

Policy News & Monthly Review

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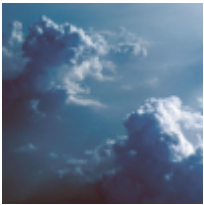
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February budget update

Following the passage of the bipartisan omnibus budget agreement in January, goodwill continued to permeate Capitol Hill as Democrats and Republicans in both chambers passed a clean bill to raise the debt ceiling until March 2015.



California drought catalyst for federal action

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) claims diminished precipitation levels over the past three years could be the worst in California's one-hundred-year recorded history. The drought has prompted legislative action from federal sources.



Landrieu assumes ENR Chair as Baucus is confirmed

Changes caused by the February 6 confirmation of Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) as the next U.S. Ambassador to China rippled through Capitol Hill.



Federal Register - February 2014

A list of notices from the federal register for February 2014 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, EPA, FEMA, USGS and more.



Rep. Rush Holt retiring

On February 18, Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ) announced that he will not seek reelection at the end of his 2014 term.



Rep. Doc Hastings, House Natural Resources Chairman, to retire

Congressman Doc Hastings (R-WA) announced this February that he will not run for reelection in November. His retirement comes 2 decades after Hastings was first voted into office in 1994.



FERC and NRC request more funding

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requested budget increases for fiscal year (FY) 2015.



FY 2015 budget request hearing: DOE Applied Energy

On March 25, the House Committee on Appropriations' Energy and Water Development Subcommittee held a fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget hearing for Applied Energy Funding at the Department of Energy (DOE).



FY 2015 budget request hearing: DOI

On March 25, the House Committee on Appropriations Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee held a fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget hearing for the Department of the Interior (DOI).



FY 2015 budget request hearing: science agencies

On March 26, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing reviewing the Administration's fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request for science agencies.



Carbon capture and storage debate heats up

On March 12, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee's Energy and Environment Subcommittees held a joint hearing to discuss the viability of carbon capture and storage (CCS) techniques used to reduce CO₂ emissions from power plants.



House lawmakers draft bills for science funding

Since the Presidential Budget Request for fiscal year (FY) 2015 was released on March 4, lawmakers have drafted bills that would authorize science funding.



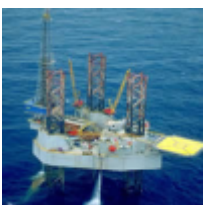
EPA issues final rule on sulfur in gasoline

On March 3, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final Tier 3 rule reducing average levels of sulfur emissions from motor vehicle gasoline consumption from 30 parts per million (ppm) to 10 ppm by 2017.



Administration and Ways and Means Committee Chair propose energy incentive cuts

March saw new developments from the Administration and lawmakers on energy financing under the American tax code.



Russia, Ukraine situation stimulates U.S. energy support efforts

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has caused the U.S. Administration and lawmakers to step up energy support to Ukraine.



Cordova confirmed as new Director of NSF

On March 12, the U.S. Senate confirmed France A. Córdova as next Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF).



U.S. joins extractive industries transparency program

On March 19, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) accepted the U.S. as a Candidate country to their global transparency standard for improving governance of natural resources.



OSTP issues public access directive

On March 20, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director John Holdren issued a memorandum requiring that federal scientific agencies create a draft scientific-collections management and public access policy.



President Obama talks energy exports with EU

On March 26, President Obama met with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso at the EU-U.S. Summit in Brussels to discuss the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) and Europe's economic security with regard to recent events in Ukraine.



USGS attributes Oklahoma earthquakes to induced seismicity

On March 7, the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Journal of Geophysical Research published a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) sponsored study on the relationship between a November 2011 magnitude-5.0 earthquake and successive aftershocks along the Wilzetta fault in Oklahoma.



Congress passes bill to abolish BW-12 provisions

This month the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 (H.R. 3370) passed the U.S. House of Representatives 306-91 and the Senate 72-22. H.R. 3370 abolishes certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (BW-12).



House discusses earthquake science on 50th anniversary of the Great Alaska Earthquake

On March 27, the House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee held an oversight hearing titled "Advances in Earthquake Science: 50th Anniversary of the Great Alaskan Quake."



Senator Blunt introduces REE bill

Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) recently introduced the National Rare Earth Cooperative Act of 2014 (S. 2006), which was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.



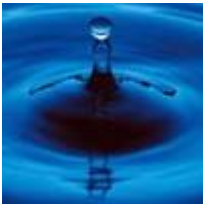
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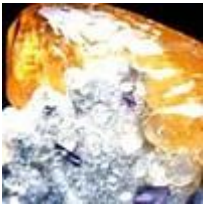
House Subcommittee passes NASA Authorization Act of 2014

The House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Space passed the NASA Authorization Act of 2014 (H.R. 4412) which lays out an "Exploration Roadmap" detailing NASA's priorities.



IPCC reports assess impacts of climate change, recommend carbon capture and storage

The United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released the Fifth Assessment Report Working Group II and Working Group III contributions which discuss evidence of climate change and pathways to reduce global carbon levels.



Federal appeals court strikes down portions of conflict minerals disclosure rule

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit struck down portions of a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) rule requiring companies to disclose whether their products contain conflict minerals.



House passes bill to improve weather forecasting at NOAA

On April 1, the House passed legislation authorizing increased funding for weather research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).



National Science Board responds to FIRST Act

On April 24, the National Science Board (NSB) released a press statement responding to the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act (H.R. 4186).



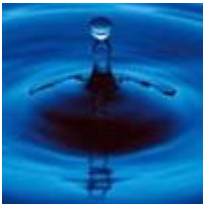
House Natural Resources Committee: DOI FY2015 budget hearing

The House Committee on Natural Resources held an oversight hearing on April 3 to examine the proposed fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget for the Department of the Interior.



House Science, Space, and Technology Committee: DOE FY2015 budget hearing

On April 10, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing to discuss the Department of Energy's (DOE) fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request.



House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee pass LNG export bill

The House Energy and Commerce Committee and Energy and Power Subcommittee passed The Domestic Prosperity and Global Freedom Act (H.R. 6) which would provide for expedited approval of liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to World Trade Organization countries.



Senator Bennet named Chair of Finance Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure

On April 3, Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) was named chairman of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure.



Kornze confirmed as Director of BLM

The Senate confirmed Neil Kornze as the 18th Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on April 8 by a vote of 71-28.



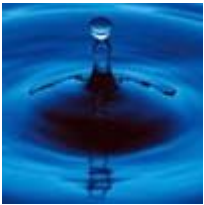
NRC under pressure to require safety upgrades in earthquake-prone nuclear facilities

Revised estimates of earthquake risk have led at least two dozen nuclear reactor facilities to inform the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that their facilities may not withstand the most severe earthquake they could possibly face.



Supreme Court upholds EPA air pollution rule

On April 29, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) upheld the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR).



GAO finds RFS causes problems for refiners

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on April 14 suggesting that delays in issuing yearly federal renewable fuel standards (RFS) leads to increased regulatory uncertainty and compliance costs for petroleum refiners.



White House delays Keystone XL

On April 18, the U.S. Department of State issued a notice granting more time for intra-agency review of the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline.



BLM moves forward with mine methane release rules

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provided notice of its plans to develop rules to control methane releases from mining operations on public lands in the April 29 edition of the Federal Register.



Study finds global REE supplies sufficient for U.S. defense needs

A recent Department of Defense (DOD) report finds that despite concerns about availability and price of rare earth elements (REEs), the global supply should be sufficient to meet U.S. defense needs for the foreseeable future.



Federal Register - April 2014

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DOE report: U.S. has potential to double hydropower capacity

The Department of Energy (DOE) released a report in early May concluding that the U.S. has the potential to almost double its current hydropower generation capacity.



USFS requests comments on proposed policy for groundwater resources management on National Forest lands

On May 2, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) announced a proposal to strengthen the agency's management direction for groundwater resources and other best management practices.



Senate confirms Schneider as Interior Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

On May 1, the Senate approved Janice Schneider as Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management (ASLM) in the Department of the Interior (DOI) by a vote of 64-32.



Senate hearing examines winter propane shortages

On May 1, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to discuss the causes of propane shortages last winter and how to prevent shortages in the future.



USGS nominee testifies before Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

On May 13, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to consider the nomination of Dr. Suzette Kimball to serve as Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).



House Science, Space, and Technology Committee approves FIRST Act

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology approved the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act (H.R. 4186) in a markup held on May 28 by a party-line vote of 20-16.



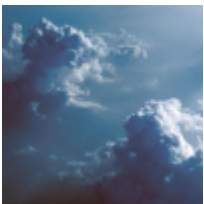
EPA requests comments on the disclosure of fracking chemicals

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) seeks comments in anticipation of a proposed rule on how companies should report chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.



Hearing on energy needs in Asia: the U.S. liquefied natural gas option

On May 29, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Asia and the Pacific Subcommittee held a hearing to discuss potential U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet rising energy needs in Asia.



Obama announces pick for NOAA Chief Scientist

This May, the White House nominated Rick Spinrad to serve as Chief Scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).