

## Policy News & Monthly Review

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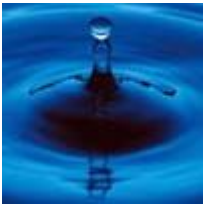
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### **New USGS water science strategy factsheet**

The U.S. Geological Survey released a fact sheet summarizing a new national Water Science Strategy. The new strategy takes a comprehensive look at the country's water needs for the next 5 to 10 years, and includes plans to build new infrastructure and capabilities to meet domestic water needs.

### **Carbon pollution standards for new power plants**

The EPA proposed Carbon Pollution Standards under the Clean Air Act to cut carbon pollution from new power plants to improve public health and curb the effects of climate change. According to the EPA, the standards would ensure that new power plants are built with available clean technology, and would coincide with investments in clean energy technologies that are already being made in the power industry.

### **House Appropriations Committee releases Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill**

The House Committee on Appropriations published their fiscal year (FY) 2014 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill this July. The bill met with strong opposition from House Democrats, who lambasted cuts that zero out approximately 20 programs and slash 34% from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget. The bill proposes \$24.3 billion in total funding; \$5.5 billion below FY 2013 levels, or 18 percent decrease. The Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee has jurisdiction over many agencies, including the U.S.

### **House Committee on Natural Resources considers water bills**

The House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power held a hearing on May 23, 2013 to discuss two bills pertaining to water resources.

The first bill, H.R. 745, would reauthorize the Water Desalination Act of 1996 and extend funding for it through the 2018 fiscal year. Representative Grace Napolitano (D-CA) introduced the bill, which awards research grants for projects looking into best practices for water desalination techniques.

### **House Natural Resources Committee Considers Energy Legislation**

Representatives introduced four energy bills in May 2013: the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPR-A) Access Act (H.R. 1964); the Federal Lands Jobs and Energy Security Act (H.R. 1965); the Planning for American Energy Act of 2013 (H.R. 1394); and the BLM Live Internet Auctions Act (H.R. 555). On May 22, 2013, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing to discuss the proposed bills.

### **Environmental lawyer may get top DOI post**

Multiple sources reveal the White House is expected to nominate Janice Schneider as the Department of Interior's assistant secretary for land and minerals management. Schneider is currently a partner at the law firm Latham & Watkins LLP in Washington, D.C. and was a senior aide to former Interior Deputy Secretary David Hayes. Schneider's experience and specialization is in the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, and tribal and cultural resource issues. The appointment awaits nomination and approval.

### **McCarthy nomination clears Senate**

After months of indignation and stand-offs between Senate Democrats and Republicans, Gina McCarthy has been confirmed as the new Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a 59 to 40 vote this July. Senate Republicans boycotted McCarthy's Environment and Public Works confirmation hearing back in May over transparency concerns aimed at the EPA. Gina McCarthy succeeds Lisa Jackson as head of the EPA.

## **Federal Register- July 2013**

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is implementing a policy requiring organizations generating or using environmental data under certain Agency-funded assistance agreements to submit documentation of their competency prior to award of the agreement. Because implementation tools are currently being developed by the Agency, EPA is delaying the required effective date of the Policy to October 1, 2013. [Monday, July 1, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 126)]

### **Unique "fingerprints" could help carbon capture efforts**

A new methodology could lead to improved monitoring of geologic carbon sequestration. Although not yet commercially viable, underground sequestration of carbon dioxide is being explored as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels that contribute to global warming.

### **1987 Montreal Protocol helped soften climate change, study says**

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was established in 1987 to reduce the production and use of certain compounds that erode sections of the Earth's stratosphere, making us more vulnerable to radiation. Now, a new study published in the *Journal of Climate* concludes that the Montreal Protocol did more than just protect us from radiation; it also helped lessen the effects of climate change.

### **Melting Arctic reveals new resources and political struggles**

New trade routes and untapped mineral deposits are just a couple things being revealed by the ever-thinning ice in an increasingly warm Arctic. This year alone nearly 400 ships passed through Russia's exposed Northern Sea Route, an Arctic waterway along the country's northern coast, and that number is expected to grow substantially in the coming years.

### **President poised to sign bi-partisan helium legislation**

Both the House and Senate passed crucial helium legislation this September to avert the shutdown of the federal helium reserve near Amarillo, Texas. The reserve provides the United States with 40 percent of its helium supply, and is critical for supplying the private sector with helium for hospital equipment, solar panels, and computer silicon chips. H.R. 527, the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013, passed with an amendment by the House and is expected to be signed by President Obama in the coming weeks.

### **Budget Update for August**

With Congress in recess for majority of August, little has changed within the budget since July.

### **National Academies assess federal Earth science education and training programs**

At the request of the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Academies released a report this August examining the role of federal education and training programs in fostering the next generation of Earth scientists. The report focused on underrepresented groups in the geosciences, such as women and minorities, in fields associated with energy, mineral, and water resources, the environment, and geologic hazards such as earthquakes and volcanoes; but excluded ocean, atmospheric and space sciences.

### **Science Committee Chairman subpoenas EPA air data**

Congressman Lamar Smith (R-TX), Chairman for the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, subpoenaed records from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) early this August. Rep. Smith hopes the records will show how the agency decided to institute newer and stricter air quality regulations in the United States. By subpoenaing the records, the committee wishes to independently verify the EPA's decisions regarding the controversial regulations.

## **Federal Register - August 2013**

Geoscience Policy Federal Register

### **Senator Murkowski releases white paper on liquefied natural gas exports**

On Tuesday, August 6, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) released a white paper entitled *The Narrowing Window: America's Opportunity to Join the Global Gas Trade*. The paper provides a set of pro-growth policy recommendations based on in-depth

studies and analysis from a variety of sources, including government agencies, academia, think tanks, and the private sector.

### **New study suggests warming patterns could cause sea level to rise 30-feet**

A new study predicts that human-induced climate change may mimic similar conditions not seen for more than 115 thousand years. Published in *Nature Geoscience*, the new study has found that during the Eemian, a period of warming that preceded the last ice age approximately 127-116 thousand years ago, high temperatures caused sea levels to rise almost 30 feet.

### **IPCC's fifth assessment report on climate change**

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) released the Fifth Assessment Report. According to the report, there is overwhelming scientific evidence that greenhouse gas levels and the average world temperature continue to increase, and that the global risk of dramatic changes to weather systems, global sea level, and flood and drought patterns is increasing as well.

### **New USGS reports on coastal change help community and emergency planners**

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) examined the probability of hurricane-induced coastal change on sandy beaches from Florida to New York in two first-ever studies released at the beginning of the month. Both reports – one examining beaches from Florida to North Carolina, the other beaches from Virginia to New York – can be used by community planners and emergency managers to make better informed decisions about coastline vulnerability and ways to deal with it.

### **House Science Majority Staff Hold Session to Discuss the Draft High Quality Research Act**

On May 21, 2013, the majority staff of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held an open discussion with members of the scientific community to provide information on the draft High Quality Research Act. The committee hoped to address concerns, resolve misconceptions, and take suggestions for improvement.

### **House and Senate Appropriations Committees pass respective Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bills**

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees passed their fiscal year (FY) 2014 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bills this July.

### **Comment Period for DOI hydraulic fracturing rule extended**

On June 6, 2013, in a Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced that the Department of the Interior will extend the comment period on the revised proposed rule on Oil and Gas; Well Stimulation, Including Hydraulic Fracturing, on Federal and Indian Lands. The comment period was due to close June 24, 2013, and will now be extended 60 days, closing on August 23, 2013. 177,000 comments had been received as of June 6.

### **USGS report highlights important areas for mineral investment in Afghanistan**

USGS scientists have identified five new areas of interest (AOI) and two subareas in Afghanistan, adding to a list of 24 areas of interest identified in a 2011 study titled, “*Summaries and Data Packages of Important Areas for Mineral Investment and Production Opportunities of Nonfuel Minerals in Afghanistan*.” Vast areas of natural mineral resources can be found in Afghanistan, and extracting and producing these resources could improve Afghanistan’s current economic situation.

### **USGS awards State Geologists grant to help preserve data**

This August, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) announced that it will award \$606,073 to 25 state geologists and geological surveys across the country for the preservation of national geological and geophysical data. The Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program (NGGDPP), a national initiative at the USGS to create standards, procedures, and protocols for data collection, was established in 2005 as a part of the Energy Policy Act (Public Law 109-58, Sec. 351).

### **NASA seeks collaborative private sector partnerships**

NASA officials released a synopsis of their Collaborations for Commercial Space Capabilities (CCSC), a program that provides private sector companies with the opportunity to utilize NASA’s resources and expertise to produce cost-effective, commercial products and services for low Earth orbit and beyond.

NASA is seeking comments on the synopsis and proposals from private companies interested in pursuing such partnerships.

Interested parties should submit a letter of intent by August 7, 2013.

### **Energy efficiency bill revised and reintroduced as vote looms**

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rob Portman (R-OH) recently revised their energy efficiency legislation, the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2013 (S. 761), in response to concerns that the original bill would not successfully pass the Senate. The new bill, S. 1392, was introduced on July 30, 2013 and is almost identical to the original bill introduced back in March. The new bill, however, excludes a provision providing state grants to implement energy efficiency standards in buildings.

### **President Obama reveals Climate Action Plan**

President Obama revealed his new Climate Action Plan on June 25, 2013. Building on his “all-of-the-above” energy strategy, the plan is primarily concerned with cutting carbon pollution in America, preparing for domestic impacts of climate change, and leading international efforts to combat and prepare for climate change.

### **Neil Kornze expected to be nominated as Director of BLM**

News sources indicate that the White House will nominate Neil Kornze to be the next Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Kornze is currently Principal Deputy Director at BLM. In 2011, Kornze joined the BLM in as a Senior Advisor to the Director. Prior to the BLM, Kornze worked as a Senior Advisor to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada. The appointment awaits nomination and approval.

Sources: Environment & Energy Publishing

### **CRS report on changes in the Arctic**

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) released a report on July 5, 2013, which provides an overview of Arctic-related issues for Congress. Prompted by concerns over diminishing sea ice, the report addresses the effects of increased human activity in the Arctic. Although the withdrawal of sea ice raises concerns about climate change, it also provides new opportunities for oil, gas, and mineral resources, trade routes, tourism, and other activities while raising issues of national security.

### **DOI and USDA announce partnership to protect watersheds from wildfire impacts**

The Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Forest Service announced a partnership to restore forestlands around important watersheds and prevent damaging wildfires.



### **Streamer - A new online tool to visualize and understand water flow across America**

Streamer is a new interactive, online map service from the United States Geological Survey and the National Atlas of the United States that allows the user to navigate America’s major rivers and streams. Using digital hydrographic data at one million-scale (1 inch = 15.8 miles), Streamer allows the user to trace any stream or river upstream and downstream from any point along its course.

### **Senate Confirms Ernest Moniz as Secretary of Energy**

On May 16, 2013, the Senate confirmed Ernest Moniz as the new Secretary of Energy with a vote of 97-0. Moniz replaces former Secretary Steven Chu.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved Moniz’s nomination on April 18, 2013. The confirmation was delayed by Lindsey Graham (R-SC) who placed a hold on the nomination due to concerns regarding the future of the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility in South Carolina.

### **House hearing on Marine Debris Emergency Act of 2013**

On June 13, 2013, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held a legislative hearing on H.R. 553, H.R. 1308, H.R. 1399, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1491, and H.R. 2219.

### **Colorado Senators want more federal aid**

Colorado Senators Mark Udall and Michael Bennet introduced legislation September 24th to lift a \$100 million cap on federal highway emergency relief funds after massive floods severely damaged or destroyed more than 21,000 homes, 50 bridges, and killed at least 9 people in Colorado. The bill, the Deficit Neutral Infrastructure Disaster Relief Act, would take already appropriated money to fund the increase. A similar bill will reportedly be submitted on the House side, as well.

### **Wilson introduces Natural Hazards Reduction Act of 2013**

This May, Frederica Wilson (D-FL), Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Technology, introduced the Natural Hazards Reduction Act of 2013 to reauthorize the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) and the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP).

NEHRP was established in 1977 to help monitor and mitigate the effects of earthquakes. NEHRP has been reviewed and reauthorized 11 times since its inception. It was last reauthorized in 2004.

### **Vote on energy legislation delayed**

In an attempt to focus on passing a budget for fiscal year 2014, Congress has decided to table an already delayed Senate vote on the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act (S. 1392) that was scheduled to take place the last week in September. The bill, originally introduced by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rob Portman (R-OH) in March and then revised and reintroduced in July, proposes the most significant energy legislation since the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-140).

### **House approves bill containing \$9.9 billion in Coast Guard funding**

On June 6, 2013, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Fiscal Year 2014 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2217). The bill contains a total of \$9.9 billion for the Coast Guard, a decrease of \$543 million from FY 2013 enacted levels. This funding will have implications for the Coast Guard's polar icebreaker vessels, which support scientific research and other U.S. interests in polar regions.

### **House Natural Resources Committee Holds Markup of Proposed Mining Legislation**

On May 15, 2013, the House Committee on Natural Resources held a markup of 18 proposed bills, including three on critical and strategic minerals (H.R. 761, H.R. 981, and H.R. 1063), one on soda ash production (H.R. 957), and one on outer continental shelf hydrocarbon reservoir management (H.R. 1613).

### **House scheduled to consider critical minerals legislation**

House lawmakers must wait to consider legislation that intends to streamline hardrock mine permitting on federal lands.

Introduced by Representative Mark Amodei (R-NV) in February, the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Act of 2013 (H.R. 761) hopes to increase domestic production of critical and strategic minerals on federal lands by setting permitting and litigation time limits on proposed mining projects, and establishing a lead permitting agency to increase efficiency.

### **USGS Using "Crowdsourcing" to Map Features of Colorado**

The U.S. Geological Survey is launching an experimental program to map man-made structures and facilities in the state of Colorado. Using an internet mapping application, volunteers can help USGS update The National Map by modifying or adding information about features such as schools and fire stations. If the pilot program in Colorado is successful, this volunteer-based mapping will be expanded to other areas.

### **New study indicates "peak oil" driven by demand, not supply**



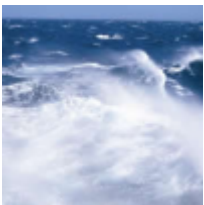
Researchers from Stanford University and the University of California-Santa Cruz have released a study that provides a new perspective on the future of Earth's oil supply. The study concludes that the demand for oil, rather than the supply, will reach a peak and then begin to decline.

#### **Senate ENR questions Secretary Jewell over hydraulic fracturing**

On June 6, 2013, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a full committee hearing to review programs and activities of the Department of the Interior (DOI). Witness testimony from Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell addressed the various programs and activities of the Department, as well as issues DOI will face in the future.

#### **NOAA Releases Dataset from Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released a dataset from the Deepwater Horizon Spill that includes more than two million chemical analyses of sediment, tissue, water and oil, as well as toxicity results. NOAA stated the dataset "wraps up a three year process that began with the gathering of water samples and measurements by ships in the Gulf of Mexico during and after the oil release in 2010." The dataset is the result of collaboration between federal agencies, state environmental management agencies, BP, and its contractors.



#### **NAS report on Ocean Acidification Strategic Plan**

The National Academies of Sciences released a report on the "Review of the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Plan." Developed as a guide for federal research, the strategic plan assesses the impacts of ocean acidification and help policymakers develop strategies for adaptation and mitigation. The report discusses the potential consequences of increasing ocean acidity, and reviews the Strategic Plan for Federal Research and Monitoring of Ocean Acidification prepared by the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Acidification, which was created as part of Fed

#### **Update: Senate CST Committee hearing on Pritzker for Secretary of Commerce**

Penny Pritzker, President Obama's pick for Secretary of Commerce, was questioned by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation committee on May 23, 2013. Though the hearing was relatively cordial, Pritzker, a businesswoman with close ties to the Hyatt Hotel chain, faced scrutiny regarding the tense management-labor relations allegedly reported at Hyatt Hotels. The Committee plans to hold a vote next month on Pritzker's confirmation. A majority in the full Senate is required to confirm the nomination.

#### **Agency Contingency Plans for the government shutdown**

The majority of federal agencies have released contingency plans detailing how they will execute an orderly ceasing of programs. The agencies' plans are based on which programs and employees are considered essential (excepted) or non-essential (non-excepted) during the funding hiatus.

#### **Floodplain mapping should include climate variation, group says**

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) released a report on August 13 that criticizes the failure of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to take account of climate change in risk assessment. The report is part of a larger effort by UCS to convince the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to account for climate impacts on flooding in its policies. The report comes before the planned initiation of increased premiums for risky buildings, which will be done by the NFIP on October 1.

#### **Capitol Hill Oceans Week in review**

On June 4-6, 2013, marine professionals, government officials, and ocean enthusiasts from across the country converged on Washington, D.C., for a three-day conversation about ocean and coastal policy.

**State, Federal partnership working to improve tsunami resilience**

Scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey, the California Geological Survey, the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and other agencies, academic and other institutions are teaming up to improve tsunami resilience in California. Instead of attempting to predict when tsunami-producing earthquake will occur, these scientists are instead identifying the impacts of a tsunami on local infrastructure and the economy.