. Natural gas was seen as a good alternative to coal, at least until renewables like wind and solar were ready for prime time.

But declining costs for renewables, more instances of water contamination, uncertainly over the heat-trappng nature of natural gas that escapes from wells unburned, and a fear that cheap gas is crowding out wind and solar have led many to change their minds.

Several environmental groups are calling for an immediate ban on fracking, while others favor a gradual phase out combined with greater federal regulation.

On the other side are many analysts and economists that believe this technology can give the United States a significant economic and geopolitical advantage.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief
Planet Ark

01/01/2013

Date: 02-Jan-13

Country: USA

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson, who spearheaded the Obama administration's crackdown on carbon emissions, said on Thursday she will step down after almost four years of battles with Republican lawmakers and industry over proposed regulations.

Under her leadership, the agency declared for the first time that carbon dioxide was a danger to human health and could be regulated under the Clean Air Act, leading the EPA to develop a new regulatory regime to limit carbon emissions.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers opposed Jackson's efforts to fight climate change, hauling her in for numerous hearings in Congress, and she faced some pushback from within the administration too.

She won praise from many environmental groups, while others complained her EPA was too timid. It was unclear what direction the administration will take on climate change during President Barack Obama's second term.

Obama thanked Jackson for her service, praising her work on mercury pollution limits, fighting climate change and helping set new fuel economy standards for vehicles.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink," Obama said in a statement.

Jackson, the first black administrator of the 17,000-strong EPA, said in a statement she was "confident the (EPA) ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson, 50, is expected to leave her cabinet position after Obama's State of the Union address in early 2013. Leading the list of potential replacements are Bob Perciasepe, deputy EPA administrator, who will take over the agency on an interim basis; and Kathleen McGinty, a former head of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and a protégé of former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Also said to be in the mix are Gina McCarthy, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation; and Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

Jackson's departure was not a surprise. Analysts had not expected her to stay for Obama's second term.

The administration is expected to face a tough fight to get any potential nominee confirmed by the Senate -- especially any candidate seen as being in the mold of Jackson.

"Secretary Jackson played the environmental 'bad cop' to President Obama's more moderate 'good cop,' but the result of their tag-team effort has been a huge expansion of the EPA's power. That's the exact opposite of what is needed," said S. T. Karnick, research director at the Heartland Institute, a Chicago group that is skeptical of man-made climate change.

Jackson is the first major energy policy official to step aside since Obama's re-election last month. Some have speculated

that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel prize-winning physicist who has also clashed with industry, will also depart, as may Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

BRUISING ENCOUNTERS

Republican lawmakers accused Jackson's EPA of massive government overreach that choked economic growth, and passed numerous bills aimed at undoing the regulations. Obama did not sign their bills into law, but the White House did begin to pull back or delay rules in the face of the relentless onslaught.

Some speculated Jackson would step down in 2011, when Obama decided to delay rules to restrict emissions of smog-forming chemicals from power plants.

"From an energy and consumer perspective, it has to be said that the Jackson EPA presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, which lobbied against many of the EPA's proposed regulations.

States and governors fought Jackson's rules in the courts, scoring a win in August when a U.S. appeals court overturned the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, aimed at reducing harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants.

On Thursday, many environmentalists and public health advocates hailed Jackson, saying she leaves a legacy of cleaner air.

Administrator Jackson has been one of the most effective leaders in the history of the Environmental Protection Agency," Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jackson is a chemical engineer by training, and reports in recent weeks suggested she might be under consideration for the post of president of Princeton University. She is also a one-time chief of staff of New Jersey Governor John Corzine, and other media reports say she may be mulling a run for governor of that state.

Despite contentious dealings with Congress, Jackson maintained a cordial relationship with one of her biggest critics, Senator Jim Inhofe. She even kept a photo of the Oklahoma Republican and his grandchildren in her office.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA, however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," said Inhofe, who has called climate change a hoax, chided the Obama administration for a "far left green agenda" and vigorously opposed carbon regulations.

Inhofe said Jackson's departure offers the White House the chance to appoint someone "who appreciates the needs of our economy."

UNFINISHED AGENDA INCLUDES FRACKING

A self-described pragmatist, Jackson passionately fought to limit air pollution. She often described her two sons' struggles with asthma when discussing the importance of clean air.

Jackson also rejected her critics' complaints that stronger environmental rules were incompatible with a robust economy.

When broad climate change legislation sputtered in Congress in 2010, the EPA became the White House's main vehicle for addressing carbon emissions.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Since then, the agency has finalized rules outlining restrictions on carbon emissions for new power plants, effectively prohibiting the construction of new coal-fired plants without carbon-capture and storage technology.

Natural Resources Defense Council President Frances Beinecke said Jackson's successor "will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants - the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled."

The EPA also will help decide whether the federal government will regulate hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The drilling technique has sparked a boom in U.S. energy production but opponents have linked it to water pollution and other problems.

Most regulation of fracking has fallen to the states, but the EPA has said it plans to propose standards on wastewater from gas wells by 2014 and is considering rules that would require more disclosure about the chemicals used in fracking.

U.S. oil and gas production has reached record levels in recent years. Even so, drillers have complained that EPA has taken too heavy a hand in regulating energy production and warn that onerous rules could crimp oil and gas output.

"In the past four years, EPA has hindered development of our nation's oil and natural gas resources by making it difficult for America's independent producers to overcome the enormous regulatory obstacles to operate," said Julia Bell, spokeswoman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief
www.planetark.com

01/01/2013

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Date: 02-Jan-13

Country: USA

Author: Ayesha Rascoe

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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(Additional reporting by Valerie Volcovici and Roberta Rampton; Editing by Ros Krasny, Will Dunham, Mohammad Zargham and David Gregorio)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EDITORIAL: Fracking flick channels science fiction
Washington Times - Online

01/01/2013

Left Coast liberals would explode natural gas revolution

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

-

The Washington Times

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

If you don't have the facts on your side, make some up. That's Hollywood's typical scheme for pushing its left-wing views on American audiences. Tinseltown's "Promised Land" puts a heavy thumb on the scale in favor of Big Green in its battle to vanquish the natural-gas industry in the debate over hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." The film is thinly disguised propaganda designed to turn public opinion against an affordable energy source that could prove the undoing of hopelessly inefficient windmills and solar panels.

"Promised Land," which opened Friday, portrays an economically depressed rural town that becomes the battleground between a rapacious natural-gas corporation and noble environmentalists. The firm wants to buy up drilling rights to local lands, but conscientious activists mount resistance, arguing that the natural-gas wells could contaminate the water table and damage their wholesome community.

Fracking is a breakthrough procedure for tapping natural gas that pumps water, sand and chemicals into underground seams, cracking shale rock and releasing trapped pockets of gas previously unreachable. The technique has made it possible to tap hundreds of trillions of cubic feet of natural gas trapped underfoot and promises to transform the United States into "the Saudi Arabia of natural gas."

Not coincidentally, the Environmental Protection Agency is investigating whether fracking can contaminate underground water tables - exactly the controversy portrayed in the film. EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson has spent the past four years as commanding general in President Obama's war on fossil fuels. She announced her resignation last week, effective following Mr. Obama's Jan. 20 inauguration, but the changing of the guard is not likely to alter the regulatory agency 's direction. Triggered by a claim of contaminated water in Pavillion, Wyo., the EPA probe could lead to onerous restrictions on fracking designed to reinforce the White House's ideological commitment to trendy energy firms that have an alarming tendency to go bankrupt after the subsidies run out.

"Promised Land" was written by Matt Damon , former star of the silver screen's "Bourne" series, and John Krasinski, from NBC's "The Office." Mr. Damon is not shy about sharing his radical political views and made a point of being seen among the Occupy Wall Street protesters. While he claims to be fed up with the slow-moving pace of Washington politics, he backed Mr. Obama twice, and he raised money for Democratic senatorial candidate Elizabeth Warren in Massachusetts.

Mr. Damon has been less forthcoming about his personal views on fracking, telling Reuters, "The point is that the movie should start a conversation." He says he was unaware that the film was partially funded by a media company owned by the United Arab Emirates, a fact uncovered by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. The state, a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, has a clear interest in hindering the growth of the natural-gas industry in the United States, which threatens to undercut America's dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

If "Promised Land" is any indication of the forces shaping Big Green's favored treatment by the left-wing Washington-Hollywood axis, the EPA 's conclusions about fracking are apt to be contaminated by science fiction rather than reflect genuine science.

The Washington Times

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

DTN/The Progressive Farmer:Agriculture Markets, News and Weather
Progressive Farmer - Online

01/01/2013

Ag Policy Blog

Chris Clayton DTN Ag Policy Editor

Bio | Email

Monday 12/31/12

Congress Scrambles to Pass Farm Bill Extension

Sometime today House leaders will concede they need to adopt a farm-bill extension. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

9:36AM CST 12/31/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Senator Stabenow discloses in her statement the true intent of the "Food Bill". Stop milk prices from spiking! etal.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

6:49PM CST 12/31/12

Thursday 12/27/12

EPA's Jackson Draws Praise, Criticism

During her four-year tenure EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and various agriculture interest groups and members of Congress have been at odds about whether EPA is expanding its reach onto U.S. farms. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

2:49PM CST 12/27/12

by Todd Neeley

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

DTN Releases Forecast of 2013 News Events

I know you have waited all year for this. My skills to map trends of non-fundamental factors in world markets and politics, along a natural gift to overstate the obvious, have once again allowed me to detail the most important news events that will affect American agriculture and policymakers in 2013. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

9:45AM CST 12/27/12

by Chris Clayton

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

Friday 12/21/12

A 2013 Farm Bill is a Nice Christmas Gift

I just want to share the gratitude of those of us in the agricultural policy community for the wonderful re-gifting House leaders have bestowed on all of us this holiday season. To think that we will get the opportunity to continue discussing the 2013 farm bill is certainly a joy that many of us will cherish, even if it looks like we got this same gift last year. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

8:46AM CST 12/21/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Now Chris, make sure you re-center your tongue before you bite down on anything. I've done it, myself, and brother does it hurt. (Of course, you probably already suspected this, as you've read my comments over the last year or so.) Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to you and your whole personal and professional family.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

9:22AM CST 12/21/12

The potential doubling of milk prices is viewed as a total disaster by many. RFS is a major factor in the doubling or tripling of corn and soybean prices. Where is the outrage over the government mandated use of ethanol?

Posted by Lon Truly at

12:26PM CST 12/21/12

Throwing money at problems is not the solution. Throwing money is the problem. See http://www.aberdeennews.com/news/aan-column-congressional-propos al-just-insane-20121215,0,3938965.story

Posted by Lon Truly at

12:55PM CST 12/21/12

The clueless and or corrupt congress ever fixated on re-election has chosen to be oblivious to the economic carnage it is creating with the unfair and inequitable crop insurance schemes. It should be obvious to everyone that targeting the largest and most profitable farm businesses with the largest investment and income guarantees grants these operations with an overwhelmingly competitive edge in a highly competitive business. It should be noted that many of these operations have little or minimal land costs and that government has no business guaranteeing ever increasing land values with insurance schemes that cover land costs. It should also be obvious that smaller farm operations targeted with no or minimal government benefits have little or no chance of competing in such an economic environment. Considering the stratospheric levels to which land values have escalated it should be obvious to all that extreme government income and investment guarantees are capitalized into land values and that government has no business targeting the wealthiest with multi million dollar business benefits.

Posted by Lon Truly at

1:13PM CST 12/21/12

A major reason that margins in ag are tight is because of government not only assuming nearly all the production and marketing risks for many of the major ag crops, but also government guaranteeing a profit to many farmers with current prices and current government insurance schemes. Current farm bill proposals double down on these government risk assumption schemes with new and crazier shallow loss income guaranteeing schemes. When farmers have to budget for more of the production and marketing risks they are not as crazy about driving profitability margins below zero.

Posted by Lon Truly at

1:27PM CST 12/25/12

And now that Christmas is over, the President is tired of vacationing, the S'mores and MeToo's can line up on Give Away

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Avenue in D.C. hoping the gifts will continue flowing.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

6:07AM CST 12/26/12

Bonny...I'll never look at "S'mores" the same way, ever again. You also do "tongue-in-cheek" very well.. Late Merry Christmas & Happy New Year. R

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:34AM CST 12/26/12

Ditto's to All,

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

10:12AM CST 12/26/12

Chris,

The only problem with your letter "commentary" to Speaker Boehner

and House Majority Leader Cantor is that I didn't write the letter.

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

11:35AM CST 12/26/12

Wednesday 12/19/12

Stabenow Appalled by House Inaction on Farm Bill

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow took to the Senate floor Wednesday afternoon lamenting the failure to get the farm bill done despite the jobs at stake and the agricultural disasters affecting the country. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

12:41PM CST 12/19/12

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

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Posted by Lon Truly at

8:22AM CST 12/21/12

House Leaders Again Hit Pause Button on Farm Bill

Politico reported Tuesday night that House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, fears losing Republican votes on a final fiscal package if leaders throw a full-fledged farm bill into the mix as well. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

6:52AM CST 12/19/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

As potentially harmful as delay could be to the Ag Sector, the dearth of Rural Development Monies is killing a lot of construction-in turn, killing jobs, both for the construction, as well as those generated by Rural Community infrastructure upgrades. In Belmond, we got a new Water Plant and good-sized Medical Facility before those funds started drying up. They DID create a number of jobs, which, in turn moved more revenue to local business. For instance if you're a small town supermarket, your orders go up, which pushes up other town's economies-see how it all works. Except, at this moment it's NOT working, and we have consumer prices rising, like the milk mentioned in the article, with more people with reduced employment or unemployed. As Mr Preston eloquently said, "Nothing from nothing leaves nothing..."

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:56AM CST 12/19/12

Cantor / Boehner need to "lead,follow OR get the hell out of the way"

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

10:42AM CST 12/19/12

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

The potential doubling of milk prices is viewed as a total disaster by many. RFS is a major factor in the doubling or tripling of corn and soybean prices. Where is the outrage over the government mandated use of ethanol?

Posted by Lon Truly at

8:21AM CST 12/21/12

Tuesday 12/18/12

Senate Goes to Its Own Plan B for Ag Disaster Aid

In the Senate on Tuesday, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., filed an amendment to the Sandy disaster legislation that would extend for one year the livestock disaster assistance, as well as the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, known as NAP. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

8:18PM CST 12/18/12

by Chris Clayton

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

State Officials ask White House to end Fracking Rule

Twostate officialshave asked the White House and other federal officials to call off a proposal to regulate hydraulic fracturing on federal and Indian lands, saying in a letter Monday that the states are better equipped to ensure groundwater safety from the practice that uses high pressure spraying and chemicals to free up natural gas supplies from underground rock formations. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

7:49AM CST 12/18/12

by Todd Neeley

| 0 Comments

| Post a Comment

Thursday 12/13/12

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Time Slipping Away for Farm Bill Deal

Democratic Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota added to the calls of lawmakers pushing for a new farm bill to be completed before Congress adjourns. Yet, a Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee called the idea of attaching the farm bill to a bill resolving the looming tax and budget issues a "Hail Mary." [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

3:15PM CST 12/13/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Perhaps congress is being highly irresponsible by granting a few high rollers annual million dollar insurance subsidies in addition to multimillion investment/profit guarantees. It is truly pathetic the many beginning and smaller farmers being denied opportunities to farm by congress recklessly targeting the greediest and largest with the most insurance benefits.

Posted by Lon Truly at

5:55PM CST 12/13/12

"If you ARE a 'Big Fish' or WANT to be a 'Big Fish', then you must always keep your self surrounded by a steady supply of 'Little Fish', otherwise, you will STARVE."

The "Trickle Down Economy" was a Myth perpetuated by repeating a soundbite. Revenue, like Cream, always rises, and if not readily produced by the efforts of Small, Strong Farms and Businesses, you end with an Economy reminiscent of the current state of the Mississippi River.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

10:04AM CST 12/14/12

What we're likely to see first is the Omnibus Bill passed to "save us from the Fiscal Cliff". notably this has the infamous "Monsanto Rider" on it, that was pulled from the Senate Version of the Farm Bill earlier this year.

For the largest Industrial Farmers, and of course for Biotech Companies, this rider allows deployment of new products without testing being completed by the FDA-just in time for Spring.

Lot's of opportunity for "the right kind of Farms," and an opportunity for the rest of us to observe, that what is sown, may not be exactly what we'll reap.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:49AM CST 12/17/12

Tuesday 12/11/12

Soybean Growers Criticize Target-Price Option

With the clock ticking on this farm bill, the American Soybean Association sent a letter Monday to House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders seeking to attack the need for a target-price program in the commodity title. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

6:16AM CST 12/11/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

I hardly think more options would simpify or reduce administration overhead expenses. Extending the current Food Bill and then falling over the cliff might just be the best solution to the nations oversized government ails. Some of us might just have to quit throwing food into the dumpster.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

7:05AM CST 12/11/12

Then, just as a sidebar, there's dumping two troubled manned fighters representing a $1.5+ Trillion investment over the next ten years, while we're simultaneously deploying Avenger Drones, which DARPA suggests will be the core of our Air Force Technology by 2017. That's a lot of Small Farms and Businesses that could be saved and started-imagine the revenue THAT would generate. China and Russia are creating State of the Art Stealth Fighters for a fraction of what we're spending, perhaps like the Wal-Mart method, we should just buy theirs and retrofit our tech onto them. Again, just a thought.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

9:42AM CST 12/13/12

Sunday 12/09/12

White House Science Advisors Stress Ag Research Investments

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

The country's agricultural research "is not prepared to meet the challenges that U.S. agriculture faces in the 21st century," according to a new report released Friday by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

1:59PM CST 12/09/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Gee...I wonder what Corporate interests are heavily represented here. I checked...St Louis must be proud.

Posted by Ric Ohge at

10:41AM CST 12/10/12

Oboma is not interested in science. He isinterested in what he can do to get control of everything he can. He is now the hero of most dicators in the world, they know they can deal with him. He will not read the report you linked to, he is just not interested in it ,it is to far beneath him. I there is nothingin it to push his socialist agenda he has no time for it. I linked to it and read it. I is a groveling attempt to get more money fo some of the screwy ideas being promoted by a bunch of liberals in univerisities who are way overpaid. Anyone who disagrees with this regime will be deamoized in his next speech and by the liberal press. This getting truly pathetic we are being lead by a potus who thinks he needs to tell us what kind of a light bulb we can use.

Posted by GORDON KEYES at

5:31PM CST 12/10/12

Well Gordon, all your "Rush rants" don't change the fact he won the election while Faux News and hate radio predicted a Romney landslide. Maybe it's time the party of tea start facing reality as well as science, the 1950s are over.

Posted by Jay Mcginnis at

7:06AM CST 12/21/12

Saturday 12/08/12

Huelskamp Has Lost Committee Job Before

One of the biggest stories this week among aggies in Washington was the ouster of Kansas Republican Tim Huelskamp

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

from the House Agriculture Committee. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

11:17AM CST 12/08/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

Do not know the details, but do know that when all on a committee or board, all vote one way or another, most of the time,, democracy is not working.

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

5:51PM CST 12/08/12

Friday 12/07/12

Federal Agencies Trying to Mitigate Low Mississippi Flows

President Obama raised the issue of the Mississippi River flows with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at a cabinet meeting Wednesday and also asked Vilsack about the drought overall. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

8:06AM CST 12/07/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

It takes considerable effort to understand a misguided liberal. If it is climate change, what would any of these idiots do about it? I guess they could setup a hearing to discuss.

Posted by Frank Thomas at

9:37AM CST 12/07/12

I do have questions. If watersheds were free flowing, without man made obstructions, how much H2O would be now flowing down the mighty Mississippi? Also, if all were released now, would there be a reserve for next year? The river we live close to, ceased to flow in the 30's, but is still flowing, with fish in it today.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by Bonnie Dukowitz at

10:54AM CST 12/07/12

Thursday 12/06/12

Farm Groups Push Again for Farm Bill

Leaders from several farm groups on Wednesday met with House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md., to talk about the importance of finishing the farm bill before Congress adjourns. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

5:19AM CST 12/06/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

My father used to say "Lead,Follow or Get the Hell out of the Way". His words are applicable to the current status of the farm bill in the U.S. House of Representatives. Does the House of Representatives have

any leadership?

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

10:16AM CST 12/06/12

The clueless and or corrupt congress ever fixated on re-election has chosen to be oblivious to the economic carnage it is creating with the unfair and inequitable crop insurance schemes. It should be obvious to everyone that targeting the largest and most profitable farm businesses with the largest investment and income guarantees grants these operations with an overwhelmingly competitive edge in a highly competitive business. It should be noted that many of these operations have little or no land costs and that government has no business guaranteeing ever increasing land values with insurance schemes that cover land costs. It should also be obvious that smaller farm operations targeted with no or minimal government benefits have little or no chance of competing in such an economic environment. Considering the stratospheric levels to which land values have escalated it should be obvious to all that extreme government income and investment guarantees are capitalized into land values and that government has no business targeting the wealthiest with multimillion dollar business benefits and billions in insurance subsidies.

Posted by Lon Truly at

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

7:21AM CST 12/07/12

Congress's mindless obsession with targeting the wealthiest farmers with nearly limitless multimillion dollar investment/profit guarantees is one of the most disruptive financial forces to ever hit rural America. Smaller farmers given miniscle government benefits are stamped irrelevant by insane government insurance programs that destroy their ability to compete in any way with the umbrella of overwhelming superior investment/profit guarantees larded on the largest operations and are being rapidly driven from rural America. If smaller farmers are to have any chance of competing in America, government must be stopped from this mindless obsession of awarding the richest with the largest income/investment guaranteeing programs

Posted by Lon Truly at

7:22AM CST 12/07/12

The bottom line is that government beginning farmer insurance or other schemes do not work very well as for all practical purposes the only beginning farmers are the poor sons of the multimillion dollar net worth farmer fathers. And we all know that for all practical purposes, that the poor sons of the poor farmers are never able to out bid the poor sons of the wealthy farmers. So what is the point of the government spending billions subsidizing the poor sons of wealthy farmers expand that families holdings via some stupid government beginning farmer scheme.

Posted by Lon Truly at

7:24AM CST 12/07/12

Tuesday 12/04/12

Farm Policy Caught in a Bad Numbers Game

The farm bill continues to be caught up in the fight over the fiscal cliff, but the way the legislation is being used by everyone reflects the failed priorities in Washington. [Read Full Blog Post]

Posted at

7:41AM CST 12/04/12

by Chris Clayton

| Post a Comment

If no farm bill or extension of the current bill is passed, and we revert to the farm bill of 1949 , what becomes of the money that pays for SNAP and the School Lunch Program today?

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Posted by Brian Hoffman at

3:27PM CST 12/04/12

With friends like Treasury Secretary Geithner and House Majority Leader Cantor,we farmers don't need any enemies.Bi-partisan anti-agriculture at it's best.')

Posted by W Lee Deutsche at

11:20AM CST 12/05/12

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA successor faces fracking fight
Imperial Valley Press - Online

12/31/2012

Departing chief draws praise from health groups, criticisim from manufacturers, GOP.

By Mark Drajem, Of Bloomberg Allentown Morning Call

8:33 a.m. PST, December 30, 2012

— Lisa Jackson's exit as head of the Environmental Protection Agency leaves her successor to combat global warming and set rules for hydraulic fracturing over the objections of businesses and Republican lawmakers.

Jackson on Thursday said she will step down as EPA chief as soon as President Barack Obama begins his second term. During her four years, the 50-year-old chemical engineer issued multibillion dollar rules to cut emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide and other pollutants from power plants, industrial boilers and cement factories. The rules earned praise from health groups, which said Jackson moved to tackle pollution left unaddressed for too long, and criticism from manufacturers and Republicans that they endangered the economic recovery.

"The industries are going to continue the barrage that we've seen," Patti Goldman, a vice president at Earthjustice, a San Francisco-based environmental group, said in an interview. "The concern is having someone who can get through the confirmation process and be as strong" as Jackson in defending the environment. There will be a lot of unfinished business for her successor, she said.

Topping the list are plans to address greenhouse gases from power plants for the first time and to issue findings on the impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. Both issues carry the same political risks Jackson faced throughout her tenure.

Possible candidates to replace Jackson include Bob Perciasepe, the No. 2 official at the agency now; Heather Zichal, the top White House aide for energy and environment; Gina McCarthy, the assistant administrator of EPA for air pollution; and Dan Esty, the top environmental regulator in Connecticut and a former Yale University professor.

Except for Zichal, each has worked at the EPA and has experience in managing a large organization. The agency has about 18,000 employees.

Jackson used a combination of technical expertise and political charm to try to ease complaints from Republicans, such as Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA; however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," Inhofe said in a statement Thursday. "She was one of the few at the EPA that was honest with me."

Even people who disagreed with Jackson's policies "came to appreciate the way she handled herself in tough situations," said Jeff Holmstead, a partner at Bracewell & Giuliani in Washington who served as a senior EPA official under former President George W. Bush.

Jackson's diplomacy didn't always work. The Republican-led House voted to strike down the major clean-air rules issued by Jackson. While Senate Democrats successfully defended those regulations, Obama himself scrapped her proposal in

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

2011 to cut smog pollution after the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups appealed to the White House for relief. A federal court struck down her landmark plan to cut pollutants from power plants that are carried by air currents across state lines, and that rule is still in limbo.

Under direction from Congress, Jackson initiated a comprehensive study of the effects on drinking water from hydraulic fracturing, the drilling technique responsible for the jump in natural-gas production in states such as Colorado, Pennsylvania and Texas. As the study continues, the agency also faces legal pressure from states and environmentalists to regulate the methane emissions from fracking, a step it had dodged.

"The top issue on everyone's radar right now is fracking," Don Elliott, a former EPA official who is a lawyer and professor at Yale Law School, said in an interview. "How EPA weighs in on it is very important."

On the one hand, the glut of natural gas has allowed power plants to shift away from dirtier coal-fueled production; on the other, local activists and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club complain that gas production is fouling the water, triggering earthquakes, and even causing global warming from the methane emissions that escape during production and transport.

EPA's study on the impact of fracking on drinking water is scheduled for release in 2014. Analysts say it could lead Congress to rewrite federal rules for the oversight of the practice or the agency to issue further regulations. Fracking is now primarily overseen by state regulators.

At the outset of her tenure, Jackson worked with then-White House adviser Carol Browner to push for legislation to cap and trade carbon-dioxide emissions. That measure, which faced near-unanimous Republican opposition, never made it to the floor of the Senate for a vote, a failure that some environmental advocates pin on the administration.

Now many environmentalists are looking to the EPA to accomplish what lawmakers could not.

The combination of cheap natural gas, auto efficiency standards and regulations on power plants can accomplish the same greenhouse-gas reductions by 2020 envisioned by the failed cap-and-trade measure, according to Dallas Burtraw, a fellow at Resources for the Future.

The EPA is scheduled to release the final version of rules on greenhouse gases from new power plants in the coming months, and, if its initial proposal is maintained, it would effectively preclude the construction of new coal-fired power plants. The EPA is also under a legal requirement to issue those rules for existing plants, a step that it has avoided so far.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, which sued the EPA to issue the regulations for greenhouse gases, this month proposed model standards for existing power plants.

Jackson's "successor will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants -- the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled," Frances Beinecke, president of the NRDC, said in a statement.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA successor faces fracking fight
Pasadena Sun - Online

12/31/2012

Departing chief draws praise from health groups, criticisim from manufacturers, GOP.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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Burbank Leader

12/31/2012

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Let study conclude
Gloversville Leader-Herald - Online

12/31/2012

Environmental radicals who are part of President Barack Obama's political base want him to cripple the coal industry. They have had some success in that.

Now they are moving on to the natural gas industry, but with less success. Though their demands for bans on gas drilling that uses hydraulic fracturing have been bowed to in a few places, including part of New York state, they have been unable to achieve much on a nationwide basis.

A study being conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency will, in time, either vindicate the gas industry or provide ammunition for the radicals.

Begun in 2011, the investigation is intended to provide science-based guidance on what, if anything, the government needs to do to regulate hydraulic fracturing. The most radical of environmentalists say the practice should be banned.

But "fracking," as it is known by many, has been in use for decades to fracture rock formations containing gas and oil. During that time, we have heard of no serious instances of water pollution resulting from fracking.

EPA researchers are looking at every aspect of the practice. Recently, the agency released a progress report on its study.

Information from companies that have fracked nearly 25,000 wells is being studied. Data from water wells is being considered. Reports on chemicals used in thousands of fracked wells are being analyzed. That, in essence, was the EPA's progress report.

The full report is not scheduled to be completed until 2014, and no one in government seems to think the process can be accelerated. That is not entirely a bad thing. Hopefully, it indicates the EPA is attempting to conduct a comprehensive, scientifically sound study.

Neither EPA officials nor Obama should allow environmental radicals to sway the study or policy regarding gas and oil drilling. As the EPA itself noted in its progress report, gas will play a key role in the nation's clean energy future. Allowing biases - and that is the correct word - against it to deprive Americans of a source of fuel would be exceedingly unwise.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Fighting climate change in 2013
Financial Chronicle - Online

12/31/2012

The year 2012 saw a number of climate-related events that threatened ma-nkind. One could easily see this venerability in footage of glaciers vanishing, images of the entire surface of the Greenland Ice Shield melting this summer, and maps of Europe's future — where being in southern part of the continent will likely be catastrophic. Several of these events shape policies and outcomes in 2013. In this article, we revisit some significant 2012 milestones that could prove to be of value for energy and climate policy-making in 2013.

In 2009, US president Barack Obama supported cap-and-trade legislation that would have put mandatory caps on the US greenhouse gas emissions. However, this promising legislation was shot down in the Senate. President Obama, after winning the 2012 election, has vowed to work to ensure that our future "isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet." Although the legislator has not shown enthusiasm, it is likely that in 2013, president Obama would rely on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s existing regulatory authority to address climate change and to focus on clean energy initiatives.

In connection with President Obama's, effort there have been a number of climate-related events. For example, 2012 saw the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and other extreme weather events, such as widespread drought in the US mid-west. In this regard, Senator Barbara Boxer, chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, along several other lawmakers is likely to move climate legislations forward in 2013. However, as the Republicans control the House, these climate legislations are unlikely to go through.

One promising trend in 2013 is the growing public awareness about global warming. For example, the proponents of government action on climate change point to results of a survey conducted by Yale and George Mason University. The survey found Americans' belief in the reality of global warming has increased 13 per cent over the past two and a half years, from 57 per cent in January 2010 to 70 per cent in September 2012. With Sandy and other in-news events, 2013 should see this support increase further.

In 2012, the proportion of US residents saying they consider themselves knowledgeable on how energy is produced, delivered and used has increased from 24 per cent to 33 per cent. More are likely to seek added information about reducing their own energy use and as energy issues become more important to them. Thus, one expects to hear less argument about whether the Earth is warming and a more serious policy discussion, by elected officials across levels of government, about how we might mitigate the effects of rising seas, changing ocean acidity, agricultural uncertainty and extreme weather events.

In addition, the US environmental protection agency (EPA) is expected to continue to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Here, some states and environmentalists are also pushing EPA to set emissions guidelines for existing power plants, refineries, and other sources. Also, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont are threatening to sue EPA for failing to address emissions of methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas from hydraulic fracking. These public pressures are likely to lead to positive outcomes in the form of emission standards for carbon dioxide and methane in 2013.

Hydraulic fracturing, also known as "fracking," has been around for more than half a century, but in 2012, it expanded rapidly because of advances in horizontal drilling deep underground. Fracking is a process used in most natural gas wells in the US, where millions of gallons of water, sand and chemicals are pumped underground to break apart the rock and release the methane gas. Despite this proliferation of new wells, 59 per cent of US residents say they are unfamiliar with the term, down from 63 per cent in March, according to the latest findings from the University of Texas at Austin's Energy

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Poll. Among those familiar with hydraulic fracturing, support decreased from 48 per cent to 41 per cent over six months. However, a December poll by Bloomberg reported that 66 per cent of US residents would like greater government oversight of the process, up from 56 per cent in September. In January 2013, Matt Damon's new film Promised Land debuts. The film is expected to give rise to public knowledge and heated debate over this promising technology.

Furthermore, 2013 in expected to bring a wider adoption of renewable technologies. For example, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Americans who say they are likely to buy hybrid or electric vehicles or use smart electric metres within the next five years. Most notably, between September 2011 and September 2012, the percentage of US residents who say they are likely to install solar panels at home increased from 21 per cent to 28 per cent. In addition, wind turbine installation in the US actually outpaced the installation of new natural gas capacity. According to Time magazine, in 2012, new wind capacity in the US reached 6,519 mw by November 30, just edging out gas capacity and more than doubling new coal installations. Meanwhile, new solar capacity in the US reached nearly 2,000 mw, beating out 2011's numbers. Globally, the stock of installed wind and solar power hit 307 gw in 2011, up from 50 gw in 2004, while total investment in the sector hit $280 billion last year. These results are promising and are likely to improve further in 2013.

The UN international panel on climate change is to release its "Working Group I" report on the physical science of global warming as part of its 5th assessment report expected to be completed in 2014. The US national climate assessment advisory committee also is scheduled to release an assessment of current and future climate change impacts on the US. The 2013 report is expected to focus on adaptation and mitigation strategies. Both these reports are likely to shape energy and climate policies in 2013.

According to Time magazine, there is further good news: Both wind and solar are becoming more competitive against fossil fuels. For example, solar modules are 75 per cent cheaper than they were four years ago, while the cost of wind turbines has fallen by 25 per cent over the last three years. The reason for this decrease in cost is not just the government help, but also, technological advances. According to policy experts, there are emerging markets for new electricity generation, especially in untapped markets like Latin America and West Asia. For example, Saudi Arabia, wants more than $100 billion in renewables, while Japan and Germany need renewables to replace worrisome nuclear power. The year 2013 may be better for renewables compared with 2012. However, a lot will depend on how the larger global economy fares. zz

(The writer is on the faculty of Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi, India)

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One universal theme will dominate for all of us - the economy [National, The (United Arab Emirates)]
Equities.com

12/31/2012

Masdar City in Abu Dhabi is designed to be a hub for cleantech companies. In the Arabian Gulf, the traditional reliance on hydrocarbons is yielding to a more sophisticated approach, driven by a regional shortage of natural gas. Karim Sahib / AFP

The global car sector will find it a rough road again this year, although the UAE is likely to buck the trend again in the next 12 months. Hannelore Foerster / Bloomberg News

A Bayt.com consumer confidence index survey shows 49 per cent of UAE residents believe their personal financial situation will improve in 2013. Sammy Dallal / The National

In the retail sector, UAE sales are forecast to grow from an estimated Dh113.87bn in 2011 to Dh151.36bn by 2015. Jaime Puebla / The National

There will only be one recurring theme in the minds of policymakers, governments and private companies in the coming year. The economy. Ali Haider / EPA

The National staff

This year the main theme on the minds of governments, investors, businesses and the public will be the same - the economy, stupid.

We begin on the home front ...

Abu Dhabi's GDP is estimated to grow at an average annual rate of 5.7 per cent between next year and 2016, Mohammed Omar Abdullah, the undersecretary of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, said recently in the capital.

A litmus test for Dubai's recovery will emerge next year and in 2014 in the shape of nearly US$42 billion (Dh154.26bn) in debt repayments coming due. How Dubai tackles this issue will provide the clearest sign yet of whether the emirate is firing on all cylinders again.

Meanwhile, according to Business Monitoring International (BMI), deleveraging will remain a prominent theme well into the year for the UAE, as corporates continue to focus on repairing their balance sheets. This will limit activity in the non-hydrocarbon economy, it said in its outlook for the Emirates.

"Abu Dhabi will outperform Dubai over the coming years given its large-scale investment plans targeting the infrastructure sector and ongoing concerns surrounding Dubai's lingering debt repayment schedule. A further tightening in international sanctions on Iran bodes poorly for Dubai's outlook given its trade linkages with the country."

Among UAE residents, the latest Bayt.com consumer confidence index survey shows 35 per cent believe the cost of living will increase in the coming 12 months and 32 per cent think the cost of property will also go up. A larger number are looking forward to a more positive 2013, however. Some 49 per cent believe their personal financial situation will improve and 47 per cent have similar hopes for the UAE's economy. The majority, 52 per cent, also believe business conditions

will follow suit, while 37 per cent are optimistic about the availability of jobs.

A fifth will consider buying property - and 64 per cent of those say they will buy new. The three most popular consumer purchases for the next six months will be desktop or laptop computers, say 26 per cent of respondents; it was furniture for 23 per cent, while 18 per cent say they will buy LCD or plasma televisions.

... then follow growth to China

In Asia, Société Générale says China, the world's second-biggest economy, will once again set the pace regionally and globally - in GDP growth at least, which is expected to hit 7.4 per cent. But, it warns, as the world economy is unstable, hopes of external demand supporting Chinese economic growth are fading. "Policymakers have taken a cautious approach toward easing, which shows they are serious about change.

"There is a 30 per cent chance of a hard landing and a 10 per cent chance of over stimulation. A bumpy landing is most likely," the French bank says.

"We think Beijing is well aware that the sensible goal is to achieve a relatively less painful deceleration, rather than a re-acceleration of the kind seen in 2009-2010."

While the BMI does not foresee a prolonged rise in geopolitical tensions in parts of the wider Middle East, it warns a rise in conflict between the West and Iran could result in a deterioration in the UAE's sovereign risk profile given the close proximity and trade ties between the two countries.

It's tougher in the euro zone

In the West the euro zone will dominate thinking, and concerns, yet again.

The euro-zone economy will be impacted by deleveraging, Business Insider predicts. The need to lower debt will affect the region's economic recovery and growth is likely to continue to be driven by fiscal policy.

In its Emerging Europe (EE) 2013 Outlook and Sovereign Review, Fitch Ratings expects the single-currency zone to stagnate in the coming year, after contracting 0.5 per cent in 2012. Overall, Fitch expects EE to grow 2.9 per cent in 2013, up from 2.3 per cent this year.

The Commonwealth of Independent States will outperform central and eastern Europe, led by the resource-rich Russian economy, Fitch says.

How to keep Greece within the euro zone will remain the focus of a long-running debate among Europe's regional policymaking bodies. Last month, euro-zone finance ministers and the IMF agreed to lower Greece's debt and disburse €43.7 billion (Dh205.68bn) in much-needed bailout funding promised in a previously agreed rescue package.

Germany's outlook is considerably rosier. The economy will continue to benefit from domestic demand and improvement in the construction sector, according to Société Générale, although real GDP growth will be a somewhat anaemic 0.8 per cent. But given improving sentiment in China and the United States and that fundamentals in the German economy are strong "any contraction in growth is expected to be short-lived", it says.

Italy is expected to continue in recession. Unemployment has risen while disposable income is shrinking, which in turn has caused a decline in consumption.

In the wider European Union, the United Kingdom's real GDP growth is forecast to be 1.1 per cent for the coming year,

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Société Générale says, while inflation will be 2.2 per cent. However, the bank warns euro-zone implosion is the biggest risk to the UK economy. Fiscal tightening is also expected to hamper the UK's recovery. Lower inflation should ease the squeeze on households but consumer spending growth will take time to recover.

The US is all about the cliff

Across the Atlantic, the United States economy should benefit as uncertainty over the fiscal cliff is resolved in 2013 and real GDP growth will hit 1.8 per cent, Business Insider says.

The uncertainty surrounding the fiscal cliff - a combination of tax rises and spending cuts - has hurt business sentiment, which should rebound by the summer. GDP growth should pick up in 2014 and 2015 boosted by housing and business investment.

It'll be a risky year for oil ...

In the energy sector, the BMI points out that crude oil will again play a major role for the Emirates. "With global growth slowing, downside risks to oil prices in 2013 are elevated, which could undermine the UAE's macro-economic recovery."

For the wider region in the year ahead, Gulf Oil Review forecasts Opec output will remain strong but with only a few member countries able to increase production from current levels. Libya has reached its pre-war disruption level of around 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd).

"At best, we expect it to maintain this production level. A slight decline in its output, seen in recent months, may even continue," the report says. Iraq can increase its production from current levels of about 3.2 million bpd but is less likely to reach the official target 3.7 million bpd in 2013.

Non-Opec supply outside the US is expected to perform better next year, although the range of estimates is wide, from 100,000 bpd to 500,000 bpd.

In the global oil sector, the US energy information agency (EIA) forecasts Brent and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil spot prices to average $104 per barrel and $88 per barrel, respectively, in 2013. The projected WTI discount to Brent crude oil, which averaged $23 per barrel in November, will fall to an average of $11 per barrel by the fourth quarter of the coming year, the US Energy Information Administration says. This forecast rests on the assumption that US real GDP grows at 1.8 per cent in 2013, while world-oil-consumption-weighted real GDP grows by 2.4 per cent.

In North America, US oil production is set to easily beat the estimated 6.4 million barrels a day figure for 2012 in the coming year and continue accelerating. It is now estimated to surpass Saudi Arabia by 2022, thanks to oil-rich shale formations and hydraulic fracturing (fracking), the International Energy Agency says.

The key is a pending decision by the administration of Barack Obama, the US president, on the Keystone XL pipeline, a 2,730-kilometre conduit proposed by TransCanada that would have capacity to carry 1.1 million barrels a day from Canada's oil sands to the US Gulf Coast.

... and a bumpy one for cars

The global car sector will find it a rough road again this year, although the UAE is likely to buck the trend again in the next 12 months with 30 per cent of Bayt.com survey respondents saying they will consider buying a vehicle, 49 per cent of whom say they will buy new, significantly more than likely in Europe and the US.

Worldwide, the picture is mixed. Toyota is set to regain the title of world's best-selling car maker from General Motors and

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Volkswagen this year, as the industry posts a record year. Global 2012 sales will top 80 million cars and lorries for the first time, as robust US and Japanese purchases offset a European downturn, according to estimates from LMC Automotive.

However, in October, Moody's Investors Service lowered its growth forecast for global car sales in 2013 amid sluggish demand in Europe and weakening sales in China.

Next year, Moody's now expects light-vehicle demand in western Europe will decline 3 per cent, compared with its prior view for 3 per cent growth, amid weaker markets in southern Europe, especially Italy.

By contrast, in China, it projects light-vehicle demand growth of 8.5 per cent, although that is down from its January forecast for a 10 per cent increase.

Moody's said the outlook for the car sector remains stable for the next 12 months to 18 months.

There's always time to shop

In the retail sector, UAE sales are forecast to grow from an estimated Dh113.87bn in 2011 to Dh151.36bn (by 2015, according to BMI.

Growing urbanisation is a factor in the buoyancy of the sector. Abu Dhabi in particular is highly urbanised, with the Urban Planning Council projecting that Abu Dhabi City's population will rise to 1.3 million in the coming year.

BMI says food sales in the UAE are expected to increase by 36.1 per cent to $10.52bn by 2015. The UAE's mass grocery retail sector is one of the Arabian Gulf region's largest by value, accounting for two-thirds of the total food and drink market. The value of the UAE's MGR sector is forecast to rise to $7.55bn by 2015, when it should account for 73.8 per cent of the overall food and drink market.

Elsewhere, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) forecasts the Asia-Pacific region's retail sales growth volume to grow 6 per cent in 2013, up from 5.8 per cent this year, with an upward trajectory expected for the industry until 2016 when the market is estimated to be worth $11.8 trillion.

Reflecting the global economic slowdown, the growth targets are significantly lower than the 9.6 per cent growth recorded in 2010, according to PwC's 2013 outlook for the retail and consumer products sector in Asia.

However like most industries, Asia-Pacific remains a top destination for global retail chains. But challenges remain, including slowing regional economies, high inflation and interest rates.

"Asia still holds out the best opportunity for growth and profits for retailers, big and small," PwC says "International retailers, however, will find it difficult to implement any large-scale expansions as sluggish markets at home are likely to constrain their investment resources," says Carrie Yu, PwC's retail and consumer leader for China and Asia-Pacific.

The Chinese retail industry is expected to grow 10.5 per cent in 2013 and an average of 10.4 per cent through to 2016. It will overtake the US as the world's biggest retail market in 2016, PwC says.

India aims for growth

In the subcontinent, the Reserve Bank of India has promised a long-awaited interest rate cut between January and March. Rates have been left on hold since April as the central bank has tried to keep soaring inflation levels under control. It is now expected to shift its focus from inflation to supporting growth. Wholesale price inflation eased marginally

to 7.24 per cent in November compared to 7.45 per cent in October. Industry has been calling for a cut, as they argue that lower borrowing costs would boost sentiment and stimulate growth.

India's minister of finance, P Chidambaram, will present the annual budget in February. This will be particularly closely watched because it precedes the general elections, which are due to take place in 2014. The budget includes proposals of revenues and expenditure for the next financial year, which begins on April 1. With a gaping budget deficit and slowing growth in the Indian economy, while India's poor have struggled with rising prices, the whole country will pay close attention to the event.

A green light for energy

In the green energy industry, a comeback from a difficult 2012 is likely. Environmental concerns remain entrenched in Europe and the US. In developing economies such as China, renewables are seen as an integral part of a diversified energy mix. In the Arabian Gulf, the traditional reliance on hydrocarbons is yielding to a more sophisticated approach, driven by a regional shortage of natural gas.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena) says future energy projects provide growth opportunities for many countries. The agency is adding momentum to the recent increase in investment in renewable energy with the roll-out of the first allotment of its $350m funding cycle in conjunction with the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD).

The two institutions, based in the capital, are working together to incentivise innovative renewable energy projects in developing countries. Irena is accepting applications from such projects until January 12 for $50m in ADFD concessional loans in the first of its seven funding cycles.

"This financing from ADFD, administered with the support of Irena, will help projects that are innovative and replicable to get off the ground," says Frank Wouters, Irena's deputy director general.

"By making such projects bankable, we believe we can create substantial growth opportunities for renewables in energy-poor countries."

Irena forecasts that GCC countries can achieve up to $200bn in returns by 2030.

Take the boat to work

In the UAE transport sector, the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) of Dubai is reviewing its marine transport master plan launched in 2006.

A new master plan will be drawn up taking into consideration the changing face of Dubai shoreline.

"In 2006, we had six marine stations, now we have 37. Our idea is to use marine transport as an alternative to road and rail transport apart from making it a tourist attraction. We believe that in the long run marine transport will help reduce traffic jams on roads," the RTA says. More than 14 million commuters use RTA's various marine transport modes every year.

The agency said two new ferry routes - between Al Ghubaiba and the cruise terminal and another between Dubai Marina and Burj Al Arab via palm Jumeirah - will attract more commuters, and more routes were being planned.

Welcome to Sharjah

Visitors and consumers are set to continue the UAE's booming hospitality sector this year.

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From this year the UAE's tourism and shopping sector has been projected to grow at an impressive 6.5 per cent per year from now until 2021, according to a study by the World Travel and Tourism Council.

That forecast is a boost to the prospects of the UAE's entertainment and shopping destinations, particularly new attractions such as Al Shaab Village in Sharjah. The study reveals the vast majority of tourists' expenditure in the UAE (74.7 per cent) is devoted to leisure activities.

Abdulla Al Dah, the chief executive of Al Zajil Fair Management, is upbeat about the growth projections. "These optimistic forecasts confirm our belief that this is the perfect time to launch [new ventures such as] Al Shaab Village. There was a high turnout of shoppers, families and general leisure tourists in its first phase."

Al Shaab received its first visitors in the summer and the second phase is due to open this year.

And lastly, take off

The region's airlines look likely to have ridden out a period of turbulence well. Middle East aviation is forecast for tremendous growth with expectations that Middle East and North Africa hub capacity will reach just below 200 million by 2018, thus exceeding the combined capacity of Heathrow, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Frankfurt, according to Mena Outlook Aviation. There is no doubt that the Middle East region truly has emerged as a global aviation powerhouse, it says.

Globally for the coming year, the International Air Transport Association (Iata) estimates industry profits rising to $7.5bn, as economic forecasts point to slightly stronger economic growth and lower oil prices. That's a better result than 2012 but with a profit margin of only 1.1 per cent of revenues, it still represents a return on capital far below other industries. The modest improvement is based on a forecast for global GDP of 2.5 per cent growth up from 2.1 per cent in 2012. This will help to fuel passenger traffic expansion of 4.5 per cent and cargo expansion of 2.4 per cent.

Cargo markets, while expanding with strengthening world trade which - is forecast to grow at 5.1 per cent, ahead of the 3.4 per cent growth expected in 2012 - will see yields fall by 1.5 per cent. Passenger yields are expected to remain flat.

Regional divergences will persist next year. North American airlines are expected to continue to improve profitability based on tight capacity management.

Asia-Pacific carriers will see a profitability boost from improved cargo volumes. Europe is expected to be the only region whose airlines will be in the red for 2013, Iata says.

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The new robber barons Enter Stage Right

12/31/2012

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The new robber barons

By Paul Driessen

web posted December 31, 2012

An oil and natural gas boom is underway in the United States, born of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing , or "fracking." It has created tens of thousands of well-paying jobs directly, and hundreds of thousands more in hundreds of businesses that supply and support the industry and its workers.

In North Dakota, the unemployment rate is 2.4 percent, in large part because of a huge increase in natural gas and crude oil production from deep shale rocks that yielded nothing prior to fracking. The new technology is also driving job growth, higher incomes, and increased tax revenues for hard-pressed state and local governments in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Texas and other states .

Meanwhile, 350 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta, other innovators are producing billions of barrels from oil sands that stretch across an area the size of Utah. Shallow deposits are accessible via surface mining, while deeper lodes are tapped using in situ drilling and steam injection. As work is completed in an area, the land is restored to woodlands , grasslands, lakes and marshes, and the process moves on.

As with fracking, the oil sands create tens of thousands of high-paying jobs and generate billions in revenue, benefitting people from Fort McMurray, Calgary and Vancouver to Ottawa and Halifax, and throughout the United States. Construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline would multiply these benefits.

And yet, despite ample evidence that responsible development of these enormous energy resources could power a national economic, manufacturing and employment renaissance, the Obama Administration's environmental ideologies and political debts to radical green groups could delay or stymie progress.

The new robber barons in the Executive Branch and Congress are not content only with taxing job creators and saddling our children and great grandchildren with trillion-dollar IOUs . They are using hard-earned tax money to finance wind, solar, biofuel and other schemes that primarily reward crony capitalist campaign contributors. They're also locking up centuries' of oil , gas, coal and uranium that could generate an economic revival, millions of jobs, and many billions in federal, state and local royalty and tax revenues.

Some say the way these robber barons use, abuse and ignore laws to advance this agenda reminds them of the infamous James Gang , which plundered banks and trains until Northfield, Minnesota citizens ended their lawless ways. Others say a better example is the Chicago-based Al Capone mob.

Still others point to the Capitol Hill "fiscal cliff" negotiations, as providing clues as to what lies ahead. President Obama says he favors a "balanced" approach to avoid fiscal calamity, but insists on raising taxes on high-income citizens – and

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will not discuss reining in entitlement expenditures that are lead life preservers on taxpayers and our economy. His Treasury Secretary tells us, "There are no options."

The President's unique concept of "balance" also defines his "all of the above" energy program. Like Humpty Dumpty , his words mean just what he chooses them to mean – as in all of the above-ground projects, but none of the below-ground resources. Perhaps the real question is, who is to be master ... of our lives, natural resources, nation and pursuit of happiness?

Thus the Administration banned oil development on 1.6 million more acres of federal lands in the West and millions more on the Outer Continental Shelf, while delaying leasing and drilling in still more areas – on top of vast acreage and resources that Congress placed off limits through legislation. The ruling czars and robber barons also imposed ethanol-in -gasoline requirements that turn 40% of the nation's corn crop into fuel, converting an area the size of Missouri from growing food crops to producing fuel that we could get by drilling, and driving up the cost of countless food products.

Their wind and solar programs waste billions of tax dollars on expensive, unreliable electricity projects that blanket habitats and steal our wildlife heritage , in violation of clear environmental laws.

Meanwhile, EPA issued still more hugely expensive rules that effectively ban the use of coal in electricity generation – sending coal's contribution from 45% a few years ago to 35% today , and killing thousands of mining and utility jobs. Its latest rules demand that the transportation sector slash its soot emissions another 20% – ostensibly to reduce asthma, other illnesses and "thousands" of premature deaths .

In reality, the only health or environmental benefits exist in EPA computer models, press releases and cover-ups of illegal experiments on humans, whose response to being subjected to "dangerous" levels of soot actually disproved EPA's claim that tougher standards are needed. EPA has also ignored the significant health risks caused by its regulations , especially for now unemployed older workers.

In the midst of all this, at the just concluded United Nations climate change negotiations in Doha, Qatar, Obama Administration representatives entertained brazen proposals to require developed countries to compensate less developed countries for "climate change damages" – under a wealth redistribution scheme that could potentially cost United States taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars. Also in the works are EPA rules, laws and treaty agreements to force the US to curb fossil fuel use and CO_2 emissions .

Inconvenient facts about these decisions were simply ignored – or treated much the same way as Steven Spielberg handled his powerful and entertaining Lincoln movie . It was released after the 2012 elections, many believe, so that minority and other voters would learn too late that it was our sixteenth president and other Republicans who championed the end of slavery – and northern and southern Democrats who fought to prevent passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, outlawing the heinous practice.

The robber barons say whatever is expedient – and then pursue policies that undermine the overall public welfare, while postponing many costly and politically explosive actions until after elections.

They also ignore and undermine the recent International Energy Agency forecast that, by 2020, the USA could be producing more oil than Saudi Arabia , currently the largest oil producer on the globe, thanks to advances in seismic, fracking, deepwater drilling and other technologies. A March 2012 Citi Global Problems and Solutions report painted a clear picture of the benefits that domestic energy development could bring – if government "public servants" and environmental "public interest" groups would permit it.

Cumulatively, the new production, reduced consumption and numerous activities associated with these technologies "could increase real GDP by an additional 2% to 3%, creating from 2.7 million to as many as 3.6 million net new jobs by

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2020," the Citi report stated. They could also shrink America's "current account deficit" by 2.4% of GDP (a 60% reduction in the current budget deficit) and cause the dollar to appreciate in real terms by +1.6 to +5.4% – all by 2020.

In the next few decades, Citi concluded, the energy sector "could drive an extraordinary and timely revitalization and reindustrialization of the U.S. economy, creating jobs and bringing prosperity to millions of Americans, just as the national economy struggles to recover from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression." It would also "improve national energy security and reverse perennial current account deficits" for decades to come.

However, as the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research has made clear, these enormous benefits "are at risk if new restrictions are imposed on the industry, from delays in approval of liquid natural gas exports, to opposition to expanding ports for coal and gas export, to opposition to pipelines and refineries, and to the threat of redundant federal regulations on the technology of hydraulic fracturing." Worse, foregoing these enormous benefits would bring little or no improvement to the environment or human welfare.

Abundant, reliable, affordable energy is the backbone of the US and global economy. Perhaps one day renewable energy will become a viable alternative to the hydrocarbons that sustain jobs and energize virtually everything we make, ship, eat and do. Until then, America and the world need to promote regulatory sanity and increased production of our enormous base of coal, oil and natural gas resources.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow and author of Eco-Imperialism: Green power - Black death.

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Don't throw out the wells, throw out the conclusions
Casper Star-Tribune - Online

12/31/2012

Don't throw out the wells, throw out the conclusions

2012-12-31T00:00:00Z 2012-12-30T17:38:07Z Don't throw out the wells, throw out the conclusions

trib.com

Excuse the phrase: Encana has muddied the waters in Pavillion.

You may remember that Encana is the energy company accused of contaminating groundwater in the Pavillion area as it used hydraulic fracturing to extract oil and gas. A preliminary report by the Environmental Protection Agency linked petroleum hydrocarbons found in the fracking process in water, and blamed the industry.

Yet shortly after the initial release, Encana and scientists from various backgrounds poked holes in the report, criticizing the agency for shoddy, sloppy science that could have skewed the results.

Since those findings and the subsequent understandable attacks on the report, groups have been warring about the findings and what they meant.

One thing is for certain: The current EPA report that is still out for public comment will never be credible. That is because energy companies will always be able to assail the terrible science of the report.

That's why we've said a new study with better science has to be conducted in order to ascertain data that can withstand the scrutiny of science. Until we demand new data, there is enough doubt and mistrust to keep the issue at loggerheads.

Earlier this month, though, Encana called on the EPA to abandon all of its water wells. It argued the wells should be removed because they were drilled too deep. Drilling too deeply would tap water, just not groundwater. Encana claims that any water taken from those wells will never be drinking water and therefore can't be considered.

And, if the EPA admits those wells were improperly sampled and drilled too deeply, then it must also discredit its own findings on fracking.

We're not scientists. And, we're not able to assess the validity of Encana's claim. That is better left hydrologists and geologists who can study the validity. We hope that experts from outside Encana and the EPA can weigh in on the important issue. We need outside, independent voices for perspective.

While it remains to be seen whether Encana's request is more than just a political move, the concerns need an answer.

Encana is right in another way: Something needs to be abandoned.

The report that linked the Pavillion area water with fracking had acknowledged scientific problems. It had so many problems that we couldn't find many who comment because the report itself raised too many questions. By the EPA's admittance, it left a few big, key important holes.

With the charged politics surrounding Pavillion, it's time for the EPA to admit: It made a mistake. No amount of

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backtracking, public commenting or explanation will justify the conclusions. The results shouldn't fit a preconceived political position the White House seems intent on pushing which is that fracking is a bad, dangerous practice.

The only thing that should be abandoned is the old report. A new report and study should be conducted. Yet, it needs to be done in a way that has the credibility and respect of both the industry, scientists and the EPA itself.

As the EPA battles Encana, or vice versa, we'd point out that there are still residents without clean water. Even worse, they don't have a clear picture of what's causing this, how to fix it, and who is to blame.

Better science will mean better answers.

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UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom
CNBC - Online

12/31/2012

By: Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

NEW YORK, Dec 28 (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. Obama may seek an insider to avoid a difficult confirmation process, with possible candidates including Bob Perciasepe, the EPA deputy administrator and interim chief, and Gina McCarthy, who runs the air quality division.

Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

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Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight.

Mark P. Fitzsimmons, a former lawyer in the Department of Justice's environmental division, and now a partner at Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Wash DC, says there is "a risk of overregulation." Some drilling activity has already slowed sharply this year due to the slump in natural gas prices.

"Regulatory overlays that add to the cost of production will further slow down development" but won't stop it, he said.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

While climate change issues and air pollution may remain larger agency priorities, fracking is moving up the agenda.

"I don't think they would be capable of ignoring something that Matt Damon makes a movie about," said Fitzsimmons.

Damon and John Krasinski star in "Promised Land," a new film that opened on Friday exploring the social impact of fracking. It received mixed reviews from critics, but is being closely watched by an energy industry that fears it could further antagonize public opinion over domestic drilling.

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A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

The debate rages over a diverse range of issues.

While fracking was exempted from the Federal Clean Water Act in 2005, operations that used diesel fuel, which contains a number of toxic chemical compounds, were not exempted.

However, what exactly constitutes "diesel" has been a bone of contention among oil firms and environmental groups.

"The question is how to define "diesel" - broadly or narrowly," says consultant McNally.

"It's a big issue especially for Bakken producers," he said, referring to the region of North Dakota where crude oil output has more than tripled in two years.

The EPA published a draft definition in May, which met with criticism from the industry and some legislators, but it will fall to the new administrator to set a final definition.

Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn from wells after the fracking process, probably in 2014. This is usually trucked offsite and sometimes re-injected elsewhere, although increasingly it is being reprocessed for further use.

And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

"It's not to say that there isn't a federal role, but you can't start to talk about a federal role without acknowledging the very strong state role."

It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA-- charged with safeguarding the nation's water-- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

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2013 Predictions
Swans Commentary

12/30/2012

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December 31, 2012

2013 Predictions

by SWANS

Infamous Predictions™

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-Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

(Swans - December 31, 2012) So what was 2012 about? Increased climate disruptions all over the world; deepening economic crises; increased unemployment; the Afghan fiasco; war without end in the Congo, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Central African Republic, Syria, etc.; wars over water; wars over oil; wars over any kind of natural resources; gun shooting and killing; political changes that change nothing except the rise of fundamentalism of one sort or the other; an Arab Spring that has turned into a blind Sharia Green Frontier; financiers and speculators doing what they best do, obscene short-term profits; rising inequalities and poverty; violence in our streets and schools; more dogmatism; more curtailed civil liberties; more torture; and fear, fear, fear; the iGadgetization that is dumbing down our culture; more CO2 released in the atmosphere; more polluting and dumping of unwanted consumer products in landfills and in the oceans; depleted fisheries; the list could go on and on.

Strange how Homo sapiens function. Our societies are based on the use of energy. By the late 1970s we already knew that oil depletion was in the making. Yet in 1998 the International Energy Agency doctored a report to show that everything was fine. Fossil fuels, particularly oil, were plentiful. That swindle keeps going on in this 2012 year. We are apparently oblivious to reality and find refuge in the litany listed in the above paragraph.

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• The same source confirms that Michelle Obama, on her last trip to Chicago, was seen in a hair-straightening salon.

• Malia Obama, angry with her racist parents, goes to live with the Pueblo Indians.

• Sasha Obama leaves home for Mumbai to be a Hindu goddess in a Bollywood blockbuster.

• A new era of Franco-American friendship dawns and Americans spend a good part of the year in Paris and on

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the CÔte d'Azur telling themselves how wonderful the French are.

• The Cold War heats up once again and President Obama sends Mitt Romney to Moscow to negotiate with the Russians for another new dÉtente and an arms treaty.

• In Mitt's absence, Ann Romney has a mÉnage À trois with Barack and Michelle Obama in the interest, she says, of strengthening America's ties with France and to encourage Americans to study French.

• Upon his return from Moscow, Romney announces that he is a Communist and a Marxist and that he will devote the rest of his life to organizing unorganized workers and moving toward his ideal -- a dictatorship of the proletariat.

• Vladimir Putin defects from Russia and seeks political asylum in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood welcomes him as a long lost Islamic brother.

• Hollywood buys the rights to the Obama/Ann Romney story and makes a movie with an all-Mexican cast of actors playing the leading roles -- in Spanish with English subtitles -- that will win the Oscar for Best Picture of the year.

• Scientists discover a drug that prolongs orgasms, sometimes as long as an hour, and in protest American women refuse to have any sex at all.

• French scientists discover an odorless, tasteless gas that makes Americans allergic to French wine and cheese, setting off a mass flight of Americans from France to Canada.

• Mitt Romney and Vladimir Putin rule Egypt, Ann Romney gives birth to a black child, Michelle Obama joins the Mossad, and Barack Obama finally tells the truth -- that he was really born in France and that he's the illegitimate son of Francois Mitterrand and his mistress, Anne Pingeot.

• Water supply is fully satisfactory. The happy few draw it from Champagne and Bourbon cases. The shrinking middle class drinks it pure from taps or plastic bottles. All the others produce it by themselves, in the form of bitter tears.

• The Greek government enacts a solar energy export tax. "We believe the solar energy Greece receives is an important natural resource that must be used for the benefit of the Greek people," said the minister of finance, "so we are enacting a tax to recover such benefit from the solar energy that is removed from our country." Hardest hit by this new tax are German and other Northern European tourists, who must now have their tans measured by a melanin density optical scanner before leaving Greece, to assess their skin darkening and hence their absorbed dose of solar energy against a standard untanned skin tone for their region. Despite initial fears that the new tax would devastate the Greek tourist industry, it is a success at generating much new revenue, which is applied to Greece's foreign debt. As one Greek tour guide said, "they may have the banks up there where it is cold and grey, but we have the sun."

• Spontaneous smiling being considered one of the most precious resources on Earth, grinning, laughing, calling names, and professional smiling on working hours are downgraded to "recycled or artificial smiling," of little or no use to save the planet.

• Republican senators draft a Shut Your Mouth bill in order to prevent every environmentalist from uttering the statement: "We have been saying for years it would happen, haven't we?"

• The Chinese Communist Party is buying the entire Swiss banking industry for $1.7 trillion, the value of its holdings in US securities. The Chinese government's purpose is to bolster its citizens' confidence in itself, as explained by the minister of finance. "Now our politburo members can deposit their personal holdings in the Chinese Swiss Bank without fear of being seen as corrupt," he said. The Swiss bankers invest their Chinese gains by buying the entire

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banking industries of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, and San Marino, and continue their business as before.

• Capitalists across the world wake up and forget that their sole job in life is to make (rather: take) money.

• In a case bought (well, brought) by Goldman Sachs, and bolstered by a host of amicus curiae briefs by large banks, the Supreme Court agrees to review the constitutionality of the 13th Amendment to determine if the present prohibition of reducing a person to slavery because of bankruptcy or a refusal to pay debts, such as underwater mortgages, is unconstitutional. "The property rights of investors are central to our society," a spokesman for the pro-slavery suit declares, "and the Court should correct the legal error that permits flagrant personal irresponsibility to deny the rightful return-on-investment those investors anticipated."

• Wall Street remains unoccupied, unaccountable, and unfortunately, unregulated.

• Birds across the world join the socialist revolution and deposit white payloads on the heads of the world's leading shitheads.

• Prince Charles builds his own stone tower by the Thames to facilitate his escape from modernity (on the weekend, anyway).

• Tony Blair's former teddy bear is adopted by David Cameron.

• Silvio Berlusconi finally goes to jail. Don't know if that will be before or after he weds his twenty-something mistress.

• Feeling neglected and betrayed by FranÇois Hollande, the president of France who has renewed a secret relationship with SÉgolÈne Royal, his past concubine and mother of his four children, ValÉrie Trierweiler leaves France for NÉchin, Belgium, and becomes the mistress of GÉrard Depardieu, the famous actor who left his mother country in order to escape confiscatory taxation.

• When the cast and characters for the new Star Wars movie is announced, there is universal glee over the news that the writers are not bringing back the character of Jar Jar Binks.

• Anonymous hacks Facebook and cripples the service for a day. Millions of people panic because they now have time to be productive.

• Apple introduces the iMind, which allows users to do just about anything without thinking. Consumers lose their ability to make educated decisions, sales plummet, and the company collapses. The world returns to being a smarter, more connected place.

• The State of Iowa announces that its 2016 US presidential caucuses will be held on January 2, 2014. Within an hour, the state of New Hampshire declares that the date for its "first in the nation Presidential primary" for 2016 has been set for December 31, 2013.

• Fox News commentator and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee announces his candidacy for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination on January 2, 2013, while at a Texas pre-school, where he also reads from his recently published children's book, My Pet Bushmaster.

• Nike, Ralph Lauren, Apple Computer, and ConAgra simultaneously announce the closing of all of their manufacturing plants in China due to escalating labor costs and environmental restrictions, and the relocation of these facilities to the "tax and regulation freedom zone" in the newly constructed Republic of Corporatania in the middle of the

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Pacific Ocean.

• The Mainway Realty Company begins sales of homes in its new soon-to-be-beachfront development, Prudhoe Bay Shores, on Alaska's North Slope. Savvy investors swoop in to scoop up these half-million to two million dollar properties along what is anticipated to be a vacation destination shoreline in a decade. Each luxury home is accompanied by a large garage for multiple SUVs, and a boathouse and dock for storing and mooring various watercraft. While these properties are some miles inland from the present shoreline of the Arctic Ocean, the president of Mainway Realty is confident of reaping large profits from this venture. "It won't be long before the sea arrives and these property values skyrocket. This is the next Miami Beach," he predicts. The rush of buyers seems to prove him right, and the planting of palm trees along the streets of Prudhoe Bay Shores continues.

• The Shell Oil Company begins its "Powering Our Econosystems" television blitz campaign with commercials highlighting its new polar bear rest stops. These platforms, complete with seal blubber dispensers, are attached to Shell's Arctic Ocean oilrigs and aim at providing respite for swimming polar bears that are unable to find any remaining pack ice.

• The Oklahoma State Senate approves a recently passed Oklahoma House bill declaring that "every sperm is sacred, every sperm is good," which criminalizes all forms of male masturbation as "unnatural under God and country." Not to be outdone, the Kansas State Senate passes a bill declaring "lustful thoughts unrelated to procreation" to be punishable through death by "enhanced waterboarding."

• Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper announces his plans to dismantle the "communistic" Canadian health care system, saying "the era of big Canuck government is over, eh?" In the same speech he proposes a change in the Canadian national anthem from the line "God keep our land glorious and free!" to "God keep tar sands glorious and free!"

• American far-right commentator Glenn Beck, adapting to the radio format but missing his beloved blackboard, begins to spend an entire hour during every show scratching his fingernails over said blackboard while he speaks in tongues. Ratings soar.

• Both the Mattel and McDonald's corporations sue Sweden through the World Trade Organization for infringing on their right to profit from children due to that Scandinavian country's restrictions on advertising to young children. In a joint statement, Ronald McDonald and Barbie declare Stockholm government officials to be "anti-child and anti-fun Viking barbarians."

• NRA headquarters in the "blue states" come under fire from mobs of angry protestors demanding gun control legislation. An NRA spokesman on Fox News declares: "This fits in with what we believe, which is that the American people need their 2nd Amendment rights in order to defend their democratic freedoms." Asked if this meant that the NRA accepted being fired upon -- so far only seven NRA officials have been shot in the sieges -- and did not want police protection, the NRA spokesman said that "on the contrary, we believe that the use of more guns is always the answer to any situation, even when it comes to deciding which group of shooters in a firefight has the greater amount of 2nd Amendment rights."

• Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Italy, in response to continued poor economic figures, announce new austerity measures, which include a new "buskers and beggars tax" and tying retirement age for civil servants to TV ratings for "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo" in the United States.

• The new president of the conservative Heritage Foundation in the United States, former South Carolina senator Jim DeMint, announces an effort to reduce school violence and mass shootings through requiring on-site SWAT teams at schools, barricaded classrooms, gun training for all staff and teachers, as well as children, beginning in first grade, and mandatory courses on gun history/Second Amendment rights. Funding will come from education budget cuts, staffing cuts, the elimination of preschool, lunch, art, music, physical education, and sports programs, and mandatory corporate

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sponsorship of schools, individual children, and textbooks.

• Concerns about the Fiscal Cliff having passed, attention is directed to the Lascivious Ledge, as the Supreme Court review of California's gay marriage ban and the Defense of Marriage Act approaches. The new End Time date is set to coincide with the ruling, should the outcome favor lasciviousness.

• When the Court overturns both, attention is redirected to the Fiscal Cliff that is looming as gays marry in droves and the demand for federal benefits skyrockets. Conservative heterosexuals divorce in protest, leaving the sanctity of marriage a homosexual concept. Attorneys thrive on the divorce boom, and the increased tax rate on alimony fends off the second potential Fiscal Cliff.

• J. Edgar Hoover and Jimmy Hoffa rise out of their graves and announce that they're a romantic couple in favor of same sex marriage.

• The world's oldest person dies, again.

• A nuclear reactor at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania falls into a large sinkhole that opened under it following a recent period of fracking under the surrounding area. Because cooling lines to the reactor were severed as it fell, it is overheating and melting its way deeper into the earth. A spokesman for US Outgas, the fracking company, denies responsibility for the disaster, claiming "it was obviously the result of an earthquake, and had nothing to do with our operations." Seismometers record earth tremors occurring as each of the other forty-six recent sinkholes in Pennsylvania open up; all were over trapped gas deposits.

• Massive leakage from rampant fracking sites in Pennsylvania and Ohio causes Lake Erie to catch fire. This spreads to feeder streams, including the Cuyahoga River in Ohio, renowned for burning back in the 1960s. Republican Ohio governor Ted Strickland declares the fire to be a far-left terrorist act by the notorious Rachel Carson Avengers, as well as teachers and union members.

• Several EPA scientists die after testing water samples from the ongoing study on the effects of hydraulic fracturing. Out of fear of litigation, the agency quietly halts the study, classifies the data, and declares fracking safe.

• Former Pennsylvania senator and 2012 Republican US presidential candidate Rick Santorum declares his candidacy for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination and announces his slogan of "God Loves Fracking, Firearms, and Factory Flatulence."

• The continuing FBI investigation of e-mail on personal computers linked to possible security leaks from the US State Department and the Pentagon leads to the offices of The New York Times, where it is discovered that the editors and op-ed writers are all secretly reading Swans Commentary to guide them in anticipating the public mood, for purposes of control and in crafting their own editorials that copy those Swans insights they think they can get credit for. "It's absurd to think we collude with government to control the public, or that we would be influenced by such an insignificant publication as Swans Commentary," said a spokesman for The Times. In a related development, drones have been seen circling over Boonville, California, headquarters of Swans Commentary.

• In a shocking move, General David Petraeus takes control of the ACLU, vowing to put an end to the unchecked surveillance state and warrantless wiretapping.

• In the aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, the National Rifle Association lobbies for a new government agency, the Department of Home Room Security. To be consistent with their "smaller is better" approach to government, they propose that each school be manned by an unmanned drone.

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• Karl Rove joins George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney in evil oblivion, where they spend their time on the golf course or the shooting range bewailing their unappreciated legacies.

• To counter the Right to Work movement, the AFL-CIO introduces the Right to Outsource law, which actually strengthens workers' rights. Corporations fall hook, line, and sinker for the similarly oxymoronic law. In response, they introduce the Right to Life law that ensures workers' demise, not realizing it will take them down too.

• The International Cycling Union is found guilty of doping in order to sustain its marathon attacks on Lance Armstrong. The 2013 Tour de France is the first scandal-free race in years.

• Flotsam from the 2011 Japan tsunami clogs San Francisco Bay, forcing the cancellation of the 2013 America's Cup yacht race. Oracle CEO and billionaire Larry Ellison is inconsolable, vowing to dedicate the remainder of his life and money cleaning up the environment to ensure that some day, somewhere, he can win at any cost.

• The Israeli government decides to build a 1,200-home compound in Judea and Samaria (aka, Palestine) as a repository for the ashes of Ariel Sharon when he is at long last allowed to die. Each home becomes a mausoleum for all past presidents and prime ministers, and, of course, all future ones for the next 5,000 years. The decision is taken in the names of humanitarian intervention and R2P. Ejected Palestinians are relocated to Gaza or Jordan, or wherever, as long as they personally finance their relocation.

• Palestinians wise up. Instead of launching rockets at Israel, which is a self-defeating endeavor, they invent a launching device that sends millions of rotten eggs to their friendly Semite enemies. Israel, which is already rotten, slowly dissipates due to the stench and smell of these rotten eggs. No one is killed. No one dies. Israelis move to Wisconsin, a state in need of peace-loving citizens. The land is so infested with the stench that only American evangelists will want to move there. Bon dÉbarras.

• Maybe instead of peregrinating to Wisconsin, Israelis decide to colonize Boonville and the Anderson Valley, a most welcome undertaking -- we need all the help we can get -- so long as they leave the rotten eggs behind them in the promise land.

• We may want to move the Wailing Wall to the Boonville Fair Grounds. It will attract a lot of tourists, beer will flow, and hot dogs (kosher, obviously) will be served. We at Swans, being poor like Job, will contribute one dollar to the enterprise. We give as much as we receive.

• Pope Benedictus XVI, the most modern pope in history after John Paul II, becomes an active tweeter as he wants, according to his device, to be cooperatores veritatis ("cooperators of the truth" -- Saint John). The account is hacked by some malicious youth (must be infidels) and pictures doctored with Photoshop show the genteel pope naked in the arms of his graced majordomo and his favorite choirboy.

• Pope Benedictus XVI forgives the pranksters, murmuring "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"; that is, "O Ali, O Ali why have you forsaken me?" Only god knows.

• A fatwa is declared on the editor of Swans for having questioned whether Mohammed was a prophet. A reward of $1,000,000 shall be paid to anyone who kills the apostate. Please send the money to P.O. Box 267, Boonville, California, 95415. Allahu Akbar.

• The end of the world did not come to pass on December 21, 2012, but we can assure you with absolute certainty that it will happen on December 31, 2013, or whenever this sot passes away, whichever day comes first. We need millenarians to entertain the company.

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• Ah Jean Ferrat comme tu me manques, camarade: Que serais-je sans toi ?

• One day, one day, love and poetry will carry the day.

Note

1. The irreverent subset of the Swans collective that brings these Infamous Predictions™ to you features the usual clowns that perform at your local circus on a regular basis, whose cast this year is Michael Barker, Jan Baughman, Peter Byrne, Fabio De Propris, Manuel Garc□a, Jr., Jonah Raskin, Glenn Reed, Harvey Whitney, Jr., and, of course, your fearless Gallic editor, who welcomes readers' flames, whines, and outrage while denying all responsibility for the reckless endeavor. Don't sue him. He is penniless. (back)

Swans' Predictions over the years

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Anonymous hacks Facebook and cripples the service for a day. Millions of people panic because they now have time to be productive.

Apple introduces the iMind, which allows users to do just about anything without thinking. Consumers lose their ability to make educated decisions, sales plummet, and the company collapses. The world returns to being a smarter, more connected place.

The State of Iowa announces that its 2016 US presidential caucuses will be held on January 2, 2014. Within an hour, the state of New Hampshire declares that the date for its "first in the nation Presidential primary" for 2016 has been set for December 31, 2013.

Fox News commentator and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee announces his candidacy for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination on January 2, 2013, while at a Texas pre-school, where he also reads from his recently published children's book, My Pet Bushmaster.

Nike, Ralph Lauren, Apple Computer, and ConAgra simultaneously announce the closing of all of their manufacturing plants in China due to escalating labor costs and environmental restrictions, and the relocation of these facilities to the "tax and regulation freedom zone" in the newly constructed Republic of Corporatania in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

The Mainway Realty Company begins sales of homes in its new soon-to-be-beachfront development, Prudhoe Bay Shores, on Alaska's North Slope. Savvy investors swoop in to scoop up these half-million to two million dollar properties along what is anticipated to be a vacation destination shoreline in a decade. Each luxury home is accompanied by a large garage for multiple SUVs, and a boathouse and dock for storing and mooring various watercraft. While these properties are some miles inland from the present shoreline of the Arctic Ocean, the president of Mainway Realty is confident of reaping large profits from this venture. "It won't be long before the sea arrives and these property values skyrocket. This is the next Miami Beach," he predicts. The rush of buyers seems to prove him right, and the planting of palm trees along the streets of Prudhoe Bay Shores continues.

The Shell Oil Company begins its "Powering Our Econosystems" television blitz campaign with commercials highlighting its new polar bear rest stops. These platforms, complete with seal blubber dispensers, are attached to Shell's Arctic Ocean oilrigs and aim at providing respite for swimming polar bears that are unable to find any remaining pack ice.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

The Oklahoma State Senate approves a recently passed Oklahoma House bill declaring that "every sperm is sacred, every sperm is good," which criminalizes all forms of male masturbation as "unnatural under God and country." Not to be outdone, the Kansas State Senate passes a bill declaring "lustful thoughts unrelated to procreation" to be punishable through death by "enhanced waterboarding."

Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper announces his plans to dismantle the "communistic" Canadian health care system, saying "the era of big Canuck government is over, eh?" In the same speech he proposes a change in the Canadian national anthem from the line "God keep our land glorious and free!" to "God keep tar sands glorious and free!"

American far-right commentator Glenn Beck, adapting to the radio format but missing his beloved blackboard, begins to spend an entire hour during every show scratching his fingernails over said blackboard while he speaks in tongues. Ratings soar.

Both the Mattel and McDonald's corporations sue Sweden through the World Trade Organization for infringing on their right to profit from children due to that Scandinavian country's restrictions on advertising to young children. In a joint statement, Ronald McDonald and Barbie declare Stockholm government officials to be "anti-child and anti-fun Viking barbarians."

NRA headquarters in the "blue states" come under fire from mobs of angry protestors demanding gun control legislation. An NRA spokesman on Fox News declares: "This fits in with what we believe, which is that the American people need their 2nd Amendment rights in order to defend their democratic freedoms." Asked if this meant that the NRA accepted being fired upon -- so far only seven NRA officials have been shot in the sieges -- and did not want police protection, the NRA spokesman said that "on the contrary, we believe that the use of more guns is always the answer to any situation, even when it comes to deciding which group of shooters in a firefight has the greater amount of 2nd Amendment rights."

Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Italy, in response to continued poor economic figures, announce new austerity measures, which include a new "buskers and beggars tax" and tying retirement age for civil servants to TV ratings for "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo" in the United States.

The new president of the conservative Heritage Foundation in the United States, former South Carolina senator Jim DeMint, announces an effort to reduce school violence and mass shootings through requiring on-site SWAT teams at schools, barricaded classrooms, gun training for all staff and teachers, as well as children, beginning in first grade, and mandatory courses on gun history/Second Amendment rights. Funding will come from education budget cuts, staffing cuts, the elimination of preschool, lunch, art, music, physical education, and sports programs, and mandatory corporate sponsorship of schools, individual children, and textbooks.

Concerns about the Fiscal Cliff having passed, attention is directed to the Lascivious Ledge, as the Supreme Court review of California's gay marriage ban and the Defense of Marriage Act approaches. The new End Time date is set to coincide with the ruling, should the outcome favor lasciviousness.

When the Court overturns both, attention is redirected to the Fiscal Cliff that is looming as gays marry in droves and the demand for federal benefits skyrockets. Conservative heterosexuals divorce in protest, leaving the sanctity of marriage a homosexual concept. Attorneys thrive on the divorce boom, and the increased tax rate on alimony fends off the second potential Fiscal Cliff.

J. Edgar Hoover and Jimmy Hoffa rise out of their graves and announce that they're a romantic couple in favor of same sex marriage.

The world's oldest person dies, again.

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A nuclear reactor at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania falls into a large sinkhole that opened under it following a recent period of fracking under the surrounding area. Because cooling lines to the reactor were severed as it fell, it is overheating and melting its way deeper into the earth. A spokesman for US Outgas, the fracking company, denies responsibility for the disaster, claiming "it was obviously the result of an earthquake, and had nothing to do with our operations." Seismometers record earth tremors occurring as each of the other forty-six recent sinkholes in Pennsylvania open up; all were over trapped gas deposits.

Massive leakage from rampant fracking sites in Pennsylvania and Ohio causes Lake Erie to catch fire. This spreads to feeder streams, including the Cuyahoga River in Ohio, renowned for burning back in the 1960s. Republican Ohio governor Ted Strickland declares the fire to be a far-left terrorist act by the notorious Rachel Carson Avengers, as well as teachers and union members.

Several EPA scientists die after testing water samples from the ongoing study on the effects of hydraulic fracturing. Out of fear of litigation, the agency quietly halts the study, classifies the data, and declares fracking safe.

Former Pennsylvania senator and 2012 Republican US presidential candidate Rick Santorum declares his candidacy for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination and announces his slogan of "God Loves Fracking, Firearms, and Factory Flatulence."

The continuing FBI investigation of e-mail on personal computers linked to possible security leaks from the US State Department and the Pentagon leads to the offices of The New York Times, where it is discovered that the editors and op-ed writers are all secretly reading Swans Commentary to guide them in anticipating the public mood, for purposes of control and in crafting their own editorials that copy those Swans insights they think they can get credit for. "It's absurd to think we collude with government to control the public, or that we would be influenced by such an insignificant publication as Swans Commentary," said a spokesman for The Times. In a related development, drones have been seen circling over Boonville, California, headquarters of Swans Commentary.

In a shocking move, General David Petraeus takes control of the ACLU, vowing to put an end to the unchecked surveillance state and warrantless wiretapping.

In the aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, the National Rifle Association lobbies for a new government agency, the Department of Home Room Security. To be consistent with their "smaller is better" approach to government, they propose that each school be manned by an unmanned drone.

Karl Rove joins George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney in evil oblivion, where they spend their time on the golf course or the shooting range bewailing their unappreciated legacies.

To counter the Right to Work movement, the AFL-CIO introduces the Right to Outsource law, which actually strengthens workers' rights. Corporations fall hook, line, and sinker for the similarly oxymoronic law. In response, they introduce the Right to Life law that ensures workers' demise, not realizing it will take them down too.

The International Cycling Union is found guilty of doping in order to sustain its marathon attacks on Lance Armstrong. The 2013 Tour de France is the first scandal-free race in years.

Flotsam from the 2011 Japan tsunami clogs San Francisco Bay, forcing the cancellation of the 2013 America's Cup yacht race. Oracle CEO and billionaire Larry Ellison is inconsolable, vowing to dedicate the remainder of his life and money cleaning up the environment to ensure that some day, somewhere, he can win at any cost.

The Israeli government decides to build a 1,200-home compound in Judea and Samaria (aka, Palestine) as a repository

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for the ashes of Ariel Sharon when he is at long last allowed to die. Each home becomes a mausoleum for all past presidents and prime ministers, and, of course, all future ones for the next 5,000 years. The decision is taken in the names of humanitarian intervention and R2P. Ejected Palestinians are relocated to Gaza or Jordan, or wherever, as long as they personally finance their relocation.

Palestinians wise up. Instead of launching rockets at Israel, which is a self-defeating endeavor, they invent a launching device that sends millions of rotten eggs to their friendly Semite enemies. Israel, which is already rotten, slowly dissipates due to the stench and smell of these rotten eggs. No one is killed. No one dies. Israelis move to Wisconsin, a state in need of peace-loving citizens. The land is so infested with the stench that only American evangelists will want to move there. Bon débarras.

Maybe instead of peregrinating to Wisconsin, Israelis decide to colonize Boonville and the Anderson Valley, a most welcome undertaking -- we need all the help we can get -- so long as they leave the rotten eggs behind them in the promise land.

We may want to move the Wailing Wall to the Boonville Fair Grounds. It will attract a lot of tourists, beer will flow, and hot dogs (kosher, obviously) will be served. We at Swans, being poor like Job, will contribute one dollar to the enterprise. We give as much as we receive.

Pope Benedictus XVI, the most modern pope in history after John Paul II, becomes an active tweeter as he wants, according to his device, to be cooperatores veritatis ("cooperators of the truth" -- Saint John). The account is hacked by some malicious youth (must be infidels) and pictures doctored with Photoshop show the genteel pope naked in the arms of his graced majordomo and his favorite choirboy.

Pope Benedictus XVI forgives the pranksters, murmuring "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"; that is, "O Ali, O Ali why have you forsaken me?" Only god knows.

A fatwa is declared on the editor of Swans for having questioned whether Mohammed was a prophet. A reward of $1,000,000 shall be paid to anyone who kills the apostate. Please send the money to P.O. Box 267, Boonville, California, 95415. Allahu Akbar.

The end of the world did not come to pass on December 21, 2012, but we can assure you with absolute certainty that it will happen on December 31, 2013, or whenever this sot passes away, whichever day comes first. We need millenarians to entertain the company.

Ah Jean Ferrat comme tu me manques, camarade: Que serais-je sans toi ?

Et puis toi, Barbara, ma belle, très belle Barbara, dis moi : il pleut sur Nantes ? Il pleut ? Il pleut ? dis moi.

One day, one day, love and poetry will carry the day.

Note

1. The irreverent subset of the Swans collective that brings these Infamous Predictions to you features the usual clowns that perform at your local circus on a regular basis, whose cast this year is Michael Barker, Jan Baughman, Peter Byrne, Fabio De Propris, Manuel García, Jr., Jonah Raskin, Glenn Reed, Harvey Whitney, Jr., and, of course, your fearless Gallic editor, who welcomes readers' flames, whines, and outrage while denying all responsibility for the reckless endeavor. Don't sue him. He is penniless. (back)

Swans' Predictions over the years

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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Legalese

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Do you wish to share your opinion? We invite your comments. Please include your full name, address and phone number (the city, state/country where you reside is paramount information). When/if we publish your opinion we will only include your name, city, state, and country.

About the Authors

Just a few birds belonging to the bevy... (back)

Internal Resources

This edition's other articles

Check the front page, where all current articles are listed.

Also...

Check our past editions, where the past remains very present.

Swans -- ISSN: 1554-4915

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EPA successor faces fracking fight
Morning Call - Online

12/30/2012

Departing chief draws praise from health groups, criticisim from manufacturers, GOP.

11:33 a.m. EST, December 30, 2012

— Lisa Jackson's exit as head of the Environmental Protection Agency leaves her successor to combat global warming and set rules for hydraulic fracturing over the objections of businesses and Republican lawmakers.

Jackson on Thursday said she will step down as EPA chief as soon as President Barack Obama begins his second term. During her four years, the 50-year-old chemical engineer issued multibillion dollar rules to cut emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide and other pollutants from power plants, industrial boilers and cement factories. The rules earned praise from health groups, which said Jackson moved to tackle pollution left unaddressed for too long, and criticism from manufacturers and Republicans that they endangered the economic recovery.

"The industries are going to continue the barrage that we've seen," Patti Goldman, a vice president at Earthjustice, a San Francisco-based environmental group, said in an interview. "The concern is having someone who can get through the confirmation process and be as strong" as Jackson in defending the environment. There will be a lot of unfinished business for her successor, she said.

Topping the list are plans to address greenhouse gases from power plants for the first time and to issue findings on the impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. Both issues carry the same political risks Jackson faced throughout her tenure.

Possible candidates to replace Jackson include Bob Perciasepe, the No. 2 official at the agency now; Heather Zichal, the top White House aide for energy and environment; Gina McCarthy, the assistant administrator of EPA for air pollution; and Dan Esty, the top environmental regulator in Connecticut and a former Yale University professor.

Except for Zichal, each has worked at the EPA and has experience in managing a large organization. The agency has about 18,000 employees.

Jackson used a combination of technical expertise and political charm to try to ease complaints from Republicans, such as Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA; however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," Inhofe said in a statement Thursday. "She was one of the few at the EPA that was honest with me."

Even people who disagreed with Jackson's policies "came to appreciate the way she handled herself in tough situations," said Jeff Holmstead, a partner at Bracewell & Giuliani in Washington who served as a senior EPA official under former President George W. Bush.

Jackson's diplomacy didn't always work. The Republican-led House voted to strike down the major clean-air rules issued by Jackson. While Senate Democrats successfully defended those regulations, Obama himself scrapped her proposal in 2011 to cut smog pollution after the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups appealed to the White House for relief. A federal court struck down her landmark plan to cut pollutants from power plants that are carried by air currents

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across state lines, and that rule is still in limbo.

Under direction from Congress, Jackson initiated a comprehensive study of the effects on drinking water from hydraulic fracturing, the drilling technique responsible for the jump in natural-gas production in states such as Colorado, Pennsylvania and Texas. As the study continues, the agency also faces legal pressure from states and environmentalists to regulate the methane emissions from fracking, a step it had dodged.

"The top issue on everyone's radar right now is fracking," Don Elliott, a former EPA official who is a lawyer and professor at Yale Law School, said in an interview. "How EPA weighs in on it is very important."

On the one hand, the glut of natural gas has allowed power plants to shift away from dirtier coal-fueled production; on the other, local activists and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club complain that gas production is fouling the water, triggering earthquakes, and even causing global warming from the methane emissions that escape during production and transport.

EPA's study on the impact of fracking on drinking water is scheduled for release in 2014. Analysts say it could lead Congress to rewrite federal rules for the oversight of the practice or the agency to issue further regulations. Fracking is now primarily overseen by state regulators.

At the outset of her tenure, Jackson worked with then-White House adviser Carol Browner to push for legislation to cap and trade carbon-dioxide emissions. That measure, which faced near-unanimous Republican opposition, never made it to the floor of the Senate for a vote, a failure that some environmental advocates pin on the administration.

Now many environmentalists are looking to the EPA to accomplish what lawmakers could not.

The combination of cheap natural gas, auto efficiency standards and regulations on power plants can accomplish the same greenhouse-gas reductions by 2020 envisioned by the failed cap-and-trade measure, according to Dallas Burtraw, a fellow at Resources for the Future.

The EPA is scheduled to release the final version of rules on greenhouse gases from new power plants in the coming months, and, if its initial proposal is maintained, it would effectively preclude the construction of new coal-fired power plants. The EPA is also under a legal requirement to issue those rules for existing plants, a step that it has avoided so far.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, which sued the EPA to issue the regulations for greenhouse gases, this month proposed model standards for existing power plants.

Jackson's "successor will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants -- the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled," Frances Beinecke, president of the NRDC, said in a statement.

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Dickinson Press' Top 10: No. 1: Booming ND Oil Patch
Dickinson Press - Online

12/30/2012

Top 10

Top 10

When does an oil boom become an oil industry? Some would say when the needed infrastructure catches up with record-breaking oil production in western North Dakota.

All year, infrastructure needs like roads, pipelines and housing have dominated headlines right alongside lead stories of the tens of thousands of jobs created and the hundreds of million in tax revenues due to oil activity here.

The governor's proposed $12.8 billion budget for the coming 2013-15 biennium includes $300 million to convert two-lane highways into four-lane ones, starting with U.S. Highway 85 between Watford City and Williston, plus $142 million to help counties and townships repair truck traffic-damaged roads. Under the budget, many new state positions would be added, including more highway patrol troopers, petroleum engineers and inspectors for monitoring drilling and well sites.

In 2012, the term "fracking" overtook "climate change" in Google searches, the word "Bakken" became a hot marketing tool, an LA production company sought oil workers for a planned reality TV show and journalists from both coasts and beyond descended on the area to report on the stories of low unemployment rates and fastest-growing U.S. population here in our midst.

The skyrocketing use of natural gas to produce electricity was projected in the state, even as gas flaring estimates of 30 percent with a loss of $100 million wasted were reported.

New state regulations related to oil production took effect last spring, though not without controversy. Industry groups such as the North Dakota Petroleum Council called many of the changes "costly and onerous," but state officials with the Oil and Gas Division said "tough rules" are necessary to ensure the integrity of wells for the next 30 years.

The new rules include requiring companies to disclose chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing, banning the dumping of liquid wastes into an open pit, except in cases where the oil well is less than 5,000 feet, increasing the bond requirement from $20,000 to $50,000 for oil wells.

A preliminary report on hydraulic fracturing was released late in the year by the EPA; industry analysts said the report shed little light on what the agency will recommend in its final report, due out in 2014.

The purpose of the study is to assess the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources, if any, and to identify the driving factors that may affect the severity and frequency of such impacts; wells in Dunn County and the Killdeer area are among the seven sites included in the congressionally-mandated study.

Editor's Note: This is the last story in The Dickinson Press' top 10 stories of the year. Previously on the list:

2: Western ND roads get dangerous

3: Crew camps grow in popularity

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4: Rocky year for DSU

5: Tragedy in New Town

6: Small western ND cities see economic, housing boom

7: Rents double, triple; housing construction industry taking off

8: Dry conditions lead to months-long burn bans, wildfires

9: Property tax bill shot down, Heitkamp beats Berg in election

10: Controversy with Stark County Sheriff Clarence Tuhy

Tags: top 10, oil, news, dickinson

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Gas will play key role in clean future
Tribune Chronicle - Online

12/30/2012

What's Trending >>

← and → arrow keys on your keyboard to activate these links ?');return false" onmouseout="hideBubbleTip()" class="txtRight"> Take best step from fiscal c...>>

Gas will play key role in clean future

December 30, 2012

Tribune Chronicle | TribToday.com

Environmental radicals who are part of President Barack Obama's political base want him to cripple the coal industry. They have had some success in that.

Now they are moving on to the natural gas industry, but with less success. Though their demands for bans on gas drilling that uses hydraulic fracturing have been bowed to in a few places, including part of New York state, they have been unable to achieve much on a nationwide basis.

A study being conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency will, in time, either vindicate the gas industry or provide ammunition for the radicals.

Begun in 2011, the investigation is intended to provide science-based guidance on what, if anything, the government needs to do to regulate hydraulic fracturing. The most radical of environmentalists say the practice should be banned.

But fracking, as it is known by many, has been in use for decades to fracture rock formations containing gas and oil. During that time, we have heard of no serious instances of water pollution resulting from fracking.

EPA researchers are looking at every aspect of the practice. Last week, the agency released a progress report on its study.

Information from companies that have fracked nearly 25,000 wells is being studied. Data from water wells is being considered. Reports on chemicals used in thousands of fracked wells are being analyzed. That, in essence, was the EPA s progress report.

The full report is not scheduled to be completed until 2014, and no one in government seems to think the process can be accelerated. That is not entirely a bad thing. Hopefully, it indicates the EPA is attempting to conduct a comprehensive, scientifically sound study.

Neither EPA officials nor Obama should allow environmental radicals to sway the study or policy regarding gas and oil drilling. As the EPA itself noted in its progress report, gas will play a key role in the nation's clean energy future. Allowing biases — and that is the correct word — against it to deprive Americans of a plentiful, clean, relatively inexpensive source of fuel would be exceedingly unwise.

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Tribune Chronicle | TribToday.com

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Farm Bill, Weather, Environment Highlight 2012
Lancaster Farming - Online

12/29/2012

As 2012 draws to a close, farmers are still waiting to see if a Farm Bill will pass. The uncertainty closed out a year in which the weather's impact on crops dominated headlines.

It was also a year in which the debate over farming's effect on the environment headed to court in several different cases, including a challenge to the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay watershed plan.

The year began with farmers worrying as perennial crops, fruit trees and vines emerged early after a mild winter. Those fears proved well-founded as late spring frosts damaged many of those crops,

The summer brought drought to much of the country, especially the Corn Belt.

In parts of the Northeast, a heat wave hit as corn was trying to pollinate, lowering yield potential.

Superstorm Sandy hit in the fall, leaving milk processors in New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania scrambling to cope with power outages for several days.

Passage of a 2012 Farm Bill looked promising in the summer after the U.S. Senate passed its version and a similar one was approved by the House Ag Committee. However, hopes dimmed in the face of opposition in the full House and stalled negotiations over avoiding the fiscal cliff.

Pennsylvania, Maryland and West Virginia courts took up several environmental cases. In Maryland, the Waterkeepers Alliance's lawsuit against a poultry producer failed to persuade a federal judge that the farm was responsible for pollution.

In West Virginia, the EPA withdrew a water-pollution order against a chicken farmer, who countered the threat of hefty fines by suing the agency over new rules aimed at cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The fate of the lawsuit was still unclear as the year drew to a close.

In U.S. District Court in Harrisburg, a judge heard arguments from the American Farm Bureau Federation and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, which say the EPA overstepped its regulatory authority with its total maximum daily load, or TMDL, program for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Below are some highlights by the month.

January

The Food and Drug Administration ordered farmers to limit the use of the antibiotic class, cephalosporins, which are given to some cattle, swine, chickens and turkeys before slaughter. The drugs are used to treat pneumonia, skin infections and meningitis, among other diseases, in humans.

Vermont DHIA announces merger plans with Lancaster DHIA.

As state environmental regulators wrapped up their review of shale gas drilling in New York, opponents of hydraulic fracturing took a local approach, enacting zoning and planning laws that ban the practice.

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The debate over allowing piggeries in the city of Haverhill, Mass., continued as the board of health decided to use nearby Tewksbury's regulations as a framework for its own rules governing swine.

February

The proposed closing of 131 Farm Service Agency offices nationwide, including four in New York state, sparked opposition at a public hearing in Saratoga County, N.Y.

Residents and college faculty in northeast Kansas said they were worried health and safety would be threatened if deadly pathogens escaped from a new federal biosecurity research lab proposed for relocation to Kansas State.

Hormel Foods announced it would phase out the use of gestation crates by its pork producers.

McDonald's Corp. announced that it would phase out gestation crates from its pork suppliers.

March

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack informed Congress he plans to approve consolidation of 131 Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices with other USDA service centers, consistent with provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Iowa became the first state to make it a crime to surreptitiously get into a farming operation to record video of animal abuse.

Federal authorities said a New Jersey cheese-maker used tainted milk to make ricotta cheese. Lebanon Cheese Co. of Lebanon, N.J., and its president were charged with a misdemeanor shipping charge.

The debate over "pink slime" or "lean finely textured beef," a low-cost ingredient in ground beef, launched this month after a news story questioned its process and safety. USDA announced schools could elect to select beef products without it.

Beef Products Inc., the maker of "pink slime," suspended operations at three of its four plants where the product is made in reaction to negative press reports.

New Holland Sales Stables contacted authorities regarding 18 head of cattle from Rhode Island that sales staff suspected had been stolen. Ledyard Lewis of North Stonington, Conn., turned himself in connection with the theft, claiming he took the cows because the owner, Arthur Smith, owed him money.

April

The unusually warm weather will mean the early arrival of strawberries this season.

Growers worried as spring weather left farmers short on rain, and fruit growers worried that early warmth could leave their crops vulnerable to frost damage.

Agriculture groups watched progress on the 2012 Farm Bill. Work began in Congress to formulate the five-year agricultural program package.

Organic farmers said they could benefit from GMO labeling on food products as 18 states had proposals or pending voter referendums asking for labeling regulations.

May

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USDA announced that the offspring of the first cow diagnosed with mad cow disease tested clean.

The Senate Ag Committee passed the 2012 Farm Bill. It now heads to the Senate for a full vote.

USDA announced plans to speed up the process for tracking E. coli in meat, a move that will help authorities more quickly find the source of bacteria outbreaks and hasten recalls of tainted food.

BPI, maker of "pink slime," said it was laying off 86 employees from its corporate office in South Dakota, citing what it calls a misinformation campaign about a product that food-industry experts agree is safe.

EPA wrapped up its review of the Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP) for the six states in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

June

The Food and Drug Administration rejected the Corn Refiners Association's bid to rename its sweetening agent "corn sugar."

A USDA survey showed there were fewer honeybee colony losses. About 22 percent of U.S. honeybee colonies were lost last winter, the lowest in the past five years.

Enough signatures were collected in California for a ballot measure to decide whether to require special labels for food made from genetically modified ingredients.

The U.S. Senate passed the 2012 Farm Bill. It heads to the House of Representatives.

July

Midwestern ranchers and lawmakers complained to EPA about the farm flyovers it conducted as part of its pollution surveillance program, and the agency's slow response for more information.

Farmers nationwide planted 96.4 million acres of corn this spring, the most in nearly eight decades, the USDA said.

Ethanol makers cut production, and some temporarily idled plants in the Midwest, as corn prices skyrocketed and demand for gasoline fell because people are driving less.

As drought conditions worsened in the Midwest, farmers considered chopping corn early.

The U.S. House Ag Committee approved the Farm Bill proposal. The package now moves to the House for a vote.

Farm Aid announced its 2013 venue will be in Hershey, Pa.

The region's organic poultry industry received a one-two punch this summer with low feed supplies and high costs.

Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Association announced the cancellation of its 2012 renewable energy festival.

As berry season reached its peak in the Northeast, frustrated farmers fought back against customers who think "PYO" stands for pilfer-your-own.

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August

A jury awarded Monsanto $1 billion in a patent-infringement trial against rival DuPont.

Maine predicted a blueberry crop yield of 90 million to 95 million pounds, the largest since 2000, when production reached a record 110 million pounds.

Empire Farm Days drew more than 70,000 to Seneca Falls, N.Y.

Despite an early spring followed by a frost, many Northeast apple growers were optimistic about their crops.

Several fairs have had swine flu outbreaks, causing for the cancellation or early release of swine exhibits at several state and county fairs.

September

Ohio State Extension specialists announced that palmer amaranth, a glyphosate-resistant weed has been discovered in Ohio.

It was a "feast or famine" harvest for apple crops this year, depending on the location of the farm.

Two Columbia County, Pa. boys were overcome by manure gas while riding their bicycles on the road next to a manure pit.

Pennsylvania's USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service warned farmers to take extra precaution when agitating manure storage pits, especially if using gypsum for cow bedding.

Ag groups headed to Washington to rally for the passage of 2012 Farm Bill.

Congressional legislators headed home in September without a Farm Bill.

A Vermont horse tested positive for eastern equine encephalomyelitis.

Alpina Foods opened a yogurt plant in Batavia, N.Y.

The drought could have lingering effects on the 2013 corn crop. Some corn hybrid varieties could be in short supply due to reduced corn seed yields.

BPI sued ABC News for defamation in connection with its "pink slime" coverage, calling it "false and misleading."

October

Despite the pushback to the changes to the federal school lunch program guidelines, school milk sales remained strong.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said milk prices in stores could double if the Farm Bill is not passed.

Pennfield Corp. announced that it has entered into an asset purchase agreement with Carlisle Advisors LLC though its subsidiary company Wellsource Nutrition LLC. Pennfield filed voluntary petitions under chapter 11 with U.S. Bankruptcy Court in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Green Mountain College found itself in the middle of a controversy over its decision to slaughter a popular pair of oxen on the college farm and use the meat for campus dining services.

Vermont's Killington ski resort said it will power one of its lifts with electricity generated by a methane digester as part of Green Mountain Power's Cow Power program.

November

Dairy cooperatives and dairy plants had to adapt production plans to process milk as processing plants were knocked offline with power outages from Hurricane Sandy.

With the general election over, farmers and agricultural organizations began the push for Farm Bill legislation.

California voters defeated a proposition to require GMO labeling on food products.

New Jersey neared a historical low for total cranberry farmland at 3,000 acres.

The Mullinix family of Dayton, Md., asked to have 490 acres of its farmland pulled out of the state's farmland preservation program.

Farmers begin the recovery process from Hurricane Sandy, which struck the Mid-Atlantic and New England region.

EPA turned down requests from several state governors for an ethanol production mandate waiver.

December

Dairy heifer triplets were born on the farm of Shawn and Mary-Ann O'Rourke in Barto, Pa. A dairy cow has a 1 in 8 million chance for delivering healthy heifer triplets.

Farmland sales were brisk in the Farm Belt as farmers worried about estate and capital gains tax increases opted to sell.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack told Farm Belt leaders that rural America is becoming "less relevant" and they need to be more strategic in picking their political fights.

New Holland Sales Stables received a $75,000 GIPSA penalty after an 18-month livestock sales fraud investigation .

As the year comes to a close, farmers expressed worry about the "dairy financial cliff" with the threat of reverting to 1949 Farm Bill policy.

U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota said it appears unlikely that the Farm Bill will pass in this session of Congress.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Top 10 stories of 2012 in Wyoming
Casper Star-Tribune - Online

12/29/2012

2012

Top 10 stories of 2012 in Wyoming

2012-12-29T12:00:00Z 2012-12-28T20:28:54Z Top 10 stories of 2012 in Wyoming

By the Star-Tribune staff

trib.com

2012 -- what a year. Both nationally and locally, it was a big year for news. Wyoming had its share of politics, disasters and sensational news. Here is a look at the Top 10 stories as voted on by employees of the Casper Star-Tribune.

Incident at Casper College

On Nov. 30, Casper College computer science professor Jim Krumm was preparing for his Friday morning class when his son walked into the classroom. Chris Krumm had already driven nearly 2,000 miles from Vernon, Conn., and typed out his letter for those who would inevitably find it while searching for evidence.

He shot his father in the head with a bow and arrow before driving a knife into Jim's chest and eventually his own body. Two minutes after the first emergency call was received from the college, there was a report of a stabbing on Hawthorne Avenue. Chris murdered Heidi Arnold just outside her home before his attack on Jim. Arnold was his father's girlfriend and a math instructor at Casper College.

Chris left a rambling manifesto, "Tired of Having Asperger Syndrome; America Should Look to China" in which he blamed his father for giving his Asperger's. Casper Police said Chris Krumm's claim of having Asperger's was self-diagnosed, and they hoped families and friends recognize warning signs of troubled individuals and perhaps prevent future tragedies.

Casper Mountain Fire

Strong winds and historically dry conditions created the perfect storm for Casper Mountain's 2012 fire. It was dubbed the Sheepherder Hill Fire after its point of origin just south of Beartrap Meadow. The blaze was the most massive in recent history, eventually burning more than 15,500 acres and 37 cabins and homes. The last Casper Mountain fire that approached this magnitude was 2006's Jackson Canyon Fire that burned nearly 12,000 acres.

The fire began about 4 p.m. Sept. 9, and a week later, it was almost entirely contained. To date, the cause remains unknown, but investigators have ruled out natural events. Human activity such as ATV exhaust, a discarded cigarette or intentional lighting are the most likely sources. At least one family has begun rebuilding on their charred property and more are expected to start this spring.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Dave Christensen's outburst

In addition to a handshake, Wyoming football coach Dave Christensen gave his Air Force counterpart a profanity-laden tongue-lashing that became a dubious internet sensation. Christensen accused the Falcons of cheating by faking an injury during the game. Air Force won the Oct. 13 game 28-27.

UW, not the Mountain West, levied the penalties on Christensen -- a $50,000 fine and a one-game suspension. The Cowboys, who entered the season with bowl hopes, finished the season with a 4-8 record.

Pavillion in the spotlight

Everyone seem to take a breath in the tussle over water testing in the Pavillion area in 2012. In January, the Environmental Protection Agency extended comment on its draft report that tentatively linked groundwater contamination in the area to the oil and gas industry practice of hydraulic fracturing.

The EPA later agreed to more tests conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey, tests the EPA said showed results generally consistent with its own results. The industry disputed that claim. The fight is far from over. Earlier this month, Encana, which owns the wells in the area, called on the EPA to abandon them, claiming the water from the monitoring wells was too deep and different than the water in residential wells.

Colton Sasser returns

On April 15 in Kunar province Afghanistan, a 200-pound bomb exploded under the armored truck driven by Army Spc. Colton Sasser, 21, of Casper. The impact flipped the truck in the air and killed Staff Sgt. David Nowacyzk who was riding shotgun next to Sasser.

Sasser was in a coma for 15 days and suffered 23 serious injuries, including traumatic brain injury, a pulverized back bone, an amputated left leg and others. After seven months of painful recovery and physical therapy, Sasser returned to Casper for the first time in November to spend Thanksgiving with his family. Hundreds of people met him at the airport and lined the streets waiving flags as banners as a caravan of more than 24 vehicles escorted him home. All of Centennial Junior High walked to his house to greet him.

Casper passes smoking ban

After months of contentious debate, the Casper City Council passed a public smoking ban in June. It survived a referendum effort, unlike its earlier counterpart that was passed and overturned in 2000.

Discussion pitted claims of business rights to self-regulation against individual rights to a safe and healthy environment. The referendum petition drive was 412 signatures short, and the ordinance took effect in September.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Wheatland tornado

A quarter-mile-wide tornado tore through farmland south of Wheatland on June 7. The 130-mph twister destroyed four structures and damaged 10 others. The only reported injury was to 69-year-old Air Force veteran Al Love. He hid in his bedroom while the tornado leveled much of his home.

"If I had waited to process it based on what I saw...it would have been too late," he told the Star-Tribune on June. 8.

Voters decline library proposal

In a contest even tighter than its 2008 counterpart, voters said "no" this Election Day to the proposed 1-cent special purpose sales tax that would have funded a new public library facility in downtown Casper.

Fewer than 600 votes decided the fate of the measure, which had been downsized considerably from a similar new-library proposal up for vote four years ago. Meanwhile, library officials say the strains on Casper's current facility are not going away anytime soon.

Carbon Sink fiasco

University of Wyoming officials quietly removed an on-campus sculpture called "Carbon Sink: What Goes Around Comes Around" in May, after its 2011 installation spark an uproar from state legislators, donors and energy industry representatives who viewed the wood-and-coal piece as anti-coal.

Emails obtained by media in Wyoming showed university officials dealing with the outrage and arranging to take the sculpture down early due to the controversy, although UW President Tom Buchanan later said there was "nothing nefarious" about the piece's removal and he wasn't pressured into doing so.

Cindy Hill vs. lawmakers

A year of fighting between Superintendent of Public Instruction Cindy Hill and legislators culminated with a report by legislative liaisons that blasted the Wyoming Department of Education for misunderstanding or ignoring the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act.

The report demonstrated serious concerns from legislative auditors about the department itself. The Select Committee on Statewide Education Accountability passed measures to gain more control of education, including a move to strip the superintendent of voting power on the state's board of education.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Cindy Hill said “the good ol’ boys are at work" to make the superintendent position appointed.

Recommendations

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom

Reuters - Online
New York, NY
Jonathan Leff
12/29/2012

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. Obama may seek an insider to avoid a difficult confirmation process, with possible candidates including Bob Perciasepe, the EPA deputy administrator and interim chief, and Gina McCarthy, who runs the air quality division.

Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight.

Mark P. Fitzsimmons, a former lawyer in the Department of Justice's environmental division, and now a partner at Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Wash DC, says there is "a risk of overregulation." Some drilling activity has already slowed sharply this year due to the slump in natural gas prices.

"Regulatory overlays that add to the cost of production will further slow down development" but won't stop it, he said.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

While climate change issues and air pollution may remain larger agency priorities, fracking is moving up the agenda.

"I don't think they would be capable of ignoring something that Matt Damon makes a movie about," said Fitzsimmons.

Damon and John Krasinski star in "Promised Land," a new film that opened on Friday exploring the social impact of fracking. It received mixed reviews from critics, but is being closely watched by an energy industry that fears it could further antagonize public opinion over domestic drilling.

A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

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DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

The debate rages over a diverse range of issues.

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However, what exactly constitutes "diesel" has been a bone of contention among oil firms and environmental groups.

"The question is how to define "diesel" - broadly or narrowly," says consultant McNally.

"It's a big issue especially for Bakken producers," he said, referring to the region of North Dakota where crude oil output has more than tripled in two years.

The EPA published a draft definition in May, which met with criticism from the industry and some legislators, but it will fall to the new administrator to set a final definition.

Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn from wells after the fracking process, probably in 2014. This is usually trucked offsite and sometimes re-injected elsewhere, although increasingly it is being reprocessed for further use.

And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

"It's not to say that there isn't a federal role, but you can't start to talk about a federal role without acknowledging the very strong state role."

(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford and Andrew Hay)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on U.S. fracking boom
Laredo Sun

12/29/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ueslei Marcelino

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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Fracking becoming popular in Hollywood
Grand Forks Herald - Online

12/29/2012

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Fracking becoming popular in Hollywood

Not so long ago, fracking was a technical term little known beyond the energy industry. Now it's coming to Hollywood, as the fierce battle between environmentalists and oil firms is played out in several forthcoming films.

By:

Joshua Schneyer and Edward McAllister, Reuters

NEW YORK — Not so long ago, fracking was a technical term little known beyond the energy industry. Now it's coming to Hollywood, as the fierce battle between environmentalists and oil firms is played out in several forthcoming films.

Hydraulic fracturing, the controversial drilling technique also known as fracking, has lifted U.S. energy output dramatically, despite warnings from critics who fear it pollutes water deep underground.

Any shift in public opinion could impact policy — and huge sums in energy spending — since drilling regulations are under review by the Obama administration and local officials around the country. The high stakes involve a range of issues from U.S. energy independence, to protection of drinking water.

Both sides are using movies to try to win the debate, though actor Matt Damon says viewers should not assume the movie he stars in, "Promised Land," is "a rabid anti-fracking polemic."

In the film, Damon plays a gas company landman — an agent who buys or leases land — intent on drilling beneath a town where some residents are concerned about the perils of fracking. As the landman gets to know the townspeople, he suffers a crisis of conscience.

In an interview in Los Angeles, Damon said he worries that viewers will wrongly assume the film is one-sided and not see it. He declined to offer his personal view on fracking. "That's not the point. The point is that (the film) should start a conversation."

The Northern Irish director Phelim McAleer's documentary, "FrackNation," is an unabashedly pro-drilling mantra set to air next month on AXS TV, the cable network controlled by Dallas Mavericks owner and media mogul Mark Cuban.

McAleer views fracking as "the best thing ever," a potential savior for the U.S. economy, unless the forces he likes to call "Big Enviro" succeed in derailing it.

On the other side of the argument, HBO, the cable pay channel, could air a sequel to "Gasland," a scathing 2010 documentary from director Josh Fox, as early as next year.

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The original film featured scenes of tap water erupting into flames and mobilized environmental groups against fracking, drawing full-throated rebuttals from an oil industry that says the process has never caused water problems.

Fox declined comment for this article.

Amid the showdown, both industry and anti-fracking camps have mounted major campaigns to sway hearts and minds.

"It could become the biggest environmental debate of our time," said Robert McNally, an energy policy expert and former White House adviser under George W. Bush. "Hollywood is taking notice, and the industry will have its work cut out for it to defend fracking."

Nearly four out of ten Americans surveyed by the Pew Research Center early this year said they knew nothing about fracking. Other polls show most Americans familiar with the practice believe fracking offers economic benefits but requires tougher regulation.

This year, for the first time, U.S. online searches for the term "fracking" became more popular than "climate change," Google data showed. Fracking has doubled on Google's popularity index since last year, and while "global warming" still draws more hits, the gap is narrowing.

Drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans, according to Gallup polling data. A Bloomberg National Poll this month showed that 66 percent of Americans want more fracking regulation, up from 56 percent in September.

'Pounding the zone'

Whether "Promised Land" will shift public opinion is uncertain. But films with environmental themes often can, according to Joseph Cappella, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

Past examples include Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" on climate change, and "Erin Brockovich," a dramatization of real events in which actress Julia Roberts played a legal clerk who uncovers water contamination by a California power company.

Ahead of the release of "Promised Land," some within the oil industry are already reading the film's script online.

"Look, I don't want to whistle past the graveyard. This film is going to be a challenge, and we'll just have to see how it does on opening weekend," said Chris Tucker of pro-drilling group Energy In Depth (EID), which is funded by industry. "In terms of popularization of the issue, it will have an effect."

The oil industry wants to avoid another blow like the one it took from Fox's 2010 "Gasland" film. Google search data shows online interest in fracking surged immediately afterwards.

For three years, Tucker has been working with other communications experts, "pounding the zone with facts" to counter what he calls false claims in "Gasland" and to promote drilling.

Films like "Promised Land" will get people curious and send them searching online, said Tucker, where he worries the term 'fracking' gets a bad rap. "People will go home and Google it, and the other side does really well on Google," he said.

EID released its own pro-drilling film, "Truthland," this year, dubbing it "the factual alternative to Gasland."

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Losing PR battle?

In some ways, the film blitz may be behind the times. Fracking has already come to dominate U.S. drilling over the last half-decade: Onshore rigs doing so-called unconventional drilling account for nearly two-thirds of the total.

Tucker and industry officials are regulars at conferences, in newspaper op-ed articles, and on TV to defend drilling.

On the environmentalist side, Fox travels widely to lead anti-fracking rallies, sometimes rousing crowds by playing a banjo, which is also featured in the Gasland soundtrack. He has enlisted help from artists including Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon.

"The lesson of 'Gasland' is that public perception is a very big part of the equation," said Jonathan Wood, a political risk analyst at London-based Control Risks, whose clients include oil companies.

In a report this month, Wood wrote that the industry has "largely failed to appreciate social and political risks, and has repeatedly been caught off guard by the sophistication, speed and influence of anti-fracking activists."

Hydraulic fracturing entails pumping water laced with chemicals and sand at high pressure into shale rock formations to break them up and unleash hydrocarbons.

The minerals are trapped thousands of feet below water tables, but critics worry that fracking fluids or hydrocarbons can still leak into water tables from wells, or above ground. Among their other concerns: fracking-related earthquakes, and growing dependence on fossil fuels.

The United States now rivals Russia as the world's top gas producer, in large part due to fracking, and has stemmed a long decline in oil output, which stands at an 18-year high near 7 million barrels a day.

So far, the Obama administration has cautiously endorsed the new drilling, but the U.S. Department of Interior is working on new fracking rules on public lands starting next year.

Some drillers have faced fracking-related fines for water contamination due to spilled fracking fluid. Last year, after sampling water in rural Pavillion, Wyoming, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented the first-ever U.S. government finding of a potential link between fracking and water contamination.

More broadly, however, the EPA condones fracking on safety grounds. But unlike the growing consensus among climate scientists linking global warming and industrial activity, there is no consensus that fracking poses a danger. Unconventional drilling has surged only over the last half decade.

The EPA will release an in-depth study on fracking's potential impacts on water supplies in 2014.

Tough economic times can widen support for drilling. A national Gallup poll this year showed that more Americans favored prioritizing economic growth over the protection of the environment (49 percent versus 41 percent).

That's a reversal from 2007, when 55 percent favored environmental protection.

Cuban is betting the hot potato issue will draw viewers to "FrackNation" on his cable channel.

"Op-Ed-umentaries like this are supposed to make people think about the topic, which is always a good thing," he said.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

More from around the web

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Any shift in public opinion could impact policy — and huge sums in energy spending — since drilling regulations are under review by the Obama administration and local officials around the country. The high stakes involve a range of issues from U.S. energy independence, to protection of drinking water.

Both sides are using movies to try to win the debate, though actor Matt Damon says viewers should not assume the movie he stars in, "Promised Land," is "a rabid anti-fracking polemic."

In the film, Damon plays a gas company landman — an agent who buys or leases land — intent on drilling beneath a town where some residents are concerned about the perils of fracking. As the landman gets to know the townspeople, he suffers a crisis of conscience.

In an interview in Los Angeles, Damon said he worries that viewers will wrongly assume the film is one-sided and not see it. He declined to offer his personal view on fracking. "That's not the point. The point is that (the film) should start a conversation."

The Northern Irish director Phelim McAleer's documentary, "FrackNation," is an unabashedly pro-drilling mantra set to air next month on AXS TV, the cable network controlled by Dallas Mavericks owner and media mogul Mark Cuban.

McAleer views fracking as "the best thing ever," a potential savior for the U.S. economy, unless the forces he likes to call "Big Enviro" succeed in derailing it.

On the other side of the argument, HBO, the cable pay channel, could air a sequel to "Gasland," a scathing 2010 documentary from director Josh Fox, as early as next year.

The original film featured scenes of tap water erupting into flames and mobilized environmental groups against fracking, drawing full-throated rebuttals from an oil industry that says the process has never caused water problems.

Fox declined comment for this article.

Amid the showdown, both industry and anti-fracking camps have mounted major campaigns to sway hearts and minds.

"It could become the biggest environmental debate of our time," said Robert McNally, an energy policy expert and former White House adviser under George W. Bush. "Hollywood is taking notice, and the industry will have its work cut out for it to defend fracking."

Nearly four out of ten Americans surveyed by the Pew Research Center early this year said they knew nothing about fracking. Other polls show most Americans familiar with the practice believe fracking offers economic benefits but requires tougher regulation.

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This year, for the first time, U.S. online searches for the term "fracking" became more popular than "climate change," Google data showed. Fracking has doubled on Google's popularity index since last year, and while "global warming" still draws more hits, the gap is narrowing.

Drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans, according to Gallup polling data. A Bloomberg National Poll this month showed that 66 percent of Americans want more fracking regulation, up from 56 percent in September.

'Pounding the zone'

Whether "Promised Land" will shift public opinion is uncertain. But films with environmental themes often can, according to Joseph Cappella, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

Past examples include Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" on climate change, and "Erin Brockovich," a dramatization of real events in which actress Julia Roberts played a legal clerk who uncovers water contamination by a California power company.

Ahead of the release of "Promised Land," some within the oil industry are already reading the film's script online.

"Look, I don't want to whistle past the graveyard. This film is going to be a challenge, and we'll just have to see how it does on opening weekend," said Chris Tucker of pro-drilling group Energy In Depth (EID), which is funded by industry. "In terms of popularization of the issue, it will have an effect."

The oil industry wants to avoid another blow like the one it took from Fox's 2010 "Gasland" film. Google search data shows online interest in fracking surged immediately afterwards.

For three years, Tucker has been working with other communications experts, "pounding the zone with facts" to counter what he calls false claims in "Gasland" and to promote drilling.

Films like "Promised Land" will get people curious and send them searching online, said Tucker, where he worries the term 'fracking' gets a bad rap. "People will go home and Google it, and the other side does really well on Google," he said.

EID released its own pro-drilling film, "Truthland," this year, dubbing it "the factual alternative to Gasland."

Losing PR battle?

In some ways, the film blitz may be behind the times. Fracking has already come to dominate U.S. drilling over the last half-decade: Onshore rigs doing so-called unconventional drilling account for nearly two-thirds of the total.

Tucker and industry officials are regulars at conferences, in newspaper op-ed articles, and on TV to defend drilling.

On the environmentalist side, Fox travels widely to lead anti-fracking rallies, sometimes rousing crowds by playing a banjo, which is also featured in the Gasland soundtrack. He has enlisted help from artists including Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon.

"The lesson of 'Gasland' is that public perception is a very big part of the equation," said Jonathan Wood, a political risk analyst at London-based Control Risks, whose clients include oil companies.

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In a report this month, Wood wrote that the industry has "largely failed to appreciate social and political risks, and has repeatedly been caught off guard by the sophistication, speed and influence of anti-fracking activists."

Hydraulic fracturing entails pumping water laced with chemicals and sand at high pressure into shale rock formations to break them up and unleash hydrocarbons.

The minerals are trapped thousands of feet below water tables, but critics worry that fracking fluids or hydrocarbons can still leak into water tables from wells, or above ground. Among their other concerns: fracking-related earthquakes, and growing dependence on fossil fuels.

The United States now rivals Russia as the world's top gas producer, in large part due to fracking, and has stemmed a long decline in oil output, which stands at an 18-year high near 7 million barrels a day.

So far, the Obama administration has cautiously endorsed the new drilling, but the U.S. Department of Interior is working on new fracking rules on public lands starting next year.

Some drillers have faced fracking-related fines for water contamination due to spilled fracking fluid. Last year, after sampling water in rural Pavillion, Wyoming, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented the first-ever U.S. government finding of a potential link between fracking and water contamination.

More broadly, however, the EPA condones fracking on safety grounds. But unlike the growing consensus among climate scientists linking global warming and industrial activity, there is no consensus that fracking poses a danger. Unconventional drilling has surged only over the last half decade.

The EPA will release an in-depth study on fracking's potential impacts on water supplies in 2014.

Tough economic times can widen support for drilling. A national Gallup poll this year showed that more Americans favored prioritizing economic growth over the protection of the environment (49 percent versus 41 percent).

That's a reversal from 2007, when 55 percent favored environmental protection.

Cuban is betting the hot potato issue will draw viewers to "FrackNation" on his cable channel.

"Op-Ed-umentaries like this are supposed to make people think about the topic, which is always a good thing," he said.

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Jackson Quitting EPA Hands Successor Fracking Fight
Bloomberg News - Online
Washington, DC
Mark Drajem
12/29/2012

Lisa Jackson's exit as head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency leaves her successor to combat global warming and set rules for hydraulic fracturing over the objections of businesses and Republican lawmakers.

Jackson yesterday said she will step down as EPA chief as soon as President Barack Obama begins his second term. During her four years, the 50-year-old chemical engineer issued multibillion dollar rules to cut emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide and other pollutants from power plants, industrial boilers and cement factories. The rules earned praise from health groups, which said Jackson moved to tackle pollution left unaddressed for too long, and criticism from manufacturers and Republicans that they endangered the economic recovery.

"The industries are going to continue the barrage that we've seen," Patti Goldman, a vice president at Earthjustice, a San Francisco-based environmental group, said in an interview. "The concern is having someone who can get through the confirmation process and be as strong" as Jackson in defending the environment. There will be a lot of unfinished business for her successor, she said.

Topping the list are plans to address greenhouse gases from power plants for the first time and to issue findings on the impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. Both issues carry the same political risks Jackson faced throughout her tenure.

Possible candidates to replace Jackson include Bob Perciasepe, the No. 2 official at the agency now; Heather Zichal, the top White House aide for energy and environment; Gina McCarthy, the assistant administrator of EPA for air pollution; and Dan Esty, the top environmental regulator in Connecticut and a former Yale University professor.

Except for Zichal, each has worked at the EPA and has experience in managing a large organization. The agency has about 18,000 employees.

Jackson used a combination of technical expertise and political charm to try to ease complaints from Republicans, such as Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA; however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," Inhofe said in a statement yesterday. "She was one of the few at the EPA that was honest with me."

Even people who disagreed with Jackson's policies "came to appreciate the way she handled herself in tough situations," said Jeff Holmstead, a partner at Bracewell & Giuliani LLP in Washington who served as a senior EPA official under former President George W. Bush.

Jackson's diplomacy didn't always work. The Republican-led House of Representatives voted to strike down the major clean- air rules issued by Jackson. While Senate Democrats successfully defended those regulations, Obama himself scrapped her proposal in 2011 to cut smog pollution, after the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups appealed to the White House for relief. A federal court struck down her landmark plan to cut pollutants from power plants that are carried by air currents across state lines, and that rule is still in limbo.

Under direction from Congress, Jackson initiated a comprehensive study of the effects on drinking water from hydraulic fracturing, the drilling technique responsible for the jump in natural-gas production in states such as Colorado,

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Pennsylvania and Texas. As the study continues, the agency also faces legal pressure from states and environmentalists to regulate the methane emissions from fracking, a step it had dodged.

"The top issue on everyone's radar right now is fracking," Don Elliott, a former EPA official who is a lawyer and professor at Yale Law School, said in an interview. "How EPA weighs in on it is very important."

On the one hand, the glut of natural gas has allowed power plants to shift away from dirtier coal-fueled production; on the other, local activists and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club complain that gas production is fouling the water, triggering earthquakes, and even causing global warming from the methane emissions that escape during production and transport.

EPA's study on the impact of fracking on drinking water is scheduled for release in 2014. Analysts say it could lead Congress to rewrite federal rules for the oversight of the practice or the agency to issue further regulations. Fracking is now primarily overseen by state regulators.

At the outset of her tenure, Jackson worked with then-White House adviser Carol Browner to push for legislation to cap and trade carbon-dioxide emissions. That measure, which faced near- unanimous Republican opposition, never made it to the floor of the Senate for a vote, a failure that some environmental advocates pin on the administration.

Now many environmentalists are looking to the EPA to accomplish what lawmakers could not.

The combination of cheap natural gas, auto efficiency standards and regulations on power plants can accomplish the same greenhouse-gas reductions by 2020 envisioned by the failed cap-and-trade measure, according to Dallas Burtraw, a fellow at Resources for the Future.

The EPA is scheduled to release the final version of rules on greenhouse gases from new power plants in the coming months, and, if its initial proposal is maintained, it would effectively preclude the construction of new coal-fired power plants. The EPA is also under a legal requirement to issue those rules for existing plants, a step that it has avoided so far.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, which sued the EPA to issue the regulations for greenhouse gases, this month proposed model standards for existing power plants.

Jackson's "successor will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants -- the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled," Frances Beinecke, president of the NRDC, said in a statement.

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Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

Lisa Jackson plans to step down as head of the Environmental Protection Agency after the president's State of the Union speech next month.

Lisa Jackson plans to step down as head of the Environmental Protection Agency after the president's State of the Union speech next month. Photographer: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

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Obama, EPA should keep fracking study from being swayed
Sentinel - Online, The

12/29/2012

Environmental radicals who are part of President Barack Obama's political base want him to cripple the coal industry. They have had some success in that. Now they are moving on to the natural gas industry, but with less success. Though their demands for bans on gas drilling that uses hydraulic fracturing have been bowed to in a few places, including part of New York state, they have been unable to achieve much on a nationwide basis. A study being conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency will, in time, either vindicate the gas industry or provide ammunition for the radicals. Begun in 2011, the investigation is intended to provide science-based guidance on what, if anything, the government needs to do to regulate hydraulic fracturing. The most radical of environmentalists say the practice should be banned. But 'fracking,' as it is known by many, has been in use for decades to fracture rock formations containing gas and oil. During that time we have heard of no serious instances of water pollution resulting from fracking. EPA researchers are looking at every aspect of the practice. Last week the agency released a progress report on its study. Information from companies that have fracked nearly 25,000 wells is being studied. Data from water wells is being considered. Reports on chemicals used in thousands of fracked wells are being analyzed. That, in essence, was the EPA's progress report. The full report is not scheduled to be completed until 2014, and no one in government seems to think the process can be accelerated. That is not entirely a bad thing. Hopefully, it indicates the EPA is attempting to conduct a comprehensive, scientifically sound study. Neither EPA officials nor Obama should allow environmental radicals to sway the study or policy regarding gas and oil drilling. As the EPA itself noted in its progress report, gas will play a key role in the nation's clean energy future. Allowing biases and that is the correct word against it to deprive Americans of a plentiful, clean, relatively inexpensive source of fuel would be exceedingly unwise.

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2012 in Review - May and June
KXMD-TV - Online

12/29/2012

A primary election and three murder charges were among the headlines in May and June of 2012.

Jim Olson has the story in tonight's look back at the Year in Review.

North Dakota voters were in the mood to say 'no' in the primary election of June 12th. On statewide measures, voters rejected a plan to get rid of property taxes, an effort to add religious liberty language to the constitution, and an effort to maintain the Fighting Sioux nickname and logo. Two days after the vote, the State Board of Higher Education voted to retire the Sioux moniker.

In early May, the Corps of Engineers announced it would resume issuing permits for taking water from Lake Sakakawea - something the Corps had banned the year before.

Mid May brought news that North Dakota had become the second leading producer of oil in the US. April's figures showed oil production leapfrogged Alaska's, leaving only Texas in front of North Dakota for black gold extraction. Some analysts say the state could surpass Texas within five years or so.

One potential roadblock to continued oil production growth is a ban on hydraulic fracturing - the method used to extract nearly all of the oil in the state's Bakken region. In May, Senator John Hoeven pushed EPA officials to back off any plans of limiting fracturing, saying it is a proven safe way to acquire oil in this region.

The booming oil business brought thousands to Williston in May for the city's petroleum conference - a chance to present new ideas and make connections with others in the industry.

Meanwhile, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikira Tribes won the last-needed permit to press on with a planned oil refinery near Makoti. Tribal officials received word of the permit in late June.

In Williston, city officials continued their effort to crack down on makeshift RV parks by banning RVs from residential areas.

A MN already facing one murder charge had three more added in late May. Omar Mohamed Kalmio had already been accused of killing Sabrina Zephier in Minot in 2011, but as of late May, officials charged him with the murders of Jolene Zephier, Dylan Zephier, and Jeremy Longie. All four were killed on January 28th of 2011. Kalmio has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled for trial in early 2012.

An early June storm caused significant damage in some parts of the region - including in the Des Lacs and Granville areas.

Minot's airport became the second-busiest in North Dakota in mid-2012, and officials announced plans for a new terminal to handle the increasing passenger load. Drawings for the new building were revealed in June. The 40 million dollar project should get going next year.

Minot's MAGIC Fund pledged 3 million dollars to help finish the 55th Street bypass and overpass project. The cost of the project had swelled from the already-funded 20 million dollars to more than 22-and-a-half million dollars.

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Speaking of increasing costs, Minot Public Schools officials announced in May that total damage to schools from the 2011 flood had surpassed 75 million dollars. The news came as work on new buildings for the district was well underway.

The number of families calling FEMA temporary housing units - what we all known as FEMA trailers - fell below the 14-hundred level in June. FEMA officials were consulting with residents trying to get them new housing arrangements with the 18-month deadline for government-supplied housing now only six months away.

A study by local officials found a huge number of homes in the flood zone had not had any cleanup work done to them one full year after the 2011 flood. (BITE) Officials sent letters to owners of the 281 untouched homes and said if no work were done, foreclosure proceedings might begin.

The National Weather Service issued a report in June saying communications failures between their workers and counterparts in Saskatchewan were a problem in the period leading up to the 2011 flood. The report said water managers in Canada sometimes changed water release rates from dams without notice and did not answer calls or emails at critical times.

The International Souris River Board met in June and OKd the hiring of a secretary to oversee efforts to develop a slate of proposed changes to the international agreement governing the Souris-Mouse River system in the US and Canada.

Meanwhile, one of the hardest hit parks in Minot - Oak Park - was reopened in time to host special ceremonies marking the one year anniversary of the 2011 flood.

And about the same time, we got an update on another KX News member whose home was severely damaged by the flood. (BITE) Shaun Sipma is counting almost exclusively on work by friends, family, and himself to rebuild his historic home near Oak Park. He's hoping to be moving back home when warm weather returns next year. With 2012 Year in Review, Jim Olson, KX News.

Tomorrow, Jim continues his look at 2012 with the big stories of July and August.

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Channel 5 News @ 10PM
Channel 5 News at 10 PM - KGWN-TV

12/29/2012

met for a little more than an hour this afternoon - trying to tackle the nation's impending fiscal cliff.that wasn't enough time to reach a deal -- but lawmakers in the senate headed right back to capitol hill, charged with getting the job done.cbs's danielle nottingham has more from the white house. Top congressional leaders met with president obama at the white house...trying to avoid the automatic tax hikes and spending cuts set to kick in january first.the president called the meeting "constructive" but reminded lawmakers --- there's not much time left. President Obama "We're now at the point where in just four days every American's tax rates are scheduled to go up by law." senators harry reid and mitch mcconnell returned to the senate floor, pledging to work through the weekend. McConnell"We are engaged in discussions - in the hopes that we come forward as early as sunday that we will have a recommendation." Reid"We're gonna do the best we can with the caucuses we have and the country that's waiting for us to make a decision." (gfx)DEMOCRATIC and republican leaders have agreed to extend jobless benefits and some tax increases -- but the income threshold is not yet clear. Danielle Nottingham, cbs News, The White House.THE president and senate leaders are expressing optimism they'll get the job done.but the president has a backup plan...just in case. Obama"If an agreement isn't reached in time, between Senator Reid and Senator McConnell, then I will urge Senator Reid to bring to the floor a basic package for an up or down vote." that bare-bones bill would preserve tax cuts for the middle class and extend unemployment benefits.it would also lay a foudnation for a broader deal to come.danielle nottingham, cbs news, the white house. The bureau of land management announced today that it has expanded best practice standards for the fluid mineral industry. It's part of an ongoing effort to continue to increase responsible domestic energy production while protecting wildlife near oil, gas and geothermal facilities on b-l-m lands. According to the b-l-m... Domestic oil production is at its highest in nearly a decade and natural gas at its highest level ever. Active cooperation between industry leaders and the b-l-m in recent years... Has contributed to significant decreases in the number of wildlife deaths associated with oil and gas operations. E -p-a administrator lisa jackson... The obama administration's chief environmental watchdog... Is stepping down after nearly four years serving that role. Jackson received criticism in wyoming over the past year after the e-p-a released data from its round of water testing near pavillion in november 2011. The testing detected high levels of benzene, methane and other chemicals. Jackson said the chemicals may be linked to hydraulic fracturing. Wyoming senator mike enzi has been particularly critical of the epa during jackson's tenure... Saying the epa has had an "anti-energy and therefore anti-wyoming agenda." jackson said she believes she's leaving the e-p-a headed in the right direction. Protestors took to the streets today in youngstown, ohio for an anti-fracking rally... Just days away from the anniversary of last year's 4 point 0 magnitude earthquake. These demonstrators want to educate the public on what they say is the negative side of drilling. The ohio department of natural resources linked the quake to an injection well in youngstown. "You have an industry that has put out a lot of pr, a lot of positive spin.But, they're never around to answer the questions when it comes to our health, when it comes to leasing tactics, when it comes to the failure of institutions, the government. To do the environmental impact studies." the rally also coincides with the release of the movie promised land... Starring matt damon. Damon plays a salesman who arrives in a rural town and buys mineral rights for drilling companies. Wyoming's unemployment rate has reached its lowest level in over three years. The wyoming department of workforce services reported that wyoming's unemployment rate declined slightly between october and november, going from 5.2 percent to 5.1 percent. It's the lowest jobless rate in the state since march 2009. Sublette, niobrara and converse counties all had rates at or below 3.9 percent, the lowest in the state. Teton had the highest rate at 9.6 percent. Wyoming's unemployment rate remains well below the national average of 7.7 percent. A mere 100 miles south of cheyenne... Flu activity is up significantly over last year. The colorado department of public health and environment is reporting a total of 244 people hospitalized with the influenza. That's compared to only 32 people at the same time last year. The outbreak has resulted in two deaths between mid-november and mid-december... Both were children under the age of three. The lucky

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After Jackson, EPA Faces Decisions on U.S. Fracking Boom
Scientific American - Online

12/28/2012

The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies.

By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. Obama may seek an insider to avoid a difficult confirmation process, with possible candidates including Bob Perciasepe, the EPA deputy administrator and interim chief, and Gina McCarthy, who runs the air quality division.

Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

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"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight.

Mark P. Fitzsimmons, a former lawyer in the Department of Justice's environmental division, and now a partner at Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Wash DC, says there is "a risk of overregulation." Some drilling activity has already slowed sharply this year due to the slump in natural gas prices.

"Regulatory overlays that add to the cost of production will further slow down development" but won't stop it, he said.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

While climate change issues and air pollution may remain larger agency priorities, fracking is moving up the agenda.

"I don't think they would be capable of ignoring something that Matt Damon makes a movie about," said Fitzsimmons.

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Damon and John Krasinski star in "Promised Land," a new film that opened on Friday exploring the social impact of fracking. It received mixed reviews from critics, but is being closely watched by an energy industry that fears it could further antagonize public opinion over domestic drilling.

A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

The debate rages over a diverse range of issues.

While fracking was exempted from the Federal Clean Act in 2005, operations that used diesel fuel, which contains a number of toxic chemical compounds, were not exempted.

However, what exactly constitutes "diesel" has been a bone of contention among oil firms and environmental groups.

"The question is how to define "diesel" - broadly or narrowly," says consultant McNally.

"It's a big issue especially for Bakken producers," he said, referring to the region of North Dakota where crude oil output has more than tripled in two years.

The EPA published a draft definition in May, which met with criticism from the industry and some legislators, but it will fall to the new administrator to set a final definition.

Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn from wells after the fracking process, probably in 2014. This is usually trucked offsite and sometimes re-injected elsewhere, although increasingly it is being reprocessed for further use.

And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

"It's not to say that there isn't a federal role, but you can't start to talk about a federal role without acknowledging the very strong state role."

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KX News
KXMC-TV

12/28/2012

A primary election and three murder charges were among the headlines in May and June of 2012. Jim Olson has the story in tonight's look back at the Year in Review. North Dakota voters were in the mood to say 'no' in the primary election of June 12th. On statewide measures, voters rejected a plan to get rid of property taxes, an effort to add religious liberty language to the constitution, and an effort to maintain the Fighting Sioux nickname and logo. Two days after the vote, the State Board of Higher Education voted to retire the Sioux moniker. In early May, the Corps of Engineers announced it would resume issuing permits for taking water from Lake Sakakawea - something the Corps had banned the year before. Mid May brought news that North Dakota had become the second leading producer of oil in the US. April's figures showed oil production leapfrogged Alaska's, leaving only Texas in front of North Dakota for black gold extraction. Some analysts say the state could surpass Texas within five years or so. One potential roadblock to continued oil production growth is a ban on hydraulic fracturing - the method used to extract nearly all of the oil in the state's Bakken region. In May, Senator John Hoeven pushed EPA officials to back off any plans of limiting fracturing, saying it is a proven safe way to acquire oil in this region. The booming oil business brought thousands to Williston in May for the city's petroleum conference - a chance to present new ideas and make connections with others in the industry. Meanwhile, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikira Tribes won the last-needed permit to press on with a planned oil refinery near Makoti. Tribal officials received word of the permit in late June. In Williston, city officials continued their effort to crack down on makeshift RV parks by banning RVs from residential areas. A mn already facing one murder charge had three more added in late May. Omar Mohamed Kalmio had already been accused of killing Sabrina Zephier in Minot in 2011, but as of late May, officials charged him with the murders of Jolene Zephier, Dylan Zephier, and Jeremy Longie. All four were killed on January 28th of 2011. Kalmio has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled for trial in early 2012. An early June storm caused significant damage in some parts of the region - including in the Des Lacs and Granville areas. Minot's airport became the second-busiest in North Dakota in mid-2012, and officials announced plans for a new terminal to handle the increasing passenger load. Drawings for the new building were revealed in June. The 40 million dollar project should get going next year. Minot's MAGIC Fund pleged 3 million dollars to help finish the 55th Street bypass and overpass project. The cost of the project had swelled from the already-funded 20 million dollars to more than 22- and-a-half million dollars. Speaking of increasing costs, Minot Public Schools officials announced in May that total damage to schools from the 2011 flood had surpassed 75 million dollars. The news came as work on new buildings for the district was well underway. The number of families calling FEMA temporary housing units - what we all known as FEMA trailers - fell below the 14-hundred level in June. FEMA officials were consulting with residents trying to get them new housing arrangements with the 18-month deadline for government- supplied housing now only six months away. A study by local officials found a huge number of homes in the flood zone had not had any cleanup work done to them one full year after the 2011 flood. (BITE) Officials sent letters to owners of the 281 untouched homes and said if no work were done, foreclosure proceedings might begin. The National Weather Service issued a report in June saying communications failures between their workers and counterparts in Saskatchewan were a problem in the period leading up to the 2011 flood. The report said water managers in Canad sometimes changed water release rates from dams without notice and did nont answer calls or emails at critical times. The International Souris River Board met in June and OKd the hiring of a secretary to oversee efforts to develop a slate of proposed changes to the international agreement governing the Souris-Mouse River system in the US and Canada. Meanwhile, one of the hardest hit parks in Minot - Oak Park - was reopened in time to host special ceremonies marking the one year anniversary of the 2011 flood. And about the same time, we got an update on another KX News member whose home was severely damaged by the flood. (BITE) Shaun Sipma is counting almost exclusively on work by friends, family, and himself to rebuild his historic home near Oak Park. He's hoping to be moving back home when warm weather returns next year. With 2012 Year in Review, Jim Olson, KX News. Tomorrow, Jim continues his look at 2012 with the big stories of July and August. Coming up on KX News in HD...poker players are going for the gold at the 9th annual North Dakota Texas Hold'm Poker Tournament - that after Stephanies check on the weekend forecast. MOMMY, WHY IS IT OKAY FOR MOMS

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom
Chicago Tribune - Online

12/28/2012

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Thomson Reuters - UK - Online

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012.

Credit: Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

NEW YORK | Fri Dec 28, 2012 9:28pm GMT

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study and, in some cases, oversight.

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Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

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But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight.

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"Regulatory overlays that add to the cost of production will further slow down development" but won't stop it, he said.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

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12/28/2012

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Yahoo! Finance Singapore

12/28/2012

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford and Andrew Hay)

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Orlando Sentinel - Online

12/28/2012

4:27 p.m. EST, December 28, 2012

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Channel 5 News at 5:30 PM - KGWN-TV

12/28/2012

today that it has expanded best practice standards for the fluid mineral industry. It's part of an ongoing effort to continue to increase responsible domestic energy production while protecting wildlife near oil, gas and geothermal facilities on b-l-m lands. According to the b-l-m... Domestic oil production is at its highest in nearly a decade and natural gas at its highest level ever. Active cooperation between industry leaders and the b-l-m in recent years... Has contributed to significant decreases in the number of wildlife deaths associated with oil and gas operations. E-p-a administrator lisa jackson... The obama administration's chief environmental watchdog... Is stepping down after nearly four years serving that role. Jackson received criticism in wyoming over the past year after the e-p-a released data from its round of water testing near pavillion in november 2011. The testing detected high levels of benzene, methane and other chemicals. Jackson said the chemicals may be linked to hydraulic fracturing. Wyoming senator mike enzi has been particularly critical of the epa during jackson's tenure... Saying the epa has had an "anti-energy and therefore anti-wyoming agenda." jackson said she believes she's leaving the e-p-a headed in the right direction. This year was the driest in wyoming in 118 years... Leaving ranchers with tough decisions to make. While many survived the summer... They speculate that another year with even a small percentage of this year's conditions could force them to lose their business. About 15 percent of the state's cattle was sold this year to accommodate for lack of food. According to the national weather service... Weathers patterns for 2013 could yield below average precipitation once again... Leaving more ranchers out of work. A mere 100 miles south of cheyenne... Flu activity is up significantly over last year. The colorado department of public health and environment is reporting a total of 244 people hospitalized with the influenza. That's compared to only 32 people at the same time last year. The outbreak has resulted in two deaths between mid- november and mid-december... Both were children under the age of three. The lucky parents of this year's new year's baby will be receiving a special gift. Laramie county safe communities and cheyenne regional medical center will present a new child safety seat and other safety devices to the family of the first born at cheyenne regional on january 1. The video you're seeing is of last year's baby... Six-pound six-ounce kanen kyler. Hunters have killed 41 wolves so far during wyoming's trophy wolf-hunting season. As of the latest update, 11 more wolves can be taken before the season ends on monday. Hunters have 24 hours to report kills. Hunt supporter maury jones says he's not surprised that hunters haven't filled the quota yet because wolves are difficult to shoot. It's wyoming's first wolf hunting season since the federal government reintroduced wolves to the yellowstone ecosystem in the 1990s. Besides the trophy kills, 23 wolves have been killed as predators. The sponsor of the "stage stop" sled dog race will donate dog food to eight animal shelters along the race route. Pedigree announced that it will donate a year's worth of dog food to seven shelters in wyoming in jackson, alpine, pinedale, lander, big piney, kemmerer and evanston. The 18th annual "stage stop" sled dog race will include parts of montana, idaho and utah on its course this year, in addition to running through wyoming. It starts january 25 in jackson. Specialty home decor and gifts retailer... Kirkland's... Recently opened one of its newest locations at cheyenne marketplace in frontier mall and will soon host its grand opening. The chain was founded in the southeast and currently operates 324 stores nationwide. Cheyenne is their only new location for the holiday season... West of the mississippi river. Kirkland's will host its grand opening on january 12 and 13. They will employ between 15 and 18 people. Coming up right after the break... Chris will have a complete look at your forecast.. Plus... In sports a offer is on the table for the n-h-l players...kurt

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
South Bend Tribune - Online

12/28/2012

12:01 a.m. EST, December 28, 2012

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Roth: 'All of the above' equals tough challenges
Journal Record - Online, The

12/28/2012

This week, Lisa Jackson, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, announced that she will leave her post. Jackson began her tenure under the president's first administration with high hopes and a sharp focus on addressing climate change in a meaningful way. However, to her dismay, many of her efforts were stalled by opponents of the administration's policies and even the White House. One large proposal the EPA put forth to limit climate-change emissions was rejected by President Barack Obama, who argued that the new regulations would be too expensive for the industry and the market to bear. However, he did tell the EPA that he would revisit the proposed rules in the year 2013. Happy New Year!

So, what might we expect from Obama in 2013, and beyond? Obama claims an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy, of which those policies and practices only appear to be strengthening. For example, the president has been a fierce advocate of renewable energy. He has called for the extension of the wind energy production tax credit. On federal lands, the Obama administration has approved 24 wind, solar, and geothermal projects, giving them an energy capacity of close to 13,750 megawatts, according to the Department of Energy. This growth of renewable electric power generation, however, is placing enormous pressure on an aging electrical grid system that is facing more reliability concerns. These challenges were realized recently following Hurricane Sandy. Renewable energy is no doubt going to remain a key focus for Obama.

Industry advances in hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling allowed Obama some cover during the presidential debates, citing historic highs in domestic production of energy. But, the president has not halted efforts or proposals to regulate hydraulic fracturing on federal lands, and the EPA is currently conducting a study about the impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. So this topic, too, will remain an important one in the federal spotlight.

Generally, Obama has favored strengthening regulation through existing law, instead of new law. No doubt, a strategy he has opted for after the cap-and-trade bill, which would have limited climate change emissions, stalled in the U.S. Senate.

So, in 2013, we have a president who faces enormous energy challenges if he continues to push an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy forward. They include large increases in domestic production of energy, a growing but small renewable electric generation arena that is threatened by lack of congressional action, a country that remains one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, and an aging electrical grid system desperately need of updates.

Jim Roth, a former Oklahoma corporation commissioner, is an attorney with Phillips Murrah P.C. in Oklahoma City, where his practice focuses on clean, green energy for Oklahoma.

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UPDATE 1-After Jackson, EPA faces decisions on US fracking boom
Reuters India

12/28/2012

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"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight.

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By RYAN TRACY

Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson said Thursday she would leave her post early next year, following a tumultuous four years in which she pursued the first US greenhouse-gas regulations and battled Republican efforts to limit her agency's powers.

Ms. Jackson has served in the role since early in President Barack Obama's first term.

She said in a statement that she "will leave the EPA confident the ship is sailing in the right direction, and ready in my own life for new challenges, times with my family and opportunities to make a difference."

She said the agency has made "historic progress" on cleaning up pollution and protecting the environment and public health. She said she would depart after Mr. Obama's State of the Union address.

The president on Thursday thanked Ms. Jackson for "her tireless efforts to benefit the American people" and said "under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink."

Republicans and industry groups often criticized Ms. Jackson, saying her agency's regulations were killing jobs and raising uncertainty for business.

Scott Segal, a partner at Bracewell & Giuliani who represents utilities that use coal, said Thursday that Ms. Jackson "presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history."

At one point, Ms. Jackson's aggressive approach to curbing pollution ran into opposition from her boss. In September 2011, Mr. Obama overruled Ms. Jackson and ordered the administration to withdraw a proposed tightening of the national standard for smog pollution, even though Ms. Jackson had said a stricter standard was necessary to protect public health.

Ms. Jackson and her deputies testified before Congress regularly, most often before House Republicans who pushed bills that would curb the EPA's power. The bills were blocked by Senate Democrats.

Ms. Jackson pushed back against the criticism, asserting for instance that her power plant regulations were preventing soot pollution that could harm children or the elderly. She said the agency's regulations created jobs because US companies could be leaders in pollution-control technologies.

In February 2011, Leo Gerard, international president of the United Steelworkers, gave Ms. Jackson a pair of boxing

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gloves as a birthday gift, citing her many tussles with lawmakers.

Ms. Jackson generally won high praise from environmental groups.

"Health and environmental advocates will definitely miss her," said Frank O'Donnell, president of the advocacy group Clean Air Watch. "She has been a real champion for clean air."

Ms. Jackson in 2009 made a formal finding that greenhouse gas emissions posed a danger to public health and began the first push to regulate them. As part of that effort, the EPA adopted new national standards for vehicle fuel efficiency and proposed regulations that would essentially ban new coal-fired power plants unless they use a carbon capture technology that is not yet commercially viable.

She also led the agency as it made final long-pending limits on pollutants such as mercury from coal-fired power plants and industrial boilers that burn coal for electricity.

While Ms. Jackson's EPA accomplished much of its clean air agenda, it also suffered some setbacks.

In August, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit threw out a regulation to curb air pollution that wafts across state lines, sending Ms. Jackson back to the drawing board on one of her major accomplishments.

In March, a federal judge reversed the agency's 2011 decision to revoke a permit from a large mountaintop coal mine in West Virginia. The judge said the agency overstepped its authority.

Ms. Jackson clashed with lawmakers on the agency's oversight of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, the technology that has helped fuel a boom in US oil and gas production. The EPA earlier this year adopted rules limiting air pollution from natural gas wells. Its scientists said they found a link between fracking and groundwater contamination in Wyoming, a conclusion the industry disputes.

Ms. Jackson's successor is likely to oversee the completion of the agency's yearslong study of fracking's impact on groundwater and any resulting regulatory push, as well as regulations limiting greenhouse-gas emissions from hundreds of existing US coal plants. Mr. Obama's choice could be an early signal of how he plans to approach environmental issues in a second term.

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EPA details focus of study on water impacts of fracking
Energy Daily - Online, The

12/28/2012

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Yahoo! News

12/28/2012

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By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer | Reuters _ 33 minutes ago

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a ...

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford and Andrew Hay)

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CNBC - Online

12/28/2012

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By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer | 28 December 2012

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But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight that could drive up costs, or limit access.

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After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role. A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

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Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn from wells after the fracking process, probably in 2014. This is usually trucked offsite and sometimes re-injected elsewhere, although increasingly it is being reprocessed for further use.

And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief | Sustainability | Thomson Reuters thomsonreuters.com

12/28/2012

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Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief

By Ayesha Rascoe | 27 December 2012

(Reuters) _ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson, who spearheaded the Obama administration's crackdown on carbon emissions, said on Thursday she will step down after almost four years of battles with Republican lawmakers and industry over proposed regulations. Under her leadership, the agency declared for the first time that carbon dioxide was a danger to human health and could be regulated under the Clean Air Act, leading the EPA to develop a new regulatory regime to limit carbon emissions.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers opposed Jackson's efforts to fight climate change, hauling her in for numerous hearings in Congress, and she faced some pushback from within the administration too.

She won praise from many environmental groups, while others complained her EPA was too timid. It was unclear what direction the administration will take on climate change during President Barack Obama's second term.

Obama thanked Jackson for her service, praising her work on mercury pollution limits, fighting climate change and helping set new fuel economy standards for vehicles.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink," Obama said in a statement.

Jackson, the first black administrator of the 17,000-strong EPA, said in a statement she was "confident the (EPA) ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson, 50, is expected to leave her cabinet position after Obama's State of the Union address in early 2013. Leading the list of potential replacements are Bob Perciasepe, deputy EPA administrator, who will take over the agency on an interim basis; and Kathleen McGinty, a former head of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and a protégé of former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Also said to be in the mix are Gina McCarthy, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation; and Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

Jackson's departure was not a surprise. Analysts had not expected her to stay for Obama's second term.

The administration is expected to face a tough fight to get any potential nominee confirmed by the Senate - especially any candidate seen as being in the mold of Jackson.

"Secretary Jackson played the environmental 'bad cop' to President Obama's more moderate 'good cop,' but the result of their tag-team effort has been a huge expansion of the EPA's power. That's the exact opposite of what is needed," said S. T. Karnick, research director at the Heartland Institute, a Chicago group that is skeptical of man-made climate change.

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Jackson is the first major energy policy official to step aside since Obama's re-election last month. Some have speculated that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel prize-winning physicist who has also clashed with industry, will also depart, as may Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

BRUISING ENCOUNTERS

Republican lawmakers accused Jackson's EPA of massive government overreach that choked economic growth, and passed numerous bills aimed at undoing the regulations. Obama did not sign their bills into law, but the White House did begin to pull back or delay rules in the face of the relentless onslaught.

Some speculated Jackson would step down in 2011, when Obama decided to delay rules to restrict emissions of smog-forming chemicals from power plants.

"From an energy and consumer perspective, it has to be said that the Jackson EPA presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, which lobbied against many of the EPA's proposed regulations.

States and governors fought Jackson's rules in the courts, scoring a win in August when a U.S. appeals court overturned the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, aimed at reducing harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants.

On Thursday, many environmentalists and public health advocates hailed Jackson, saying she leaves a legacy of cleaner air.

"Administrator Jackson has been one of the most effective leaders in the history of the Environmental Protection Agency," Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jackson is a chemical engineer by training, and reports in recent weeks suggested she might be under consideration for the post of president of Princeton University. She is also a one-time chief of staff of New Jersey Governor John Corzine, and other media reports say she may be mulling a run for governor of that state.

Despite contentious dealings with Congress, Jackson maintained a cordial relationship with one of her biggest critics, Senator Jim Inhofe. She even kept a photo of the Oklahoma Republican and his grandchildren in her office.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA, however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," said Inhofe, who has called climate change a hoax, chided the Obama administration for a "far left green agenda" and vigorously opposed carbon regulations.

Inhofe said Jackson's departure offers the White House the chance to appoint someone "who appreciates the needs of our economy."

UNFINISHED AGENDA INCLUDES FRACKING

A self-described pragmatist, Jackson passionately fought to limit air pollution. She often described her two sons' struggles with asthma when discussing the importance of clean air.

Jackson also rejected her critics' complaints that stronger environmental rules were incompatible with a robust economy.

When broad climate change legislation sputtered in Congress in 2010, the EPA became the White House's main vehicle

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for addressing carbon emissions.

Since then, the agency has finalized rules outlining restrictions on carbon emissions for new power plants, effectively prohibiting the construction of new coal-fired plants without carbon-capture and storage technology.

Natural Resources Defense Council President Frances Beinecke said Jackson's successor "will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants _ the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled."

The EPA also will help decide whether the federal government will regulate hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The drilling technique has sparked a boom in U.S. energy production but opponents have linked it to water pollution and other problems.

Most regulation of fracking has fallen to the states, but the EPA has said it plans to propose standards on wastewater from gas wells by 2014 and is considering rules that would require more disclosure about the chemicals used in fracking.

U.S. oil and gas production has reached record levels in recent years. Even so, drillers have complained that EPA has taken too heavy a hand in regulating energy production and warn that onerous rules could crimp oil and gas output.

"In the past four years, EPA has hindered development of our nation's oil and natural gas resources by making it difficult for America's independent producers to overcome the enormous regulatory obstacles to operate," said Julia Bell, spokeswoman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

(Additional reporting by Valerie Volcovici and Roberta Rampton; Editing by Ros Krasny, Will Dunham, Mohammad Zargham and David Gregorio)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Fracking Regulation To Fall On Lisa Jackson's Successor
Huffington Post, The

12/28/2012

NEW YORK, Dec 28 (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. But Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

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Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

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After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
Business Insurance - Online

12/28/2012

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EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announces resignation
Casper Star-Tribune - Online

12/28/2012

2012-12-28T07:00:00Z 2012-12-28T09:41:03Z EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announces resignation

The Associated Press

The Associated Press

5 hours ago • Associated Press

WASHINGTON — EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, the Obama administration's chief environmental watchdog, is stepping down after nearly four years marked by high-profile debates over groundwater testing near Pavillion, global warming pollution, the Keystone XL oil pipeline, new controls on coal-fired plants and several other hot-button issues that affect the nation's economy and people's health.

Jackson constantly found herself caught between administration pledges to solve thorny environmental problems and steady resistance from Republicans and industrial groups who complained that the agency's rules destroyed jobs and made it harder for American companies to compete internationally.

The GOP chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Fred Upton of Michigan, said last year that Jackson would need her own parking spot at the Capitol because he planned to bring her in so frequently for questioning. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney called for her firing, a stance that had little downside during the GOP primary.

Jackson, 50, the agency's first black administrator and a chemical engineer, did not point to any particular reason for her departure. Historically, Cabinet members looking to move on will leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

Jackson came under fire in Wyoming this past year after the EPA released data from its round of water testing near Pavillion in November 2011. The testing detected high levels of benzene, methane and other chemicals. Jackson said the chemicals may be linked to hydraulic fracturing.

A month later, the EPA released a draft report tentatively linking hydraulic fracturing to groundwater contamination near the Pavillion gas field. Industry officials largely condemned the report while environmental groups touted it as proof hydraulic fracturing is a danger to water supplies. That same month, Gov. Matt Mead called for a broader groundwater investigation of the area.

In January, the EPA extended public comment on the draft report, which was originally set to expire that month.

The EPA agreed to further testing of its two wells near Pavillion in March, to clarify questions about the first round of results. The agency agreed to bring in the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct the testing. The next month, the USGS began a second round of testing on the wells near Pavillion.

In September the USGS releases data from the last round of testing with no analysis. The EPA and industry offered differing interpretations of the numbers, with the EPA saying they're "generally consistent" with earlier results.

In October EPA officials announced another comment period delay, this time to January, at a Pavillion Working Group

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meeting in Riverton. A long-awaited peer review was also pushed back, likely to January.

Wyoming U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi criticized the Obama administration in a media release issued Thursday about Jackson's resignation.

“Under this Administration, the EPA has had an anti-energy and therefore anti-Wyoming agenda," the statement read. "The regulations and red tape that have flowed from this one agency have helped slow our economic recovery and have ignored the concerns of farmers, ranchers, and our energy industry. Unfortunately, this is being driven by the White House and I’m not convinced that a new agency head will make much of a difference in the policies we will see over the next four years. There is always a possibility that someone with a more aggressive environmental agenda will lead the EPA in its war on coal and traditional forms of energy.”

Despite the opposition on several fronts, which former EPA chiefs have said is the worst they have seen against the agency, Jackson still managed to take significant steps that will improve air quality and begin to curb global warming.

"I will leave the EPA confident the ship is sailing in the right direction, and ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference," she said in a statement. Jackson will leave sometime after President Barack Obama delivers his State of the Union address, typically in late January.

In a separate statement, Obama said Jackson has been "an important part of my team." He thanked her for serving and praised her "unwavering commitment" to the public's health.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump, while also slashing carbon pollution," he said.

Environmental activist groups and other supporters lauded Jackson for the changes she was able to make, but industry representatives said some may have come at an economic cost. Groups also noted that she leaves a large, unfinished agenda.

"There has been no fiercer champion of our health and our environment than Lisa Jackson, and every American is better off today than when she took office nearly four years ago," said Frances Beinecke, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council. But she noted that Jackson's successor will inherit an unfinished agenda, including the need to issue new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., chairman of the Senate's subcommittee on clean air, called Jackson's tenure a "breath of fresh air" and credited her for setting historic fuel economy standards for cars and trucks, and for finalizing clean air standards.

But Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, said Jackson presided over some of the most expensive environmental rules in EPA history.

"Agency rules have been used as blunt attempts to marginalize coal and other solid fossil fuels and to make motor fuels more costly at the expense of industrial jobs, energy security, and economic recovery," Segal said. "The record of the agency over the same period in overestimating benefits to major rules has not assisted the public in determining whether these rules have been worth it."

Other environmental groups, though, praised Jackson's clean air efforts.

"Notwithstanding the difficult economic and political challenges EPA faced, her agency was directly responsible for saving

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the lives of tens of thousands of Americans and improving the health of millions throughout the country," said S. William Becker of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies. "She will be sorely missed."

Larry Schweiger, head of the National Wildlife Federation, cited her climate change work and efforts to reduce carbon pollution.

Environmental groups had high expectations for the administration headed by Obama, a Democrat, after eight years of President George W. Bush, a Republican and Texas oilman who rebuffed agency scientists and refused act on climate change. Jackson came into office promising a more active EPA.

But she soon learned that changes would not occur as quickly as she had hoped. Jackson watched as a Democratic-led effort to reduce global warming emissions passed the House in 2009 but was then abandoned by the Senate as economic concerns became the priority. The concept behind the bill, referred to as cap-and-trade, would have established a system where power companies bought and sold pollution rights.

"That's a revolutionary message for our country," Jackson said at a Paris conference shortly after taking the job.

Jackson experienced another big setback last year when the administration scrubbed a clean-air regulation aimed at reducing health-threatening smog. Republican lawmakers had been hammering the president over the proposed rule, accusing him of making it harder for companies to create jobs.

She also vowed to better control toxic coal ash after a massive spill in Tennessee, but that regulation has yet to be finalized more than four years after the spill.

Jackson had some victories, too. During her tenure, the administration finalized a new rule doubling fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks. The requirements will be phased in over 13 years and eventually require all new vehicles to average 54.5 mpg, up from 28.6 mpg at the end of last year.

She shepherded another rule that forces power plants to control mercury and other toxic pollutants for the first time. Previously, the nation's coal- and oil-fired power plants had been allowed to run without addressing their full environmental and public health costs.

Jackson also helped persuade the administration to table the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, which would have brought carbon-heavy tar sands oil from Canada to refineries in Texas.

House Republicans dedicated much of their time this past election year trying to rein in the EPA. They passed a bill seeking to thwart regulation of the coal industry and quash the stricter fuel efficiency standards. In the end, though, the bill made no headway in the Senate. It served mostly as election-year fodder that appeared to have little impact on the presidential race.

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor and Pauline Jelinek contributed to this report.

Recommendations

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EPA Chief Lisa Jackson to Step Down | TheLedger.com
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12/28/2012

EPA Chief Lisa Jackson to Step Down

This photo April 17, 2012 file photo shows Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson during an interview with The Associated Press at EPA Headquarters in Washington. Jackson, The Obama administration's chief environmental watchdog, is stepping down after a nearly four-year tenure marked by high-profile brawls over global warming pollution, the Keystone XL oil pipeline, new controls on coal-fired plants and several other hot-button issues that affect the nation's economy and people's health. (AP Photo/Kevin Wolf, File)

Juliet Eilperin

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WASHINGTON | Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, who pushed through the most sweeping curbs on air pollution in two decades, announced Thursday morning that she will resign her post.

Jackson, who will step down shortly after President Barack Obama's State of the Union address next month, said she was "ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference." Many had expected that she would not remain for the administration's second term; Jackson herself joked about it recently.

Outspoken on issues including climate change and the need to protect poor communities from experiencing a disproportionate amount of environmental harm, Jackson pressed for limits on emissions from coal-fired power plants and on dumping mining waste into streams and rivers near mines.

The slew of rules the EPA enacted over the past four years included the first greenhouse-gas standards for vehicles, cuts in mercury and other toxic pollution from power plants, and a tighter limit on soot, the nation's most widespread deadly pollutant. Many congressional Republicans and business groups claimed Jackson was waging a "war on coal." But she was a hero to the environmental community.

The president issued a statement praising Jackson.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act, and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump while also slashing carbon pollution," Obama said.

Obama has not picked her successor, although two of the leading candidates work at the EPA: Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe and Gina McCarthy, who heads the agency's air and radiation office. Jackson has told several people she considers Perciasepe well prepared to take the agency's helm.

Both Perciasepe and McCarthy could face challenges in getting confirmed by the Senate since they helped craft many of

the EPA's policies during Obama's first term. But they are also seen as career officials rather than political activists. Stephen Brown, vice president for federal government affairs at the oil refiner Tesoro Corp., said Perciasepe represents "a sound choice" because he "knows the job, the agency and the hurdles associated with both."

Other possible successors include Mary D. Nichols, head of the California Air Resources Board, and Kathleen McGinty, who headed the White House Council on Environmental Quality under President Bill Clinton.

Sen. David Vitter (La.), the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said Thursday that he would seek a more business-friendly nominee to run the agency. "Moving forward I'll be working with my colleagues in the Senate to make sure the new nominee is thoroughly vetted, puts sound scientific standards above political ideology and understands that EPA's avalanche of regulations can crush the growth of American businesses," he said in a statement.

It is unclear how ambitious an agenda the EPA will pursue in Obama's second term. The agency will soon finalize the first carbon standard for new power utilities, but the White House has yet to decide whether to impose limits on existing facilities, according to several people who have been briefed on the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity because no decision has been made.

The EPA has delayed a decision on whether to classify coal ash as a hazardous waste and is fighting in federal court to reinstate rules governing cross-state air pollution from coal plants in the eastern half of the country. It is also in the midst of a long-term study of how hydraulic fracturing affects the environment, which could trigger new federal rules governing natural-gas extraction.

Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, said his members will be looking for the EPA to "have a strong voice" in whether Obama should approve the Keystone XL pipeline carrying heavy crude oil from Canada to the United States, and to press ahead with carbon limits on existing power plants. "It's arguably the biggest thing the administration can do by itself, without legislation, to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions," he said in an interview.

Many of the most significant regulations the EPA has enacted over the past four years arose from settlements with environmental groups, which challenged rules the agency issued under President George W. Bush.

"Most of the significant rules have already been finalized, so I'm not sure what's left," said Joseph Stanko, who heads government relations at the law firm Hunton & Williams and represents several utility companies.

While Jackson successfully pushed for a number of landmark initiatives, including limits on nutrient pollution flowing from several states into the Chesapeake Bay, she also suffered a high-profile setback when Obama pulled an EPA proposal last year to curb smog-forming ozone pollution. At the time, the president said the new rules would unnecessarily damage the economy and were not essential because the agency was slated to review the issue in 2013.

The child of a postal worker who grew up in the 9th Ward of New Orleans, Jackson often spoke of her personal history when explaining her public policy decisions. When discussing climate change and environmental disasters, she recalled driving her mother, stepfather and aunt out of the city in the face of Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed her mother's home; when announcing new air quality rules, she frequently referred to the agony she felt as a mother watching her infant son struggle with asthma. During an interview with The Washington Post, she once started singing Stevie Wonder's 1973 hit "Living for the City" to describe how far the country had come in terms of cleaning up air pollution.

While she charmed some of her critics - Sen. James M. Inhofe, R-Okla., referred to Jackson as "my favorite bureaucrat" - she alienated much of the business community. Ross Eisenberg, vice president for energy and resources policy at the National Association of Manufacturers, complained to reporters recently that Jackson and her deputies consistently failed to achieve a balance when regulating pollutants from industrial activities.

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"EPA seems wedded to the notion that it must push its policies as hard as it possibly can, with the goal being to enact the strictest possible standard that will survive legal scrutiny," Eisenberg said. "That's not EPA's job."

Scott Segal, a partner at the law firm Bracewell & Giuliani who represents coal-fired utilities as director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, wrote in an e-mail that Jackson managed to drive environmental policy in Washington because of "her excellent communications skills, likable personality and skilled use of political leverage."

But Segal also criticized her for enacting costly regulations and misleading the public by exaggerating their benefits: "Agency rules have been used as blunt attempts to marginalize coal and other solid fossil fuels and to make motor fuels more costly at the expense of industrial jobs, energy security and economic recovery."

Jackson said in an interview that she is open to pursuing consulting and public speaking and misses New Jersey, which is where she and her family lived before moving to Washington in 2009. Her name has been floated as a possible candidate for the presidency of Princeton University, where she received a graduate degree in engineering.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
Today Show - NBC News Network - Online

12/28/2012

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

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Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

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Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight that could drive up costs, or limit access.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role. A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

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Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn

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And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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MSNBC - Online

12/28/2012

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
US Daily, The

12/28/2012

News:

email article

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom

US-EPA-FRACKING:After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom

By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Around the Water Cooler: An Update on EPA's Hydraulic Fracturing Study Greenversations (EPA's Blog)

12/28/2012

Hydraulic fracturing is a horizontal drilling technique used to release natural gas and oil from underground reserves. In 2010, natural gas provided 25% of the energy for residential and industrial use in the U.S. The country has vast reserves of natural gas and the nation's clean energy future relies on it.

The increased production of natural gas and oil from hydraulic fracturing has led to increasing concerns about its potential impact on human health and the environment, and a topic of scientific study.

In 2010, at the request of Congress, EPA initiated a national study to understand the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources. To establish the study's scope and plan, EPA held multiple meetings with stakeholders as well as technical workshops with experts.

The scope of the research is focused on the five stages of the hydraulic fracturing water cycle: water acquisition; chemical mixing; well injection; flowback and produced water; and wastewater treatment and waste disposal. The study plan is designed to answer research questions through the analysis of existing data, case studies, scenario evaluations (through computer modeling), laboratory studies, and toxicological studies.

Today, EPA announced the release of its report highlighting the progress it has made to date on the hydraulic fracturing study. The progress report summarizes the current status of 18 research projects undertaken as part of the study, and provides project-specific updates that include research approach, status, and next steps.

The report does not draw conclusions about the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources, and draft study results are expected in late 2014.

If you want to learn more about EPA's research and download the Progress Report, look no further than EPA's website on the Hydraulic Fracturing Study.

About the Author: Katie Wagner is a student contractor with the Science Communication Team in EPA's Office of Research and Development.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation
KOTA-TV - Online

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON (AP) - Environmental Protection Agency Administration Lisa Jackson says she's stepping down after nearly four years on the job.

Jackson announced her departure in a statement Thursday. She gave no particular reason for leaving but said she was ready for new challenges, time with her family and new opportunities to make a difference.

Jackson's tenure was marked by high-profile brawls, including the fight over whether hydraulic fracturing was causing groundwater pollution in the tiny Wyoming community of Pavillion

She says she's leaving the agency, in her words, "confident the ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson is expected to leave after the State of the Union address in late January. Cabinet members looking to move on often leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA director to step down next month
Columbus Dispatch - Online

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON — Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, who pushed through the most-sweeping curbs on air pollution in two decades, announced yesterday that she will resign.

Jackson will step down shortly after President Barack Obama's State of the Union address next month. She said she is ready "for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference." Many had expected that she would not remain for the administration's second term.

Outspoken on issues including climate change and the need to protect poor communities from a disproportionate amount of environmental harm, Jackson pressed for limits on emissions from coal-fired power plants and on dumping mining waste into streams and rivers near mines.

The slew of rules the EPA enacted over the past four years included the first greenhouse-gas standards for vehicles, cuts in mercury and other toxic pollution from power plants, and a tighter limit on soot, the nation's most widespread deadly pollutant. Many congressional Republicans and business groups claimed Jackson was waging a "war on coal." But she was a hero to the environmental community.

The president issued a statement praising Jackson.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act, and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump while also slashing carbon pollution," Obama said.

Obama has not picked her successor. Two of the leading candidates work at the EPA: Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe and Gina McCarthy, who heads the agency's air and radiation office.

Either could face challenges in getting confirmed by the Senate since they helped craft many of the policies during Obama's first term. But they are not seen as political activists.

Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana, the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said he will seek a more business-friendly nominee. "Moving forward, I'll be working with my colleagues in the Senate to make sure the new nominee is thoroughly vetted, puts sound scientific standards above political ideology and understands that EPA' s avalanche of regulations can crush the growth of American businesses," he said in a statement.

It is unclear how ambitious an agenda the EPA will pursue in the second term. The agency soon will finalize the first carbon standard for new power utilities, but the White House hasn't decided whether to impose limits on existing facilities, sources said.

The EPA has delayed a decision on whether to classify coal ash as a hazardous waste and is fighting in federal court to reinstate rules governing cross-state air pollution from coal plants in the eastern half of the country. It is also in the midst of a long-term study of how hydraulic fracturing — "fracking" — affects the environment, which could trigger new federal rules governing natural-gas extraction.

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While Jackson successfully pushed for a number of landmark initiatives, she also suffered a high-profile setback when Obama pulled an EPA proposal last year to curb smog-forming ozone pollution. The president said the new rules would unnecessarily damage the economy.

Jackson often personalized her decisions. When announcing air-quality rules, she referred to the agony she felt watching her infant son struggle with asthma.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief
Reuters India

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012.

Credit: Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

WASHINGTON | Fri Dec 28, 2012 5:24am IST

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson, who spearheaded the Obama administration's crackdown on carbon emissions, said on Thursday she will step down after almost four years of battles with Republican lawmakers and industry over proposed regulations.

Under her leadership, the agency declared for the first time that carbon dioxide was a danger to human health and could be regulated under the Clean Air Act, leading the EPA to develop a new regulatory regime to limit carbon emissions.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers opposed Jackson's efforts to fight climate change, hauling her in for numerous hearings in Congress, and she faced some pushback from within the administration too.

She won praise from many environmental groups, while others complained her EPA was too timid. It was unclear what direction the administration will take on climate change during President Barack Obama's second term.

Obama thanked Jackson for her service, praising her work on mercury pollution limits, fighting climate change and helping set new fuel economy standards for vehicles.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink," Obama said in a statement.

Jackson, the first black administrator of the 17,000-strong EPA, said in a statement she was "confident the (EPA) ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson, 50, is expected to leave her cabinet position after Obama's State of the Union address in early 2013. Leading the list of potential replacements are Bob Perciasepe, deputy EPA administrator, who will take over the agency on an interim basis; and Kathleen McGinty, a former head of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and a protégé of former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Also said to be in the mix are Gina McCarthy, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation; and Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

Jackson's departure was not a surprise. Analysts had not expected her to stay for Obama's second term.

The administration is expected to face a tough fight to get any potential nominee confirmed by the Senate -- especially any candidate seen as being in the mold of Jackson.

"Secretary Jackson played the environmental 'bad cop' to President Obama's more moderate 'good cop,' but the result of their tag-team effort has been a huge expansion of the EPA's power. That's the exact opposite of what is needed," said S.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

T. Karnick, research director at the Heartland Institute, a Chicago group that is skeptical of man-made climate change.

Jackson is the first major energy policy official to step aside since Obama's re-election last month. Some have speculated that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel prize-winning physicist who has also clashed with industry, will also depart, as may Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

BRUISING ENCOUNTERS

Republican lawmakers accused Jackson's EPA of massive government overreach that choked economic growth, and passed numerous bills aimed at undoing the regulations. Obama did not sign their bills into law, but the White House did begin to pull back or delay rules in the face of the relentless onslaught.

Some speculated Jackson would step down in 2011, when Obama decided to delay rules to restrict emissions of smog-forming chemicals from power plants.

"From an energy and consumer perspective, it has to be said that the Jackson EPA presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, which lobbied against many of the EPA's proposed regulations.

States and governors fought Jackson's rules in the courts, scoring a win in August when a U.S. appeals court overturned the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, aimed at reducing harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants.

On Thursday, many environmentalists and public health advocates hailed Jackson, saying she leaves a legacy of cleaner air.

"Administrator Jackson has been one of the most effective leaders in the history of the Environmental Protection Agency," Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jackson is a chemical engineer by training, and reports in recent weeks suggested she might be under consideration for the post of president of Princeton University. She is also a one-time chief of staff of New Jersey Governor John Corzine, and other media reports say she may be mulling a run for governor of that state.

Despite contentious dealings with Congress, Jackson maintained a cordial relationship with one of her biggest critics, Senator Jim Inhofe. She even kept a photo of the Oklahoma Republican and his grandchildren in her office.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA, however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," said Inhofe, who has called climate change a hoax, chided the Obama administration for a "far left green agenda" and vigorously opposed carbon regulations.

Inhofe said Jackson's departure offers the White House the chance to appoint someone "who appreciates the needs of our economy."

UNFINISHED AGENDA INCLUDES FRACKING

A self-described pragmatist, Jackson passionately fought to limit air pollution. She often described her two sons' struggles with asthma when discussing the importance of clean air.

Jackson also rejected her critics' complaints that stronger environmental rules were incompatible with a robust economy.

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When broad climate change legislation sputtered in Congress in 2010, the EPA became the White House's main vehicle for addressing carbon emissions.

Since then, the agency has finalized rules outlining restrictions on carbon emissions for new power plants, effectively prohibiting the construction of new coal-fired plants without carbon-capture and storage technology.

Natural Resources Defense Council President Frances Beinecke said Jackson's successor "will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants - the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled."

The EPA also will help decide whether the federal government will regulate hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The drilling technique has sparked a boom in U.S. energy production but opponents have linked it to water pollution and other problems.

Most regulation of fracking has fallen to the states, but the EPA has said it plans to propose standards on wastewater from gas wells by 2014 and is considering rules that would require more disclosure about the chemicals used in fracking.

U.S. oil and gas production has reached record levels in recent years. Even so, drillers have complained that EPA has taken too heavy a hand in regulating energy production and warn that onerous rules could crimp oil and gas output.

"In the past four years, EPA has hindered development of our nation's oil and natural gas resources by making it difficult for America's independent producers to overcome the enormous regulatory obstacles to operate," said Julia Bell, spokeswoman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
Reuters India

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012.

Credit: Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

NEW YORK | Fri Dec 28, 2012 10:31am IST

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Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

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"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

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Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight that could drive up costs, or limit access.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role. A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Reviewing Specific Gas Drilling Sites
Natural Gas Intelligence Newsletter - Online

12/28/2012

As part of its multi-year study of hydraulic fracturing, retrospective case studies are being conducted across the country to determine if drinking water contamination actually occurred, and if so, was it the result of unconventional drilling techniques.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
Rocket News

12/28/2012

Written on December 28, 2012 by Editor - Top News Stories

NEW YORK |

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WTBX-FM - Online

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

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director of strategy and research of your project since
WESA-FM (Pittsburgh's NPR News Station)

12/28/2012

the three Rivers workforce investment Board shows there's still a long way to go TRW I be a director of strategy and research of your project since the research shows local women's jobs are concentrated in just a handful of fields you a lot about the wage gap between women job and the job held by men so we understand that we understand why that happening in at least one of watching the move slowly narrowing that we started to ask the question what is access to careers in different sectors and how does that differ from an study shows the areas women are overwhelmingly employed for industries healthcare retail education and hospitality on the link to the complete reports FW USA . FM is a lawmaker says he'll introduce legislation aimed at keeping sixty million dollars in fines against Penn State from leaving Pennsylvania one . five W ESA's Larry Wilson has more center County Republican Jake Corman says he sent two letters to the NCAA which finds PSU in July for the role the school's football program played in the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal the money is supposed to be donated to abuse victims organizations that the NCAA has insisted only a quarter of the total final gutter groups in Pennsylvania and Korman says he doesn't understand why is your . dollars raised through most of Reagan's inaugural DMCA would like to disagree whimsical spirit of what we've asked for is being adhered to so go to comments proposing legislation that would require the fine against Penn State to be redistributed within the Commonwealth don't not any organizations affiliated with the University is down but apply to any college or university fined ten million dollars or more cable thing in Harrisburg recorded administration says it will participate in a Senate Finance Committee hearing on the governor 's proposal to privatize management of the three . five billion dollar Pennsylvania lottery spokeswoman for Governor Tom Corbett's Department of revenue said yesterday that officials are happy to answer questions in any after the hearing date has been set for January fourteenth Monday is the deadline for the Corbett administration to decide on the British lottery operators sold good to manage the water system twenty three year contract by the talks are underway to postpone that revenue Secretary Deb user says that the deadline may be pushed past the end of the year associations on first taking place in a cooperative manner we are optimistic that by mutual consent and extension will occur and we should know very shortly at what global services once the national lottery United Kingdom and is a consultant to the California lottery unionized state lottery employees plan to offer a competitive alternative which is guaranteed in their contract a major study on hydraulic fracturing will be released in twenty fourteen by the US Environmental Protection Agency's estate about Pennsylvania Scott Detra reports . it will feature data from natural gas drilling sites in Pennsylvania EPA studies goal assessing the risk of clicking water contamination in each stage of the tracking process the agency is looking at home with water drillers withdraw from river basins what chemicals go to fracturing fluid and how wells are constructed the study includes a lot of Pennsylvania . EPA will make repeat trips to Washington and Bradford counties to test water quality and study the impact grilling EPA's also using computer modeling a weighty effective water withdrawals from the Susquehanna River basin between two thousand eight in twenty eleven the agency estimates drillers used one . six billion gallons of Susquehanna River water report won't be released until twenty fourteen but last week the EPA published a progress report documenting where it's getting its information about Frak it Scott Efrem stated that Pennsylvania find more from Scott Doctorow on the street impact website of state impact . NPR . / consuming if you find more local and regional news reporting on our website you yesterday ... checking on area roadways it's still pretty quiet as regarding into the personality we can isolate denies the original turquoise Nordstrom take all of thirty minutes this morning coming in from the airport and drive to forget all twenty minutes of Park West at the stars are used from the Turnpike Boulevard of the Allies fourteen minutes no delays distorting and no accidents reported either by our colleagues Doctor traffic clubs in today's forecast a high near thirty one degrees cloudy overnight cycle some light snow showers lease and twenty six degrees snowflakes falling tomorrow morning not likely to amount to much and conversion - thirty three for Saturday's by Sunday cloudy on your twenties and on Monday

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA ADMINISTRATOR JACKSON WILL STEP DOWN
U-T San Diego - Online

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, who pushed through the most sweeping curbs on air pollution in two decades, announced Thursday morning that she will resign her post.

Jackson, who will step down shortly after President Barack Obama's State of the Union address next month, said she was "ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference." Many had expected that she would not remain for the administration's second term; Jackson herself joked about it recently.

Outspoken on issues including climate change and the need to protect poor communities from experiencing a disproportionate amount of environmental harm, Jackson pressed for limits on emissions from coal-fired power plants and on dumping mining waste into streams and rivers near mines.

The slew of rules the EPA enacted over the past four years included the first greenhouse-gas standards for vehicles, cuts in mercury and other toxic pollution from power plants, and a tighter limit on soot, the nation's most widespread deadly pollutant. Many congressional Republicans and business groups claimed Jackson was waging a "war on coal." But she was a hero to the environmental community.

The president issued a statement praising Jackson.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act, and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump while also slashing carbon pollution," Obama said.

Obama has not picked her successor.

Sen. David Vitter, R-La., the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said Thursday that he would seek a more business-friendly nominee to run the agency. "Moving forward I'll be working with my colleagues in the Senate to make sure the new nominee is thoroughly vetted, puts sound scientific standards above political ideology and understands that EPA's avalanche of regulations can crush the growth of American businesses," he said in a statement.

It is unclear how ambitious an agenda the EPA will pursue in Obama's second term. The agency will soon finalize the first carbon standard for new power utilities, but the White House has yet to decide whether to impose limits on existing facilities, according to several people who have been briefed on the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity because no decision has been made.

The EPA has delayed a decision on whether to classify coal ash as a hazardous waste and is fighting in federal court to reinstate rules governing cross-state air pollution from coal plants in the eastern half of the country. It is also in the midst of a long-term study of how hydraulic fracturing affects the environment, which could trigger new federal rules governing natural-gas extraction.

Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, said his members will be looking for the EPA to "have a strong

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

voice" in whether Obama should approve the Keystone XL pipeline carrying heavy crude oil from Canada to the United States, and to press ahead with carbon limits on existing power plants. "It's arguably the biggest thing the administration can do by itself, without legislation, to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions," he said in an interview.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...
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News

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom

Thursday, December 27, 2012 11:01 p.m. CST

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

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food assistance the US Environmental Protection Agency is
WESA-FM (Pittsburgh's NPR News Station)

12/28/2012

company to take over management of Pennsylvania's three . five billion dollars state lottery expires Monday but as ninety . five W ESA's Mary Wilson reports a corporate administration is trying to push that deadline back will reason the Commonwealth is pushing for more time has to deal with the union that represents some of the lottery employees union is allowed to make its own counter offer the private data on the lottery and just an extension making its offer dealing early January that state revenue Secretary Dan user says there is another reason , is pursuing a later deadline for governor is very concerned about what I considered the ridiculous claims that this is been a that this process is lacked transparency user since he and another corporate administration official have together held more than one hundred meetings with Republican and Democratic state legislators just one of those meetings was public during this past spring that there may be another shot at quelling transparency concerns the foreign date is finalized a chair Senate Finance Committee has just a public hearing on schedule in January variables in Harrisburg hundreds of soup kitchens homeless shelters and charities are asking the corporate administration to remember that have not strengthened expletive process coalition wants to see funding for the state food purchase program increase by more than six million dollars in the next fiscal year program has lost one . five million dollars in funding since two thousand six hunger free Pennsylvania spokeswoman Sheila Christopher says her organization has already turned to nongovernmental sources of funding and aid in air in and et al. we On social factor HR how well you get the time to add value to how how is the last five or six years and we pretty much of the shriek of losses use caution the agencies sass were floating in their budget proposals bookers versus leading usual $6.7 million from program that supports food banks and similar facilities throughout the Commonwealth is the only way to meet the rising need for food assistance the US Environmental Protection Agency is comparing a report on natural gas drilling state of Pennsylvania strong central reports the study will include a lot of information from Pennsylvania's guest who is studying won't be released until 2014 but the agency recently published a progress report the study is looking at five stages of hydraulic fracturing and assessing each assessed risk of contaminating drinking water BPA is examining everything from how drummers take water out of reverse what chemicals they used to extract natural gas to how companies store and dispose of racking wastewater to study includes an extensive look at drilling in Bradford and Washington counties EPA is also looking instill data from Pennsylvania with sites and studying how much water is being withdrawn from the Susquehanna River basin the agency is also taking a close look at criticizing Texas Colorado and North Dakota got interested in Pennsylvania and is strong public health officials are issuing warnings about carbon monoxide poisoning which typically spikes at this time of year Allegheny County health Department acting director Ron Voorhees says here's an vehicles are most often the culprits order are you or are you or are you older you are or what you are lower in other go up automatically in the middle and alert you about what people are If you are brought to our worst nine accidental carbon monoxide poisoning senility County last year most of them were associated with heating systems with one more on those news stories and many others on our website at W. ESA.FM along with program information and our live news and jazz music program streams against the USA.FM all clear was early Friday On the Pkwy., North ICD-9 transfers will take you all of 13 minutes your trip in from the airport if you're returning home from the holidays I should take about 20 minutes from the airport Before Cataldo Pkwy., West chicken and pork were used from the turnpike to the Boulevard of the Allies to just about 14 minutes commute at this hour no accidents reported either this update is provided by NASDAQ traffic should be a mostly cloudy today and for the weekend ahead under 31□ this afternoon temperatures will be steady and arrange for what's left of 2012 and 40 a foreseeable part of early 20 13th Audi tomorrow I'll light snow showers possible the morning at little or no accumulation height of 33□ cloudy on Sunday hired 28 on the Monday New Year's used partly sunny skies in the morning will be clouding up later will see a high near 30 mostly cloudy Tuesday and Wednesday highs in the upper 20s 27□ now on the Southside cloudy skies overhead of

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In fracking culture war, celebs, billionaires and banjos
ltmatters.com.ph

12/28/2012

Weekender

Posted on December 27, 2012 06:49:14 PM

By Joshua Scheneyer and Edward McAllister, Reuters

In fracking culture war, celebs, billionaires and banjos

NEW YORK -- Not so long ago, fracking was a technical term little known beyond the energy industry. Now it's coming to Hollywood, as the fierce battle between environmentalists and oil firms is played out in several forthcoming films.

A still from Gasland -- www.naturalgaswatch.org

Hydraulic fracturing, the controversial drilling technique also known as fracking, has lifted US energy output dramatically, despite warnings from critics who fear it pollutes water deep underground.

Any shift in public opinion could impact policy -- and huge sums in energy spending -- since drilling regulations are under review by the Obama administration and local officials around the country. The high stakes involve a range of issues from US energy independence, to protection of drinking water.

Both sides are using movies to try to win the debate, though actor Matt Damon says viewers should not assume the movie he stars in, Promised Land, is "a rabid anti-fracking polemic."

In the film, Damon plays a gas company landman -- an agent who buys or leases land -- intent on drilling beneath a town where some residents are concerned about the perils of fracking. As the landman gets to know the townspeople, he suffers a crisis of conscience.

In an interview in Los Angeles, Damon said he worries that viewers will wrongly assume the film is one-sided and not see it. He declined to offer his personal view on fracking. "That's not the point. The point is that (the film) should start a conversation."

The Northern Irish director Phelim McAleer's documentary, FrackNation, is an unabashedly pro-drilling mantra set to air next month on AXS TV, the cable network controlled by Dallas Mavericks owner and media mogul Mark Cuban.

McAleer views fracking as "the best thing ever," a potential savior for the US economy, unless the forces he likes to call "Big Enviro" succeed in derailing it.

On the other side of the argument, HBO, the cable pay channel, could air a sequel to Gasland, a scathing 2010 documentary from director Josh Fox, as early as next year.

The original film featured scenes of tap water erupting into flames and mobilized environmental groups against fracking, drawing full-throated rebuttals from an oil industry that says the process has never caused water problems.

Fox declined comment for this article.

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Amid the showdown, both industry and anti-fracking camps have mounted major campaigns to sway hearts and minds.

"It could become the biggest environmental debate of our time," said Robert McNally, an energy policy expert and former White House adviser under George W. Bush. "Hollywood is taking notice, and the industry will have its work cut out for it to defend fracking."

Nearly four out of ten Americans surveyed by the Pew Research Center early this year said they knew nothing about fracking. Other polls show most Americans familiar with the practice believe fracking offers economic benefits but requires tougher regulation.

This year, for the first time, US online searches for the term "fracking" became more popular than "climate change," Google data showed. Fracking has doubled on Google's popularity index since last year, and while "global warming" still draws more hits, the gap is narrowing.

Drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans, according to Gallup polling data. A Bloomberg National Poll this month showed that 66% of Americans want more fracking regulation, up from 56% in September.

"POUNDING THE ZONE"

Whether Promised Land will shift public opinion is uncertain. But films with environmental themes often can, according to Joseph Cappella, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

Past examples include Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth on climate change, and Erin Brockovich, a dramatization of real events in which actress Julia Roberts played a legal clerk who uncovers water contamination by a California power company.

Ahead of the release of Promised Land, some within the oil industry are already reading the film's script online.

"Look, I don't want to whistle past the graveyard. This film is going to be a challenge, and we'll just have to see how it does on opening weekend," said Chris Tucker of pro-drilling group Energy In Depth (EID), which is funded by industry. "In terms of popularization of the issue, it will have an effect."

The oil industry wants to avoid another blow like the one it took from Fox's 2010 Gasland film. Google search data shows online interest in fracking surged immediately afterwards.

For three years, Tucker has been working with other communications experts, "pounding the zone with facts" to counter what he calls false claims in Gasland and to promote drilling.

Films like Promised Land will get people curious and send them searching online, said Tucker, where he worries the term "fracking" gets a bad rap. "People will go home and Google it, and the other side does really well on Google," he said.

EID released its own pro-drilling film, Truthland, this year, dubbing it "the factual alternative to Gasland."

LOSING PR BATTLE?

In some ways, the film blitz may be behind the times. Fracking has already come to dominate US drilling over the last half -decade: Onshore rigs doing so-called unconventional drilling account for nearly two-thirds of the total.

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Tucker and industry officials are regulars at conferences, in newspaper op-ed articles, and on TV to defend drilling.

On the environmentalist side, Fox travels widely to lead anti-fracking rallies, sometimes rousing crowds by playing a banjo, which is also featured in the Gasland soundtrack. He has enlisted help from artists including Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon.

"The lesson of Gasland is that public perception is a very big part of the equation," said Jonathan Wood, a political risk analyst at London-based Control Risks, whose clients include oil companies.

In a report this month, Wood wrote that the industry has "largely failed to appreciate social and political risks, and has repeatedly been caught off guard by the sophistication, speed and influence of anti-fracking activists."

Hydraulic fracturing entails pumping water laced with chemicals and sand at high pressure into shale rock formations to break them up and unleash hydrocarbons.

The minerals are trapped thousands of feet below water tables, but critics worry that fracking fluids or hydrocarbons can still leak into water tables from wells, or above ground. Among their other concerns: fracking-related earthquakes, and growing dependence on fossil fuels.

The United States now rivals Russia as the world's top gas producer, in large part due to fracking, and has stemmed a long decline in oil output, which stands at an 18-year high near 7 million barrels a day.

So far, the Obama administration has cautiously endorsed the new drilling, but the US Department of Interior is working on new fracking rules on public lands starting next year.

Some drillers have faced fracking-related fines for water contamination due to spilled fracking fluid. Last year, after sampling water in rural Pavillion, Wyoming, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented the first-ever US government finding of a potential link between fracking and water contamination.

More broadly, however, the EPA condones fracking on safety grounds. But unlike the growing consensus among climate scientists linking global warming and industrial activity, there is no consensus that fracking poses a danger. Unconventional drilling has surged only over the last half decade.

The EPA will release an in-depth study on fracking's potential impacts on water supplies in 2014.

Tough economic times can widen support for drilling. A national Gallup poll this year showed that more Americans favored prioritizing economic growth over the protection of the environment (49% versus 41%).

That's a reversal from 2007, when 55% favored environmental protection.

Cuban is betting the hot potato issue will draw viewers to FrackNation on his cable channel.

"Op-Ed-umentaries like this are supposed to make people think about the topic, which is always a good thing," he said.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
KDAL-AM - Online

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

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Scientific American - Online

12/28/2012

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By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson leaves EPA to mixed reviews
Washington Times - Online

12/28/2012

A hero to the environmental movement and a constant thorn in the sides of Republicans and the energy sector, outgoing Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson presided over one of the most controversial and dramatic periods in the agency's history.

She made her mark by helping craft new automobile fuel standards, imposing a ban on new coal-fired power plants, and being among the loudest in calling for action to combat climate change.

But Ms. Jackson, who announced her resignation Thursday after four years at the helm of the EPA, also sustained several legal defeats and embarrassments during her tenure. Among Republicans and many in the fossil-fuels industry, she has dragged the agency's scientific credibility to an all-time low after failed attempts to tie hydraulic fracturing to water contamination in Texas, Wyoming and Pennsylvania.

She also is departing as the EPA and two House committees investigate her use of secret email accounts.

Less than a year ago, one of Ms. Jackson's top deputies, Al Armendariz, was forced to resign after promising to "crucify" oil and gas companies in order to set an example for the rest of the industry.

But those setbacks, as far as Ms. Jackson and President Obama are concerned, pale in comparison with the accomplishments of the past four years.

"I will leave the EPA confident the ship is sailing in the right direction, and ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference," said Ms. Jackson, the first black EPA administrator.

She plans to leave office after Mr. Obama's State of the Union address, though an exact date has not been set.

In his own statement, the president lauded Ms. Jackson's tenure at the EPA and cast her as a key player in implementing the most significant environmental rules and regulations of the past four years.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump, while also slashing carbon pollution," Mr. Obama said.

Within the environmental community, Ms. Jackson's popularity remains high. The Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club and other environmental groups praised her Thursday.

"Administrator Jackson has been one of the most effective leaders in the history of the Environmental Protection Agency. Her legacy will be cleaner air for all Americans," said Larry Schweiger, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation.

Frances Beinecke, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said every American is better off as a result of Ms. Jackson's actions.

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"Lisa leaves giant shoes to fill. Her successor will inherit an unfinished agenda," she said.

That unfinished agenda includes a massive EPA study of the potential links between hydraulic fracturing — commonly known as fracking — and water pollution. It is the largest, most sweeping federal look at the practice to date, but it has come under fire from those who say it is meant only to provide cover for harsh new regulations that environmentalists want on ideological grounds.

On at least three occasions, the agency has blamed the process for harming drinking-water supplies. Each time it has been forced to backpedal after further study cast doubt on its findings.

Those incidents and others have eroded the EPA's credibility among Republicans, some of whom surely will doubt any scientific findings released by the EPA over the next four years.

Sen. James M. Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican and one of the EPA's loudest critics, recently asked, "Why should anyone trust their 'science' now?"

On Thursday, he blasted the EPA's actions but commended Ms. Jackson for her honesty and congeniality — a sentiment shared by many other Republicans and leaders in the fossil-fuel industry, even those who disagree with Obama administration policy.

"She was one of the few at the EPA that was honest with me," Mr. Inhofe said. "While so many other Obama administration appointees don't tell the truth, she did, and I hope that is not the reason for her departure."

But Mr. Inhofe and others say that although she may have been an upfront and honest public official, her efforts have been and will continue to be disastrous for American consumers and energy producers.

"From an energy and consumer perspective, it had to be said that the Jackson EPA presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history. Agency rules have been used as blunt attempts to marginalize coal and other solid fossil fuels and to make motor fuels more costly at the expense of industrial jobs, energy security and economic recovery," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, a coalition of energy companies. "The record of the agency over the same period in overestimating benefits to major rules has not assisted the public in determining whether these rules have been worth it."

Although it is unclear whether Ms. Jackson's resignation is tied to the growing furor around her use of secret email accounts, critics say she is simply getting out of town before the scandal grows.

"It is not only implausible that Lisa Jackson's resignation was unrelated to her false identity, which we revealed, given how the obvious outcome and apparent objective of such subversion of transparency laws was intolerable," said Christopher C. Horner, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which sued the EPA this year for records related to the secret emails.

"But it became an inevitability when, last week, the Department of Justice agreed s a result of our lawsuit] to begin producing 12,000 of her 'Richard Windsor' alias accounts related to the war on coal Jackson was orchestrating on behalf of President Obama outside of the appropriate democratic process," he said.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Fracking USA - big decisions loom
IOL News Search

12/28/2012

December 28 2012 at 10:39am

By Reuters

Reuters

File photo of a fracking site in the USA.

New York - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA - charged with safeguarding the nation's water - in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

WATER DANGER

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation
Northern Colorado 5 - Online

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON (AP) - Environmental Protection Agency Administration Lisa Jackson says she's stepping down after nearly four years on the job.

Jackson announced her departure in a statement Thursday. She gave no particular reason for leaving but said she was ready for new challenges, time with her family and new opportunities to make a difference.

Jackson's tenure was marked by high-profile brawls, including the fight over whether hydraulic fracturing was causing groundwater pollution in the tiny Wyoming community of Pavillion

She says she's leaving the agency, in her words, "confident the ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson is expected to leave after the State of the Union address in late January. Cabinet members looking to move on often leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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Reuters India

12/28/2012

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NEW YORK | Fri Dec 28, 2012 10:29am IST

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Regulatory News

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Local News Briefs
Glenwood Springs Post Independent - Online

12/28/2012

Post IndependentGlenwood Springs, CO Colorado

12-car pileup shuts down I-70 in Glenwood Canyon

GLENWOOD CANYON, Colorado — A 12-car pileup closed westbound I-70 for about two hours Friday afternoon in Glenwood Canyon. No one was seriously injured.

The westbound lanes of I-70 were shut down just after noon when 11 passenger cars and one semi-truck lost control and collided on the icy road near milepost 129.

Two occupants from one vehicle were transported to Valley View Hospital in Glenwood Springs for minor injuries.

A white pickup, believed to be the first vehicle involved, left the scene.

Anyone with information on this vehicle is asked to contact the Colorado State Patrol at 945-6198.

The Eagle County Sheriff's Office, the Gypsum Fire Department, the Eagle County Ambulance District and the Colorado Department of Transportation responded to the scene along with the Colorado State Patrol.

Big Steve's Towing, Lucas Towing, Western Slope Towing and West Vail Shell Towing all responded to the scene to help recover vehicles.

With unpredictable winter in full force, the Colorado State Patrol reminds drivers to please take your time and drive carefully, and help ensure that Colorado roadways are safe for everyone this holiday season.

CMC trustees take no action on undisclosed personnel issue

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colorado — The Colorado Mountain College board of directors met in special session on Friday to discuss an undisclosed personnel matter, but took no action following a brief executive session, according to spokeswoman Debra Crawford.

This was the second special meeting this month at which the board went behind closed doors to talk about personnel matters.

Crawford said that she could not divulge the subjects of the meetings, which took place on Dec. 7 and 21, due to confidentiality requirements.

EPA releases progress report on fracking study

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency has released a progress report on its research into potential impacts of natural gas hydraulic fracturing and drilling on drinking water.

The update released Friday doesn't come to any conclusions and the final report won't be released until 2014.

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The EPA says information on fracking chemicals has been collected from nine companies and 24,925 wells. Computer analysis is also being done on well construction.

The EPA says it is working with scientists, the industry, and environmental groups to examine any possible impacts. Sampling at five locations in Colorado, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Texas has been completed, and lab studies are being done on drilling wastewater.

The industry and many states say the process is safe when done properly, but critics dispute that.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
MSN Money (US)

12/28/2012

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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wtaq.com

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

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Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief
wtaq.com

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson, who spearheaded the Obama administration's crackdown on carbon emissions, said on Thursday she will step down after almost four years of battles with Republican lawmakers and industry over proposed regulations.

Under her leadership, the agency declared for the first time that carbon dioxide was a danger to human health and could be regulated under the Clean Air Act, leading the EPA to develop a new regulatory regime to limit carbon emissions.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers opposed Jackson's efforts to fight climate change, hauling her in for numerous hearings in Congress, and she faced some pushback from within the administration too.

She won praise from many environmental groups, while others complained her EPA was too timid. It was unclear what direction the administration will take on climate change during President Barack Obama's second term.

Obama thanked Jackson for her service, praising her work on mercury pollution limits, fighting climate change and helping set new fuel economy standards for vehicles.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink," Obama said in a statement.

Jackson, the first black administrator of the 17,000-strong EPA, said in a statement she was "confident the (EPA) ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson, 50, is expected to leave her cabinet position after Obama's State of the Union address in early 2013. Leading the list of potential replacements are Bob Perciasepe, deputy EPA administrator, who will take over the agency on an interim basis; and Kathleen McGinty, a former head of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and a protégé of former U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Also said to be in the mix are Gina McCarthy, the EPA's assistant administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation; and Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

Jackson's departure was not a surprise. Analysts had not expected her to stay for Obama's second term.

The administration is expected to face a tough fight to get any potential nominee confirmed by the Senate -- especially any candidate seen as being in the mold of Jackson.

"Secretary Jackson played the environmental 'bad cop' to President Obama's more moderate 'good cop,' but the result of their tag-team effort has been a huge expansion of the EPA's power. That's the exact opposite of what is needed," said S. T. Karnick, research director at the Heartland Institute, a Chicago group that is skeptical of man-made climate change.

Jackson is the first major energy policy official to step aside since Obama's re-election last month. Some have speculated that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel prize-winning physicist who has also clashed with industry, will also depart,

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

as may Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

BRUISING ENCOUNTERS

Republican lawmakers accused Jackson's EPA of massive government overreach that choked economic growth, and passed numerous bills aimed at undoing the regulations. Obama did not sign their bills into law, but the White House did begin to pull back or delay rules in the face of the relentless onslaught.

Some speculated Jackson would step down in 2011, when Obama decided to delay rules to restrict emissions of smog-forming chemicals from power plants.

"From an energy and consumer perspective, it has to be said that the Jackson EPA presided over some of the most expensive and controversial rules in agency history," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, which lobbied against many of the EPA's proposed regulations.

States and governors fought Jackson's rules in the courts, scoring a win in August when a U.S. appeals court overturned the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, aimed at reducing harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants.

On Thursday, many environmentalists and public health advocates hailed Jackson, saying she leaves a legacy of cleaner air.

"Administrator Jackson has been one of the most effective leaders in the history of the Environmental Protection Agency," Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation.

Jackson is a chemical engineer by training, and reports in recent weeks suggested she might be under consideration for the post of president of Princeton University. She is also a one-time chief of staff of New Jersey Governor John Corzine, and other media reports say she may be mulling a run for governor of that state.

Despite contentious dealings with Congress, Jackson maintained a cordial relationship with one of her biggest critics, Senator Jim Inhofe. She even kept a photo of the Oklahoma Republican and his grandchildren in her office.

"Lisa Jackson and I disagreed on many issues and regulations while she headed the EPA, however, I have always appreciated her receptivity to my concerns, her accessibility and her honesty," said Inhofe, who has called climate change a hoax, chided the Obama administration for a "far left green agenda" and vigorously opposed carbon regulations.

Inhofe said Jackson's departure offers the White House the chance to appoint someone "who appreciates the needs of our economy."

UNFINISHED AGENDA INCLUDES FRACKING

A self-described pragmatist, Jackson passionately fought to limit air pollution. She often described her two sons' struggles with asthma when discussing the importance of clean air.

Jackson also rejected her critics' complaints that stronger environmental rules were incompatible with a robust economy.

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Since then, the agency has finalized rules outlining restrictions on carbon emissions for new power plants, effectively

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prohibiting the construction of new coal-fired plants without carbon-capture and storage technology.

Natural Resources Defense Council President Frances Beinecke said Jackson's successor "will inherit an unfinished agenda that begins with the issuance of new health protections against carbon pollution from existing power plants - the largest remaining driver of climate change that needs to be controlled."

The EPA also will help decide whether the federal government will regulate hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The drilling technique has sparked a boom in U.S. energy production but opponents have linked it to water pollution and other problems.

Most regulation of fracking has fallen to the states, but the EPA has said it plans to propose standards on wastewater from gas wells by 2014 and is considering rules that would require more disclosure about the chemicals used in fracking.

U.S. oil and gas production has reached record levels in recent years. Even so, drillers have complained that EPA has taken too heavy a hand in regulating energy production and warn that onerous rules could crimp oil and gas output.

"In the past four years, EPA has hindered development of our nation's oil and natural gas resources by making it difficult for America's independent producers to overcome the enormous regulatory obstacles to operate," said Julia Bell, spokeswoman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

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After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
10 sources
New York, NY
Jonathan Leff
12/28/2012

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. But Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

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Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight that could drive up costs, or limit access.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role. A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

The debate rages over a diverse range of issues.

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However, what exactly constitutes "diesel" has been a bone of contention among oil firms and environmental groups.

"The question is how to define "diesel" - broadly or narrowly," says consultant McNally.

"It's a big issue especially for Bakken producers," he said, referring to the region of North Dakota where crude oil output has more than tripled in two years.

The EPA published a draft definition in May, which met with criticism from the industry and some legislators, but it will fall to the new administrator to set a final definition.

Under Jackson, the EPA also said it would begin to regulate the millions of gallons a day of wastewater that is withdrawn

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from wells after the fracking process, probably in 2014. This is usually trucked offsite and sometimes re-injected elsewhere, although increasingly it is being reprocessed for further use.

And eventually, the EPA could face pressure to backtrack on previous initiatives. In April, the agency relented to pressure from the industry, giving drillers until January 2015 to end the practice of "flaring" excess natural gas from wells that were not connected to pipelines. It had initially proposed that firms cease almost immediately.

For Jackson's successor, a central question is whether the EPA takes a broader role in the industry, or, as Jackson hinted a year ago, allows state officials to call most the shots when it comes to drilling:

"It's not to say that there isn't a federal role, but you can't start to talk about a federal role without acknowledging the very strong state role."

(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Jackson to step down as Obama's environmental chief

Reuters - Online
Washington, DC
Ayesha Rascoe
12/28/2012

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Lisa Jackson, who spearheaded the Obama administration's crackdown on carbon emissions, said on Thursday she will step down after almost four years of battles with Republican lawmakers and industry over proposed regulations.

Under her leadership, the agency declared for the first time that carbon dioxide was a danger to human health and could be regulated under the Clean Air Act, leading the EPA to develop a new regulatory regime to limit carbon emissions.

Industry groups and Republican lawmakers opposed Jackson's efforts to fight climate change, hauling her in for numerous hearings in Congress, and she faced some pushback from within the administration too.

She won praise from many environmental groups, while others complained her EPA was too timid. It was unclear what direction the administration will take on climate change during President Barack Obama's second term.

Obama thanked Jackson for her service, praising her work on mercury pollution limits, fighting climate change and helping set new fuel economy standards for vehicles.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink," Obama said in a statement.

Jackson, the first black administrator of the 17,000-strong EPA, said in a statement she was "confident the (EPA) ship is sailing in the right direction."

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Jackson is the first major energy policy official to step aside since Obama's re-election last month. Some have speculated that Energy Secretary Steven Chu, a Nobel prize-winning physicist who has also clashed with industry, will also depart, as may Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Republican lawmakers accused Jackson's EPA of massive government overreach that choked economic growth, and passed numerous bills aimed at undoing the regulations. Obama did not sign their bills into law, but the White House did begin to pull back or delay rules in the face of the relentless onslaught.

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States and governors fought Jackson's rules in the courts, scoring a win in August when a U.S. appeals court overturned the EPA's Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, aimed at reducing harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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"In the past four years, EPA has hindered development of our nation's oil and natural gas resources by making it difficult for America's independent producers to overcome the enormous regulatory obstacles to operate," said Julia Bell, spokeswoman for the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

(Additional reporting by Valerie Volcovici and Roberta Rampton; Editing by Ros Krasny, Will Dunham, Mohammad Zargham and David Gregorio)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation
KGWN-TV - Online

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON (AP) - Environmental Protection Agency Administration Lisa Jackson says she's stepping down after nearly four years on the job.

Jackson announced her departure in a statement Thursday. She gave no particular reason for leaving but said she was ready for new challenges, time with her family and new opportunities to make a difference.

Jackson's tenure was marked by high-profile brawls, including the fight over whether hydraulic fracturing was causing groundwater pollution in the tiny Wyoming community of Pavillion

She says she's leaving the agency, in her words, "confident the ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson is expected to leave after the State of the Union address in late January. Cabinet members looking to move on often leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...
WHTC-AM - Online

12/28/2012

News

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom

Friday, December 28, 2012 12:01 a.m. EST

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

By Jonathan Leff and Joshua Schneyer

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

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"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. But Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater

study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

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Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

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While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

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DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

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"The question is how to define "diesel" - broadly or narrowly," says consultant McNally.

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

holland...hastings...charlotte...lansing...south haven...

kalamazoo...battle creek...jackson

940 pm est thu dec 27 2012

...winter weather advisory in effect from 1 pm friday to 6 am est

saturday...

the national weather service in grand rapids has issued a winter

weather advisory for snow and hazardous travel...which is in effect

from 1 pm friday to 6 am est saturday.

hazardous weather...

* snow will develop after 1 pm friday

* total accumulations mostly in the 1 to 3 inch range...locally

  up to 4 inches.

impacts...

* hazardous travel during the friday evening commute.

precautionary/preparedness actions...

* the michigan department of transportation reminds motorists

  to adjust speeds based on the conditions... and to take it

  slow in ice and snow.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U...
WKZO-AM - Online

12/28/2012

News

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Friday, December 28, 2012 12:01 a.m. EST

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(Additional reporting by Selam Gebrekidan and Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Joseph Radford)

SEVERE WEATHER ALERT:

Winter Weather Advisory

More Details Hide Details

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clare...hart...fremont...big rapids...mount pleasant...muskegon...

greenville...alma...jenison...grand rapids...ionia...st. johns...

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

holland...hastings...charlotte...lansing...south haven...

kalamazoo...battle creek...jackson

940 pm est thu dec 27 2012

...winter weather advisory in effect from 1 pm friday to 6 am est

saturday...

the national weather service in grand rapids has issued a winter

weather advisory for snow and hazardous travel...which is in effect

from 1 pm friday to 6 am est saturday.

hazardous weather...

* snow will develop after 1 pm friday

* total accumulations mostly in the 1 to 3 inch range...locally

  up to 4 inches.

impacts...

* hazardous travel during the friday evening commute.

precautionary/preparedness actions...

* the michigan department of transportation reminds motorists

  to adjust speeds based on the conditions... and to take it

  slow in ice and snow.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

After Jackson, EPA faces big decisions on U.S. fracking boom
WNMT-AM - Online

12/28/2012

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, speaks during a news conference in Rio de Janeiro June 20, 2012. REUTERS/Ue

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The past four years of U.S. environmental regulation was marked by a crackdown on emissions that angered coal miners and power companies. Over the next four, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency will have to decide whether to take on an even larger industry: Big Oil.

Following Lisa Jackson's resignation on Wednesday, her successor will inherit the tricky task of regulating a drilling boom that has revolutionized the energy industry but raised fears over the possible contamination of water supplies.

The controversial technique at the center of the boom, hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting millions of gallons of water laced with chemicals deep into shale rocks to extract oil and gas. It has become a flashpoint issue, putting the EPA -- charged with safeguarding the nation's water -- in the middle of a fight between environmentalists and the energy industry.

Both sides now eagerly await a major EPA research project into fracking's effects on water supplies due in 2014, as well as final rules on issues including the disposal of wastewater and the use of 'diesel' chemicals in the process.

It is unclear who will take the role, but the incoming chief may have a "huge impact" on the oil and gas industry, says Robert McNally, a White House energy adviser during the George W. Bush administration who now heads the Rapidan Group, a consulting firm.

On the one hand, energy industry and big manufacturers are warning the EPA not to impede a drilling boom that offers the promise of decades' worth of cheap energy. Meanwhile, environmentalists are pressing President Barack Obama to ensure the drilling bonanza is not endangering water resources.

"This administration clearly needs contributors to economic growth for its economic legacy as much as it needs to add to its environmental legacy," said Bruce Bullock of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"This appointment could be key in seeing which of those two legacies is more important."

There are many contenders for the role, but no clear front-runner as yet. But Obama is unlikely to win Congressional approval for a heavy-handed regulator, and there is no suggestion of a stringent crackdown.

Even Jackson, who suffered withering criticism from big industry and Republicans for her efforts to curb pollution and limit greenhouse gas emissions, has cautiously condoned the practice as safe, while acknowledging the need for greater study and, in some cases, oversight.

"(Fracking technology) is perfectly capable of being clean," Jackson said in February. "It requires smart regulation, smart rules of the road."

Jackson's successor may now be charged with refining those rules, and both energy companies and fracking critics are anxious about the outcome.

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Industry body Independent Petroleum Association of America said the EPA has "hindered development" of oil and gas for four years, and looks forward to a new chief who will promote energy drilling "hand in hand" with environmental regulation.

Executive director of the Sierra Club environmental group Michael Brune says the EPA has "unfinished business" in addressing things such as the release of methane emissions during fracking.

APPETITE TO REGULATE

Some analysts say Obama will not risk the economic stimulus of cheaper, domestic energy by pushing for tougher regulations. The oil sector is one of the few bright spots in the U.S. economy; natural gas prices are near their lowest in a decade, a boon for manufacturers, and U.S. oil output is the highest in 18 years.

"Even before (Jackson's resignation) there didn't seem to be much of an appetite in the White House to regulate shale drilling on a federal level in the next couple of years," says Nitzan Goldberger, U.S. energy policy analyst with Eurasia Group.

But big drillers such as ExxonMobil and Chesapeake who have plowed billions of dollars into shale fields are watching carefully for any sign of new rules or oversight that could drive up costs, or limit access.

While fracking technology has been around for decades, it has only gained widespread use across dozens of states in recent years. The EPA, like many groups, has struggled to keep up with the expansion, according to Government Accountability Office reports released earlier this year.

After years in which states were mostly responsible for regulating onshore drilling, the new EPA administrator will be pressed to take a more central role. A Gallup poll this year showed drinking water contamination is the leading environmental concern among Americans.

A year ago, in the first U.S. government report of its kind, the EPA drew a potential link between water contamination in rural Pavillion, Wyoming and fracking, based on samples of ground water from the area. That study has been contested, and subsequent research has been inconclusive.

A firmer word on the impact may not emerge until 2014, when the EPA is expected to release the first exhaustive in-depth government study on the long-term effects of fracking on drinking water, commissioned by Congress over two years.

DIESEL, WASTEWATER AND FLARING

The debate rages over a diverse range of issues.

While fracking was exempted from the Federal Clean Water Act in 2005, operations that used diesel fuel, which contains a number of toxic chemical compounds, were not exempted.

However, what exactly constitutes "diesel" has been a bone of contention among oil firms and environmental groups.

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Thomson Reuters - UK - Online

12/28/2012

NEW YORK | Fri Dec 28, 2012 4:59am GMT

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation
Associated Press (AP) - Cheyenne Bureau

12/28/2012

WASHINGTON_Environmental Protection Agency Administration Lisa Jackson says she's stepping down after nearly four years on the job.

Jackson announced her departure in a statement Thursday. She gave no particular reason for leaving but said she was ready for new challenges, time with her family and new opportunities to make a difference.

Jackson's tenure was marked by high-profile brawls, including the fight over whether hydraulic fracturing was causing groundwater pollution in the tiny Wyoming community of Pavillion

She says she's leaving the agency, in her words, "confident the ship is sailing in the right direction."

Jackson is expected to leave after the State of the Union address in late January. Cabinet members looking to move on often leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

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EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

Latest Wyoming news, sports, business and entertainment
Associated Press (AP) - Cheyenne Bureau

12/28/2012

GAME LAWS

Legislature to consider game, fish license hikes

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) _ Wyoming lawmakers will face a range of bills concerning hunting and fishing issues when they convene next month, including one that calls for increasing license fees.

The Legislature's Joint Travel, Recreation and Wildlife Committee has endorsed a bill to increase most hunting and fishing licenses for both residents and nonresidents.

Eric Keszler is spokesman for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. He says the department needs the license fee increases to maintain its current level of operations. He says failing to approve the increases would result in about a 20 percent cut in the agency's budget.

Other proposed bills related to game and fish would allow hunters to kill a cow bison every five years, up from the current law that limits hunters to one bison tag in their lifetime.

DIPLOMA WEBSITE-COMPLAINT

Wyo. fights site offering life-experience degrees

(Information in the following story is from: Casper (Wyo.) Star-Tribune, http://www.trib.com)

CASPER, Wyo. (AP) _ A Cheyenne-based website that offered degrees in medicine, law and other areas based on life experience is facing legal action from the state of Wyoming.

A complaint filed by the state is asking Right Price Registration LLC to stop operating as an unregistered, degree-granting educational institution and to remove all references to Wyoming from its promotional materials.

The Casper Star-Tribune reports the website http://www.degreeinaday.com , registered in the state by Right Price Registration, offered to provide customers a diploma document for associate's degrees to master's degrees for as little as $195. The website wasn't active Thursday.

Repeated calls to Degree in a Day's Cheyenne phone number by the Star-Tribune were unanswered.

CASPER MOUNTAIN FIRE

Cause of Casper Mountain fire still not known

CASPER, Wyo. (AP) _ Authorities still haven't determined what started the wildfire that burned more than 15,000 acres on Casper Mountain this summer.

Natrona County Fire Inspector Dave Baker told the Casper Star-Tribune that investigators believe it was human-caused. The leading theories are that the fire was accidentally started by ATV use or discarded smoking material or that it was

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intentionally set.

The fire destroyed 37 homes and cabins. Authorities know of only one person who has rebuilt so far.

Owen Jones, a retired elementary school principal, said he wanted a new cabin in time for the winter, his favorite time on the mountain. Like his old cabin, the new one serves as meeting place for the Dead Poet's Society _ a group of retirees who meet to read poetry and play darts.

CHEVRON-CEO INTERVIEW

Chevron's CEO: it will take time for natural gas to be used in nation's transportation fleet

NEW YORK (AP) _ Chevron CEO John Watson says while he believes natural gas will displace coal in power generation, getting it into people's cars presents a larger challenge.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Watson said it will take time to develop the infrastructure necessary to make the fuel practical in the nation's transportation fleet.

When asked about hydraulic fracturing, Watson said there are "understandable anxieties" about the method of extracting oil and gas. He says the industry needs to work through them with local governments.

Coal and natural gas are the two mainstays of Wyoming's economy.

Chevron is in the midst of an enormous cycle of investment aimed at extracting oil and gas from wherever it hides in the earth's crust.

EPA ADMINISTRATOR

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JACKSON TOURISM

Hotel reservations up in Jackson Hole this weekend

(Information in the following story is from: Jackson Hole (Wyo.) News And Guide, http://www.jhnewsandguide.com)

EPA & Hydraulic Fracturing - Dec. 28 to Jan. 2

JACKSON, Wyo. (AP) _ Hotel reservations in Jackson Hole for the weekend before New Year's are up over the last two years.

The Jackson Hole Daily reported Thursday that 69 percent of lodging in the valley is booked this Saturday. Last year at the same time, 56 percent of rooms were booked. In 2010, 49 percent were reserved.

The booking rate is also better than the weekend before Christmas, when hotels and vacation rentals were only 26 percent full.

Fresh powder could be drawing visitors. Parts of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort have gotten about 2 feet of snow this week.

CHRISTMAS TREES-FISH

Old Christmas trees help Ocean Lake fish habitat

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) _ Fremont County residents don't have to let their Christmas trees go to waste after the holidays. They can drop them off to be used as fish habitat.

Wyoming Public Radio reports that each January, area anglers collect Christmas trees and sink them to the bottom of Ocean Lake to create a better habitat for walleye, crappie and yellow perch.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department fisheries biologist Paul Gerrity says the trees give the fish a place to forage or hide from predators in a lake whose bottom is otherwise pretty flat.

Residents can drop off live, undecorated old Christmas trees at the Lander and Dubois landfills or the Riverton bale station.

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